Compliments of Stacey Shanner

Good to Be HOME

issue 34

TRANSFORMING THE HEART OF THE HOME

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Stacey Shanner
REALTOR®

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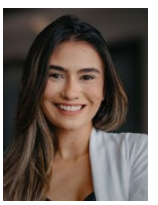

Stacey Shanner
Realtor®

Direct: (866) 458-4226
Office: (610) 878-5000
E-mail: info@remindermedia.com
www.remindermedia.com

The Shanners
1100 First Avenue
Suite 200
King Of Prussia, PA 19406

Back of Tear Out Card 1

SERVES 4

HEIRLOOM TOMATO TOASTS

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 to 5 heirloom slicer tomatoes, sliced ¼ in. thick
- 1 shallot, minced
- 1 c. blueberries, blackberries, or cherries (or mixture of all three)
- 1 to 2 tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ c. sherry vinegar
- ½ c. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp. granulated sugar
- 4 or 5 garlic cloves, smashed
- 1 stick unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1 to 2 baguettes, cut in half lengthwise
- 1 lb. burrata or good-quality mozzarella
- Fresh herbs of choice (basil, dill, tarragon)
- Sea salt

INSTRUCTIONS:

1/ In a large bowl, toss the tomatoes, shallot, and berries together with the salt, pepper, vinegar, oil, and sugar. Let sit until the tomatoes have released their liquid and the shallots are softened, 20 to 30 minutes. Taste for seasoning.

2/ In a small bowl, combine the garlic and butter; set aside. Grill or toast the baguette pieces for 1 to 2 minutes, until lightly browned. Spread generously with the garlic butter and grill for about 30 seconds (you can also do this under a broiler).

3/ Spread the burrata onto the warm bread and top with the marinated tomato-berry mixture. Drizzle the remaining juice from tomato-berry mixture over the top and garnish with fresh herbs and sea salt.

Recipes from ***Brunch Season: A Year of Delicious Mornings from the Buttermilk Kitchen***
by Suzanne Vizethann. Gibbs Smith, 2025. Photography by Kelly Berry.

Dear Bill and Judy,

The long, sunny days of summer are brimming with energy, making this the perfect time to invest some TLC in your abode. This issue of Good to Be Home offers quick ideas and practical upgrades to help you enjoy your spaces more without adding stress to your season.

Designer Lindsay Olson of Lulu Designs shows how thoughtful updates can revive a tired kitchen, proving that a clear layout and well-chosen finishes can transform how a room supports your daily life. You'll also discover smart ways to make the most of overlooked corners, turning narrow halls, high shelves, and other forgotten spots into natural, functional storage.

If you're looking for fast yet impactful improvements, the details truly matter. A fresh set of cabinet pulls can energize a room much like adding a favorite accessory, and light, breathable bedding can help you rest easier.

For those considering larger home projects, this issue includes tips for working smoothly with contractors and keeping remodels on track. You'll also find guidance for keeping your home "market ready" and watering your lawn and garden with care.

The enclosed articles offer tips for adding polish and practicality to these and other features throughout your home, helping you make meaningful improvements without added stress.

Here's to enjoying a summer filled with less effort and more ease. As always, it's a pleasure to send you this magazine.

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The Shanners
1100 First Avenue
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Good to Be HOME

PUBLISHER
Chief Executive Officer Steven Acree
publisher@remindermedia.com

EXECUTIVE
President Luke Acree
Chief Marketing Officer Joshua Stike
Chief Operating Officer Michael Graziola
Chief Revenue Officer Ethan Acree

MARKETING
Vice President of Content and Marketing Operations Jessica Fitzpatrick
Director of Marketing Dan Acree
Director of Creative Services Kristin Sweeney
marketing@remindermedia.com

EDITORIAL
Senior Layout Designer Jordan Hunsberger
Senior Writer and Editor Matthew Brady
Content Writers Allison Gomes, Andre Rios
editorial@remindermedia.com

SALES AND CLIENT SUCCESS
Vice President of Sales Nicholas Bianco
Vice President of Corporate Sales Darryl MacPherson
Director of Client Success Matthew Frizalone
hello@remindermedia.com

OPERATIONS
Vice President of Finance Shana Lebofsky
Vice President of Engineering Shane Brennan
Vice President of IT Thomas Setliff
Director of Business Intelligence Daniel Gallaway
Director of Manufacturing Shannon Mosser
Director of HR John Keogh
hr@remindermedia.com

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A Lowdown on LINENS

written by **MATTHEW BRADY**

We've all experienced it at one time or another: trying to sleep on a sweltering summer night. Without air-conditioning, the best line of defense is usually a fan, thinner clothes, and minimal bed coverings.

The right bedding fabric, in particular, can make a huge difference. This overview covers the best sheet types and how to care for them so you can rest easy this season.

What to look for

Ideally, in summertime you want to dress your bed in linens that will provide coolness and airflow to your summer nights, so opt for breathable, moisture-wicking natural fibers. Here are some of your best options.

Percale cotton

Percale is renowned for being light, soft, breathable, and even cool to the touch. Thread count varies, however: the higher it is, the more likely airflow will be restricted (though the fiber and weave type also affect comfort). Percale's is generally ideal below 400, yet its cotton cousin, sateen, is optimal up to 600.

Linen

Linen also boasts stellar breathability and coolness. This flaxseed-based material is also famous for its moisture-absorbing prowess—being able to absorb up to 20 percent of its weight in moisture before you feel it. It's a great choice for hot sleepers. It gets better with age too: the more you wash it, the softer the material gets.

Bamboo

This natural material is transformed into lightweight linens that are considered by some to be even softer and just as breathable as the previous options. In addition, bamboo is known to provide excellent temperature regulation (in both summer and winter) and moisture wicking.

Sheet care

Whatever type of sheets you choose, practice proper care to ensure longevity by following the manufacturer's instructions (generally, using the gentle wash cycle followed by low-heat or air drying), only using mild detergents, and washing them without bulkier items such as towels. Taking such steps can help sustain their cooling comfort for years.

HOW TO KEEP YOUR HOME IN SELLING CONDITION

written by **ALLISON GOMES**

Though you may be settled in your house and determined to stay there for another five or ten years, you never know when life might nudge you to a new chapter, such as with a job change or a growing family. That's why the best time to get it market ready isn't when you're ready to sell—it's right now. Thinking like a seller can help you protect your home's value, avoid expensive last-minute fixes, and make life easier when it's finally time to list.

Maintain your curb appeal

It's no secret that first impressions matter in real estate, and your house's exterior sets the tone long before anyone steps inside. Even if selling isn't on the immediate horizon, it's always a good idea to maintain your curb appeal. Start with the basics: keep your lawn trimmed, walkways clear, and landscaping tidy. These smaller tasks, when done steadily, can save you from the stress of a massive cleanup later. Plus, they'll make your abode a place you'll be proud to call home every day.

If you want to take it a step further, consider adding seasonal flowers and ample mulch to instantly refresh your yard. Further, don't forget to periodically pressure-wash the siding and driveway to keep surfaces looking new. Other simple updates, like repainting the front door and swapping out worn hardware and house numbers, can help keep your exterior looking well cared for. In turn, these changes send a clear message—to both neighbors now and to potential buyers later—that your home has been loved.

Stay on top of maintenance

Though many people may be impressed by your home's aesthetics, what buyers *can't* see often matters just as much as what they can. Keeping your house's major systems in top shape will not only make it more comfortable to live in but also give future buyers peace of mind. Think of it as preventative care for your dwelling: a little attention now can help keep things running smoothly later.

Make sure to schedule biannual checkups for your HVAC unit, roof, gutters, and plumbing and electrical systems. Catching small problems early can save you thousands of dollars in the long run and prevent unpleasant surprises down the road. Something as simple as fixing a slow leak or replacing worn weatherstripping can protect your home from greater damage.

Even if selling isn't on the immediate horizon, it's always a good idea to maintain your curb appeal. Start with the basics: keep your lawn trimmed, walkways clear, and landscaping tidy.

Start with easy, high-impact updates like repainting walls in neutral colors, replacing outdated light fixtures, and swapping in new cabinet hardware.

Refresh your interiors over time

One of the perks of prepping your house before you're even considering selling is that you can take your time working on your interiors and actually enjoy those changes. Start with easy, high-impact updates like repainting walls in neutral colors, replacing outdated light fixtures, and swapping in new cabinet hardware. (See page 16 for more detail on the latter.) These small touches can modernize your place's look without breaking the bank.

If your flooring is showing wear, consider refinishing hardwoods or replacing old carpet with something more durable. And don't underestimate the power of organization: clearing out clutter and maximizing storage can make your home feel more spacious and functional.

Keep a record of your updates

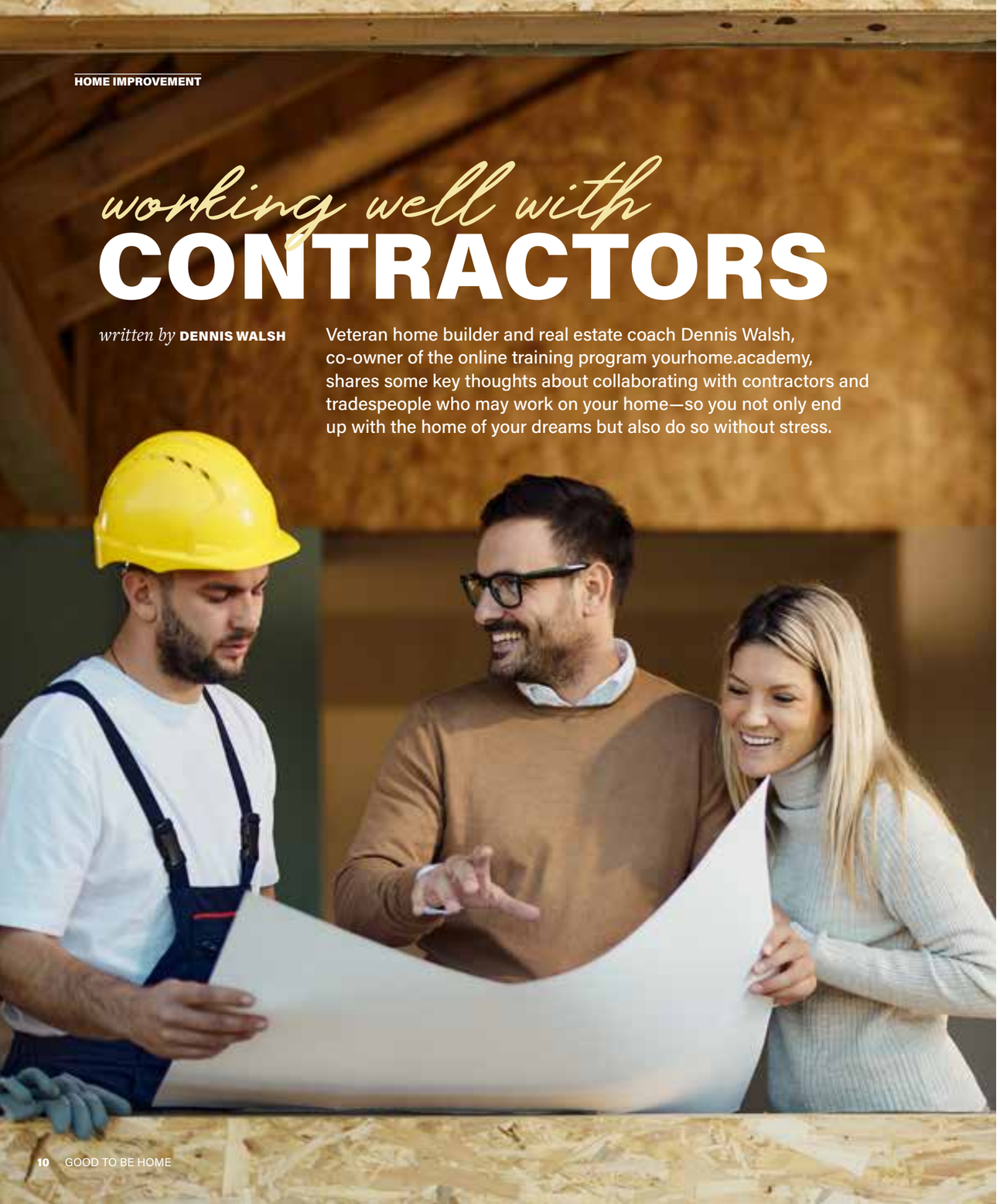
Every project you take on, whether it's a kitchen upgrade or a new water heater, adds to your home's history and potential value. So whatever you do to improve your spaces, it's important to keep track of it. Create a folder or digital file to store receipts, warranties, and contractor information so you can stay organized. This will show buyers all the care and attention you've put into your property. Moreover, these detailed records can streamline future appraisals and inspections since you'll have everything ready to go.

Getting your home in showing shape doesn't actually require turning it into a perfect showroom. It's more about maintaining what you own, developing good habits, and making intentional updates gradually. This approach helps protect your investment, making your space feel cozy and welcoming today and more sellable tomorrow.

working well with CONTRACTORS

written by **DENNIS WALSH**

Veteran home builder and real estate coach Dennis Walsh, co-owner of the online training program yourhome.academy, shares some key thoughts about collaborating with contractors and tradespeople who may work on your home—so you not only end up with the home of your dreams but also do so without stress.



Communicate often

Whether it's with a specialty contractor or the general contractor, there should be an established line of communication. Too often, a homeowner jumps in and sends a message through anyone they can find on the job—and too often that message either gets lost in the shuffle or gets misinterpreted and shared incorrectly with someone in charge.

So the lesson here is to establish right up-front how communication is to be properly handled and with whom—and make sure that's exactly how it happens. Further, I would suggest that all key communications are recorded somehow in writing, whether it be in the form of an email or text or some other agreed-upon system.

Establish regular updates

An approach used by many professional contractors is to not only establish a consistent point of contact but also schedule a weekly appointment for a call or meeting to review questions, selections, and the progress of the project. I found this highly effective in my custom building and remodeling business. Unless there was something that appeared to be an emergency, our customers would keep notes of questions to review during their weekly update call or job-site meeting.

Identify a process for changes and selections

Even when you know the correct point of contact, it's important to establish the process and paperwork that will be used to quote any pricing details and how and when any additional costs will be paid; you should also give us a permanent record of this.

The same thing applies to selections. When and how do we choose colors, finishes, and details of things like roofing, siding, cabinets, flooring, fixtures, and more? Are all selections finalized prior to the start of the project? Or is there a timetable set up to finalize these selections at different points as the project moves forward? These are important concerns and need to be established right from the start.

Make decisions and selections promptly and on time

As a custom builder, I lived through far too many situations where my customers kept procrastinating and caused delay after delay by not finalizing selections on time. In some cases, there were significant lead times for items like cabinets, specialty flooring, tile, appliances, and such. Delays to the project not only are frustrating for the customer but also become very expensive for the contractors.

What happens is many people freeze in their tracks with so many options to choose from, so they experience decision-making burnout. What I would tell them at some point early on is that there's no such thing as one best overall choice; there are any number of great choices that will work fine.

Stay the heck out of the way

I can tell you as a contractor that a lot of well-meaning clients love to visit, stand around, and even help out by holding the ends of boards we're cutting—they just generally find ways to be part of the fun.

Unfortunately, we really don't need their help! More often than not, they're just getting in the way, slowing the project down, and creating safety issues. In spite of their best intentions, all they're doing is making it more difficult for us to get our work done.

So if you don't have anything better to do at home, please just get the heck out of the house and come back later.

ADOBE FIREFLY

Don't get "while you're at it" disease

This is a common affliction that strikes some people whenever they have construction workers around.

Here's how it happens: An electrician is working on some wiring, and the homeowner comes up and says, "Hey, while you're at it, could you run some wiring over to the other side of the room and add another receptacle there by the window?" Or the plumber is running a gas line to the fireplace and they ask, "While you're at it, would you take another gas line out to the back corner of the house for a barbecue grill?" And the special requests go on.

Unfortunately, what some homeowners are actually saying is "Since you're already here doing this, could you also do this extra work for free?" The appropriate question is "How much will it cost if you were to add this extra work while you're already here on the project?" Contractors will appreciate it when you don't make them feel as if you're trying to take money out of their pockets.

I hope you find this list of suggestions helpful as you prepare to jump into the swirling waters of home remodeling!

For more info, visit **yourhome.academy**

HARDWARE:
The Jewelry of Your Home

written by **ANDRE RIOS**

In recent years, minimalist features like plain Shaker cabinets and seamless doors have dominated interior design. As clean-lined and contemporary as these features may be, it might be time to reconsider some previously overlooked elements that are now back in vogue: statement-making hardware. From vibrant cabinet handles to visually striking drawer pulls and bold new takes on knobs, it's brimming with design potential.

The key question is: Are you underutilizing it? This summer, open the door to hardware that's more than just functional, serving instead as a focal point that elevates your home's overall style.

UNUSUAL TWISTS

Small features can make a big impact, and today's hardware trends reflect that. Consider embracing bolder colors, unexpected shapes, and artful patterns on your doors, cabinets, and drawers. But there's no need to overhaul every room. To experiment with style, install pieces like oversized handles that span the length of a cabinet or hand-painted floral knobs in one area, such as your pantry or under-sink cabinets.

SIMPLE SOPHISTICATION

For a more traditional aesthetic, replace builder-grade or plain hardware with an elegant alternative like matte-black metal or brushed brass. These finishes catch the light in modern ways and are available in a range of alluring styles. Focus on areas guests will notice and interact with, such as your front door handle, living room armoire, and kitchen cabinetry. Even in classic silhouettes, quality materials can make a refined impression.

GEM TONES

To add dramatic flair, opt for hardware in bold and bright hues. For instance, liven up a bathroom filled with dark walnut cabinetry by swapping in jade-green knobs, or introduce a stately feel to a home office with sapphire-blue crystal doorknobs. To ensure that these vivid colors feel cohesive and not out of place, pull inspiration from existing accents in the room, such as vibrant wall art or subtle tones in stone countertops. When chosen with care, jewel-toned hardware will elevate any space to another level of color and shine.

RESTORED ANTIQUES

Certain design elements never go out of style. Case in point: antique keyhole covers, wrought-iron door knockers, and vintage ring pulls offer timeless appeal. You might uncover treasures at local thrift shops or by repurposing old furniture you already own since many vintage pieces just need a polish to shine again. To add regional character, incorporate elements inspired by your home's location and history, such as Scandinavian motifs in Minnesota, art deco features in New York, or fleur-de-lis accents in Louisiana.

WONDERFUL WOOD

Does the term "hardware" only bring to mind metal pieces? If so, don't dismiss wood hardware, which, while more common on dressers and bedside tables, can also add warmth and texture to kitchens and bathrooms. Choose a tone-on-tone look for understated elegance, or create color contrast (e.g., light beech against dark mahogany) for a playful twist. To make the most of wood's natural beauty, skip the paint and opt for a clear finish that preserves the grain and ensures durability.

But you don't need to stop there. Once you've added a little fashion to these functional pieces, consider elevating other overlooked accents, such as switch plates, doorway trims, or lighting. These subtle upgrades can help you create a breathtaking look that pulls any space together—and transforms your home into a treasure trove of style.

best of the BRUNCH

recipes by **SUZANNE VIZETHANN**
photography by **KELLY BERRY**

4 Servings

SUMMER SQUASH OMELET *with ricotta*

This is the kind of dish you make for yourself and feel really good about it. It's light, and is an easy way to make an omelet thanks to a little help from the oven.

Ingredients:

3 eggs

⅓ cup heavy cream

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided

2 summer squash, shaved with a peeler

Sea salt

½ cup fresh ricotta

Freshly ground black pepper

1 red chile, seeds removed, minced

½ cup mixed fresh herbs, such as basil, chives, and parsley

1 lemon, zested and juiced

Freshly grated Parmesan cheese

NOTE

The trick to good eggs is getting the pan to the right temperature. This takes a bit of practice, but the butter will let you know immediately if the pan is too hot. Practice a few times by putting cold butter in a preheated skillet.

Instructions:

1/ Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

2/ Place the eggs and cream in a small bowl. Use a fork to break up the eggs and stir until the eggs are completely liquid.

3/ Preheat an 8-inch nonstick, oven-safe skillet over medium heat for about 30 seconds. Add the butter and 1 tablespoon of olive oil. The butter should start to sizzle but not brown. If butter starts to brown, the pan is too hot, and you will need to start over. If the butter barely melts, then the pan is too cold.

4/ Add the shaved squash and then the egg mixture. Add salt to taste and place the omelet pan in the oven for 3 to 4 minutes or until the eggs are just set.

5/ Remove from the oven and add the ricotta to the center. Season with more salt and the pepper, then, using a rubber spatula, lift under the omelet and fold in half and slide onto a plate.

6/ Toss the minced chile, herbs, lemon zest and juice, and remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil in a small bowl to combine. Pour over the finished omelet and sprinkle with plenty of Parmesan cheese.

Recipes from *Brunch Season: A Year of Delicious Mornings from the Buttermilk Kitchen* by Suzanne Vizethann. Gibbs Smith, 2025. Photography by Kelly Berry.

Scan the QR Code *for the full cookbook.*

heirloom TOMATO TOASTS

4 Servings

Summer tomatoes are just the best, and these toasts are a perfect way to celebrate them. We don't often think of tomatoes as a fruit, but they are, and the acidity and sweetness of the marinated berries play beautifully with them.

Ingredients:

4 to 5 heirloom slicer tomatoes, sliced ¼ inch thick

1 shallot, minced

1 cup blueberries, blackberries, or cherries (or mixture of all three)

1 to 2 teaspoons salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

¼ cup sherry vinegar

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon granulated sugar

4 or 5 garlic cloves, smashed

1 stick unsalted butter, room temperature

1 to 2 baguettes, cut in half lengthwise

1 pound burrata or good-quality mozzarella

Fresh herbs of choice (basil, dill, tarragon)

Sea salt

Instructions:

1/ In a large bowl, toss the tomatoes, shallot, and berries together with the salt, pepper, vinegar, oil, and sugar. Let sit until the tomatoes have released their liquid and the shallots are softened, 20 to 30 minutes. Taste for seasoning.

2/ In a small bowl, combine the garlic and butter; set aside. Grill or toast the baguette pieces for 1 to 2 minutes, until lightly browned. Spread generously with the garlic butter and grill for about 30 seconds (you can also do this under a broiler).

3/ Spread the burrata onto the warm bread and top with the marinated tomato-berry mixture. Drizzle the remaining juice from tomato-berry mixture over the top and garnish with fresh herbs and sea salt.

8 to 10 Servings

BABY VIDALIA CASSEROLE *with bacon*

This is a dish we always had on the table growing up, most commonly paired with a steak my dad would grill. This also goes great with eggs. You can use regular Vidalia onions if you can't find baby Vidalias.

Ingredients:

¼ pound (about 1 cup) bacon, sliced

2 pounds baby Vidalia onions, green tops cut off and reserved

¼ stick unsalted butter

4 to 5 sprigs whole thyme, plus more for garnish

3 tablespoons heavy cream

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

36 whole wheat Ritz crackers, blended in a food processor

Instructions:

1/ Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

2/ Cook the bacon in a large sauté pan over medium-low heat until it renders and is crispy. Drain the bacon on paper towels and then crumble.

3/ Slice the baby Vidalias in half lengthwise and slice into half-moons. Place in the pan with the bacon fat, add the butter, thyme, and cream, and sauté until limp, but not brown. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Remove thyme sprigs and discard.

4/ In a casserole dish, layer half of the onions, crumbled bacon, cheese, and the cracker crumbs. Repeat layers. Bake for 20 minutes, or until lightly browned. Garnish with sliced reserved green tops and fresh thyme sprigs.

chocolate-hazelnut STICKY CAKE

This is a version of the Swedish sticky cake called kladdkaka, which is very similar to a brownie. The key here is to not cook it too long.

Makes 8 to 10 slices

Ingredients:

1 stick unsalted butter, melted, plus more butter for greasing the pan

1⅓ cups granulated sugar

2 eggs

1 teaspoon hazelnut extract

½ cup cocoa powder, sifted

⅔ cup all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon salt

Powdered sugar, for serving

¼ cup toasted hazelnuts, lightly chopped, for serving

Instructions:

1/ Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Grease a 9-inch round cake pan with butter.

2/ In a medium bowl, whisk the butter, sugar, eggs, and hazelnut extract until the mixture is fully combined. Whisk in the cocoa powder, flour, and salt.

3/ Pour the cake batter into the prepared pan and smooth out into an even layer. The batter will be thick.

4/ Bake for 20 minutes or until the top has hardened and has started to crack. The center should still be soft and gooey, but it will harden as it cools.

5/ Serve with a dusting of powdered sugar and toasted hazelnuts.

NOTE This also pairs well with [the cookbook's] homemade Whipped Cream.

TRANSFORMING THE *HEART OF THE HOME*

interview with **LINDSAY OLSON**
written by **ALLISON GOMES**
photography by **SHELBY BOURNE**

Lindsay Olson, owner of Lulu Designs, shares how she completely transformed a small, outdated kitchen for a busy family of six in Huntington Beach, California.

How did you get started in interior design?

I was always creative but at around five or six years old decided that I wanted to go to business school. So I did and after graduation got an internship in real estate. I loved seeing the houses but hated the sales side of it. I ended up meeting a developer, and we started flipping houses together because I had an eye for design and noticed when something felt off about a house and what needed to change. I didn't have the confidence to know *why* what I was doing was working, but it was clearly helping him sell the houses quickly. This was something I wanted to pursue further, so I went to school at night for interior design and got my degree. I've been doing it ever since.

Would you describe your design philosophy?

I'm all about blending function and form. I can make anything look beautiful, but it must work well for my clients. If it doesn't, then I haven't done my job. Those two elements are what I strive for every day in every project, along with client satisfaction. I've been doing this for around twenty-four years now, and for some people, I'm on their fourth or fifth room or even their third or fourth house. I'm in a relationship business, and that repeat business is so important.

You're considered a kitchen expert. What's your general approach to designing this space?

I always start with a client questionnaire to understand how they use the kitchen, whether it's primarily for just heating quick meals or making everything from scratch. From there, I can plan the layout and working triangle between the stove, fridge, and sink based on how the kitchen is used. If they're not cooking every day, I can separate zones or make it more of a showpiece; if they're in there constantly, it needs to become a workhorse. But I also always think long-term. Even if a client doesn't cook, the next homeowner might, so it has to work for anyone.

The marble's mix of cool and warm tones inspired the palette I used in the rest of the space. I wanted both to coexist since I feel like many kitchens lean too white and gray.

What were the goals for this particular kitchen renovation?

This client, a doctor, said from day one, "I hate my kitchen. It's got this ugly green granite and a random wall—I don't know why it's here." Her wish list ended up being simple: get rid of the green, make the design classic because she doesn't want to redo it again, and keep the space beautiful but functional for her lifestyle. She's a mom of four and runs a catering business, so she uses her kitchen constantly. She needed a space that would work hard and also look great since it's visible from the front door.

We ended up removing a wall and adding an archway to the kitchen from the entry, which opened up the space completely and gave full access to it. Now she can sit eight people at the island, which is essential for a family of six who also have other family members and friends visiting all the time. The cabinets also needed to handle the wear and tear that will naturally come with how heavily the family uses the space, so I didn't want white paint that would chip and need to be touched up. We went with white oak cabinets, which, even though they've been on trend, aren't time-stamped to 2026 and can take more of a beating than paint.

The island is stunning and clearly takes up a large part of the space. Would you tell us more about it?

Like I mentioned, it needed to seat at least eight people, so it had to be around seven by fourteen feet. When I went with my client to look at slab options for the counter, she fell in love with the marble. But this type of stone is a different animal because of the veining, so we needed to purchase four slabs to make it all line up, which was so worth it.

With marble, you also have the opportunity to create a really cool edge detail that you can't with ceramic countertops since they need to have a square edge. Because we were using this stone, I wanted to do something a little different that would be more of a conversation starter. I worked with my fabricator to come up with the design, and we were all so happy with the final product. If we had just kept it all square, it would have been a missed opportunity.

Did that marble have any influence on the rest of your design choices?

Yes, the marble's mix of cool and warm tones inspired the palette I used in the rest of the space. I wanted both to coexist since I feel like many kitchens lean too white and gray. I made sure the gold veining was carried through to the hood's metal trim and the knobs and pulls so the space felt warm and cool at the same time. That balance helps it stay timeless.

The kitchen has two fridges, a freezer, two dishwashers, and a huge sink with two faucets. How did you fit everything in?

The client admitted later that when she saw my designs, she was worried that she'd lose too much cabinetry. But after we finished, she said, "Now I have to buy more stuff because I have so much storage!" The large island is really central to it all since it supports the forty-eight-inch sink and multiple appliances, and then we added the two fridges, a freezer, and plenty of cabinetry along one of the walls. The layout gives her everything she wanted yet still feels open.

Were there any challenges or unexpected adjustments during the process?
We originally wanted to add a mini mudroom in the space, but there's a drain from an upstairs shower in one of the walls that we couldn't move. Instead, we expanded the existing mudroom into the front entry because it leads directly into the kitchen, turning it into a more flexible space for my client. We added large cabinets in the same finish as the kitchen, so she can also use them for additional storage for the catering business they own, if needed.

Tell us about the coffee bar. Was that her idea or yours?
That was all her. On top of owning a catering business, she also has a franchise of Duck Donuts, so she has about fifty ways to make coffee: Keurig, Nespresso, espresso machines, kettles, and more. And with four kids, everyone makes different drinks using different methods. The family doesn't drink alcohol, but she wanted the area to feel like a traditional bar—just for coffee. It has a nugget ice machine and refrigerator, so it could easily convert to a bar in the future for any future homeowners.

What inspired the arch detail above the coffee bar?
We added the arch at the entry, and the coffee bar actually sits to the left of it. Everything started feeling a little too square, so repeating that curve balanced the space and made it feel intentional. She didn't need more storage, so I could cut a little bit into the available room, which ended up creating a cozier space.

Which element of this design are you most proud of?
It honestly feels like a completely different house. Removing that wall helped make the kitchen more functional and completely changed the home—you can now see straight through from the front door to the backyard. But I'm probably most proud of the fact that she sends me pictures weekly of her kids and their friends in her house. That's why I do what I do.

For more info, visit **luludesigns.com**

WATERING
DO'S AND DON'TS

written by **ANDRE RIOS**

While indoor comforts may perfectly capture the essence of home, it may be a well-tended landscape that truly makes you feel proud of your personal property. Care for your lawn and garden diligently, and its healthy plant life will surround your house with vibrant natural splendor—and potentially even add value to your home.

But if you fail to nurture these areas correctly, especially when it comes to watering, you can actually do more harm than good (and the wilting, discolored results will speak for themselves). Refresh your yard-hydrating knowledge with this guide to common mistakes homeowners make, and learn some more beneficial alternatives.

DON'T: *HESITATE TO SEEK HELP*

Underwatering can obviously lead to dry patches in your grass and crunchy, faded plant life, but how much should you actually be watering? Truthfully, this largely depends on your local climate, the species of plant you're working with, and the season. So for guidance, consider speaking with a local landscaper or gardening center associate.

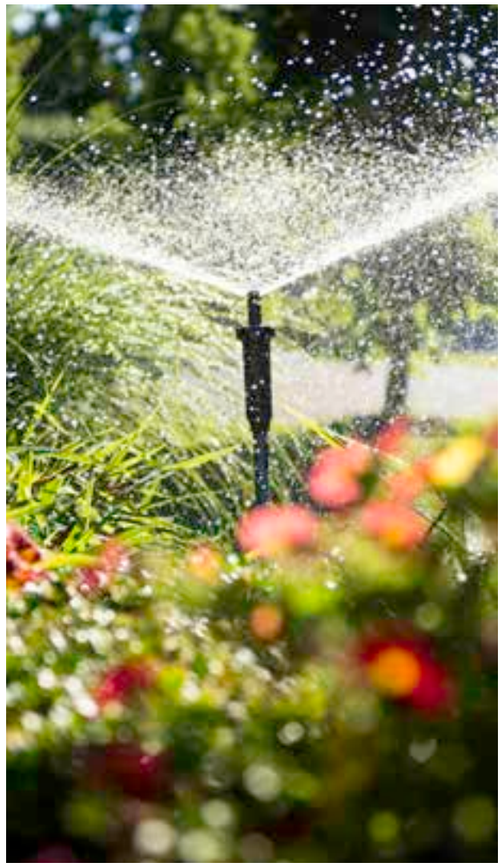
Take photographs so the expert can identify the variety of plants on your property, including your lawn, trees, and flowers. From there, they can provide exact watering recommendations as well as advice on other factors, such as disease and pests, that could be impacting its health. For additional information on healthy tree watering, you may want to consult an arborist.

ADOBE FIREFLY

DO: *WATER FULLY*

While your specific grass may have its own unique needs, the general rule is that most lawns need one to one and a half inches of water per week. Drench it deeply once or twice weekly—and, if you own an irrigation system, set its schedule to suit such timing. Also verify that the moisture penetrates at least six to eight inches into the turf's dirt each time, which will support healthy roots better than light, frequent waterings. For accuracy, use a soil moisture meter or even a simple trowel to gauge how thoroughly you drench the turf each session.

As for the plants in your garden, consider keeping tabs in a spreadsheet or notebook on how often unique species need moisture, particularly in mixed garden beds that host a variety of different flora, then adjust various sprinklers throughout your yard so every species gets a full drink each week. If you don't have irrigation installed, refer to your notes daily to determine when and where precisely to water.



OPT FOR EARLY-MORNING SESSIONS, WHICH ARE IDEAL BECAUSE TEMPERATURES ARE TYPICALLY COOLER AND THE WIND IS CALMER, POTENTIALLY MINIMIZING WASTE.

DON'T: *OVERDO IT*

Conversely, you'll want to avoid overwatering your lawn and garden, even if you live in a dry climate. In fact, this is especially dangerous in hot, dry areas because most native plant life isn't suited to heavy dampness.

Numerous consequences can arise from overzealous watering. For instance, it can lead to shallow root development and, due to settling moisture, invite pests and diseases, making it potentially just as lethal as neglecting your plants altogether. Not to mention, it's just downright wasteful. To also protect yourself from any water-overuse fees, be sure to check your local guidelines since watering may be limited—or even prohibited—due to local restrictions or droughts.

DO: *TIME IT ACCORDINGLY*

When you water is just as important as how much you dispense. Opt for early-morning sessions, which are ideal because temperatures are typically cooler and the wind is calmer, potentially minimizing waste. In other words, low sunlight and breezes will give hydration time to settle deep into the soil or be absorbed by leaves rather than simply evaporating away. This timing also allows the dirt to dry before evening, reducing the risk of plant diseases that can arise in dark, wet soil.

Try to stay consistent with your timing as well. Altering your watering habits frequently can actually damage certain plants, particularly flowering varieties and edible ones. However, you may need to revisit your irrigation system's schedule or turn it off temporarily during rainy periods.

DON'T: *NEGLECT TECH ISSUES*

Finally, while irrigation machinery certainly makes watering easier, these systems are by no means faultless. Should they fail to provide the right amount of moisture in the correct increments, your lawn and garden can suffer the consequences. So to ensure that they're working properly, look out for common signs of defects, including unexplained dry spots, water pooling in certain areas, unusual noises coming from the device, and poor pressure.

If you notice these issues or are simply curious why certain plants just aren't holding up, contact an irrigation repair specialist. Maintaining an effective watering system—whether it's your manual work or devices doing it for you—is one of the most important methods for ensuring that your lawn and garden receive all the hydration it needs . . . no more, no less.

Don't Let Hidden Space *go to waste*

written by **ALLISON GOMES**

No matter the size of your home, it can sometimes feel like there's never enough storage. Closets can quickly fill up, countertops disappear under clutter, and you're left wondering where everything is supposed to go. However, chances are your home has more potential than meets the eye. With a bit of creative thinking and intentional planning, you can uncover the hidden opportunities in every room, making your space not only more organized but also more functional and enjoyable to live in.

Along angled walls

These sloped surfaces are generally difficult to design around since they're often too short to fit standard furniture or impossible to hang artwork on. But they may just be the perfect spot for some much-needed storage. Consider transforming such an area with a custom shelving unit that matches the slant of the wall or even stacking IKEA shelves to follow the angle closely. You could also use it as a compact workstation by installing a wall-mounted desk on the flat part of the wall. (Just be sure you have an adjustable chair so you avoid hitting your head.) Whichever route you choose, it's important that you lean into the angle rather than fight it.

Behind doors

You may have one or two over-the-door hooks throughout your house, but there's so much more you can do with this vertical space. Depending on what's behind the door, it could be the perfect spot to mount slim shelves to store small odds and ends that might otherwise clutter your dresser or vanity. In the pantry or laundry room, install larger racks to hold cans, cereal boxes, or cleaning supplies, which can help to maximize every inch of usable space.

Inside furniture

These pieces can do more than look good—they could actually be used to store items you need regular access to but don't want to keep visible at all times. Consider investing in pieces with built-in storage space, including coffee tables, ottomans, and even couches, which are perfect spots to tuck away things like blankets and extra pillows. Even more, a storage bench at the end of your bed or in an entryway offers both seating and a place to hide shoes or seasonal decor. For small bedrooms, beds with drawers or lift-up storage underneath can make a world of difference, helping you stay organized without sacrificing comfort or style.

Through the hallway

This area may seem too narrow to be useful, but with a little creativity, it can become surprisingly practical. Try adding floating shelves for books, plants, or art to make the space feel intentional rather than just transitional. A slim console table can provide a convenient landing spot for keys and mail. And if your hallway is on the wider side, consider installing built-in cabinetry or a bench with cubbies for extra storage that doesn't disrupt traffic flow.

A slim console table can provide a convenient landing spot for keys and mail.

Finishing your attic may also increase the value of your home, which can help offset the upfront costs of renovating it.

Above kitchen cabinets

If these built-ins don't reach the ceiling, that unused space is actually a hidden storage gem. Use decorative baskets or bins to store rarely used items like holiday dishes or serving platters; for a more styled look, display plants, cookbooks, or ceramic pieces that tie in to your kitchen's color scheme. Just be sure to keep it minimal since too many items can make the space look cluttered. And since it's high up, keep a folding step stool nearby so you can easily access whatever you store up there.

In the attic

More than other places in this list, an attic certainly qualifies as "out of sight, out of mind," an area usually dedicated to collecting old boxes (and dust) rather than making memories. However, a finished attic can serve as a guest suite, a home office, or even a playroom for kids; the key is to focus on insulation, lighting, and ventilation so it's comfortable year-round. In addition, built-in storage along low walls or under eaves will allow you to continue storing your belongings. As a bonus, finishing your attic may also increase the value of your home, which can help offset the upfront costs of renovating it.

When it comes to creating a more functional home, you don't always need more square footage—just a fresh perspective. By reimagining the areas you already have, you can uncover space and purpose in the most unexpected places. Even the smallest adjustments can add up to a home that feels more efficient, intentional, and uniquely yours.

FUN COFFEE FILTER FUNCTIONS

written by **MATTHEW BRADY**

Sometimes, the simplest solutions in life are staring us right in the face. If you're a coffee drinker, you might just be familiar with one of them: coffee filters. Believe it or not, these multifunctional products have a myriad of potential uses. Here are just some of the ways you could be using them without crafting a cup of joe.

IN THE KITCHEN

We'll start in the room where these items can be found. A coffee filter's absorption powers can particularly come in handy when used to cover foods in the microwave, soak up grease from oily foods, and even strain liquids other than coffee. In addition, you can protect your plates and bowls by placing coffee filters between them while stacking the items. A bonus hack: If you have cast-iron skillet, consider putting a filter in it while it's drying—it will absorb moisture and help stave off rust.

AROUND THE HOME

The uses go well beyond one room, of course. For example, did you know that coffee filters make for great cleaning tools? Because they're virtually lint-free, you can use them to clean mirrors, windows, and even delicate electronics. They can also aid your green thumb—placing a filter at the bottom of a pot keeps the soil in place while letting excess water drain through, and you can get seeds to sprout by inserting them into a damp filter.

ON THE GO

It may be worth your while to have coffee filters handy for convenience when you're out and about. For example, you can use them as tidy snack holders or transform them into tea bags for loose-leaf tea. In addition, their lightweight yet sturdy nature makes them ideal for wrapping delicate items in while traveling.

The inclusion of useful tips is one of the top reasons 58 percent of recipients have referred the professional who sent them the magazine in the past 12 months.

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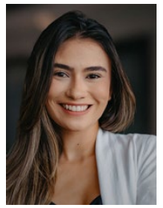

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info@remindermedia.com

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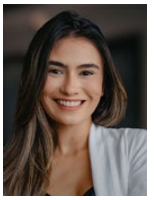

Stacey Shanner
Realtor®

Direct: (866) 458-4226
Office: (610) 878-5000
E-mail: info@remindermedia.com
www.remindermedia.com

The Shanners
1100 First Avenue
Suite 200
King Of Prussia, PA 19406

Back of Tear Out Card 2

chocolate-hazelnut STICKY CAKE

INGREDIENTS

1 stick unsalted butter, melted, plus more butter for greasing the pan

1⅓ c. granulated sugar

2 eggs

1 tsp. hazelnut extract

½ c. cocoa powder, sifted

⅔ c. all-purpose flour

1 tsp. salt

Powdered sugar, for serving

¼ c. toasted hazelnuts, lightly chopped, for serving

KITCHEN NOTE:
This also pairs well with [the cookbook's] homemade Whipped Cream.

INSTRUCTIONS

1/ Preheat the oven to 350°. Grease a 9-inch round cake pan with butter.

2/ In a medium bowl, whisk the butter, sugar, eggs, and hazelnut extract until the mixture is fully combined. Whisk in the cocoa powder, flour, and salt.

3/ Pour the cake batter into the prepared pan and smooth out into an even layer. The batter will be thick.

4/ Bake for 20 minutes or until the top has hardened and has started to crack. The center should still be soft and gooey, but it will harden as it cools.

5/ Serve with a dusting of powdered sugar and toasted hazelnuts.

MAKES 6 TO 8 SLICES

Recipes from ***Brunch Season: A Year of Delicious Mornings from the Buttermilk Kitchen*** by Suzanne Vizethann. Gibbs Smith, 2025. Photography by Kelly Berry.

Stacey Shanner
The Shanners
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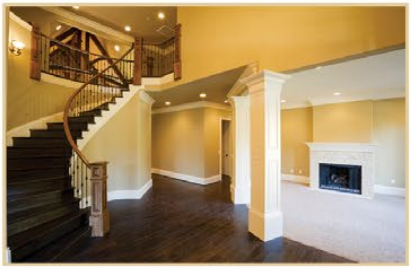

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