

Compliments of Stacey Shanner

AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

THE MAGAZINE CELEBRATING LIFE IN AMERICA

ISSUE 145

A Cozy NEW ENGLAND CABIN



Stacey Shanner
REALTOR®

WHAT'S YOUR HOME
REALLY WORTH?



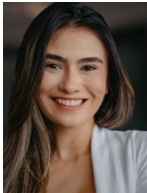
SCAN TO SEE
YOUR ESTIMATED
HOME VALUE!



Front of Tear Out Card 1



RIGATONI *alla vodka*



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Back of Tear Out Card 1

RIGATONI *alla vodka*

SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS

- 14 oz. rigatoni or penne
- 2 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1½ tbsp. Calabrian chili paste
- ½ c. concentrated puree (tomato paste)
- ½ c. vodka
- 1 c. pouring cream
- ¼ tsp. white sugar
- ¾ c. finely grated parmesan, plus extra to serve

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1/ Bring a large saucepan of salted water to the boil. Add the pasta and cook for 2 minutes less than recommended on the packet.
- 2/ Meanwhile, heat the olive oil in a large deep saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring, for 5 minutes, or until soft. Season well with salt and pepper, then add the garlic and chili paste and cook, stirring, for 1 minute, or until fragrant.
- 3/ Add the tomato paste and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes, or until slightly darkened and thickened. Pour in the vodka and cook for 2 minutes, or until reduced slightly. Stir in the cream and sugar and cook for a further 2 minutes, or until well combined.
- 4/ Drain the pasta, reserving 1 c. of the cooking water. Add the pasta and half the cooking water to the sauce and bring to a simmer, gently tossing the pasta to combine. Add the parmesan and remaining cooking water and cook, tossing gently, until the pasta is al dente and the sauce is just thickened. Remove from the heat and season with salt and pepper.
- 5/ Divide the pasta among bowls and scatter with extra parmesan to serve.

Recipe from *Eat NYC: Iconic Recipes That Feed the City* by Yasmin Newman. Smith Street Books, 2024.
Photography by Alan Benson.



AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

Dear Bill and Judy,

Inspiration can be found just about anywhere you seek it, from people to places. This issue of American Lifestyle invites you to discover just some the many destinations, both near and far, that can create a fresh perspective on your home and lifestyle.

First stop: Golden, Colorado, where thousands gather each year for a joyful winter tradition celebrating golden retrievers. This lively event transforms the charming mountain town into a hub of connection and celebration, exemplifying how a shared passion for pets can bring people together in unforgettable ways.

You'll also take a culinary journey to the heart of New York City. The recipes inside bring the Big Apple's iconic spirit right into your kitchen. Each one invites you to recreate a sense of destination at home, turning everyday meals into something memorable.

Finally, discover the quiet beauty of Rangeley, Maine. In this small town, Kevin Browne Architects thoughtfully created a cabin that embraces its natural surroundings both inside and out. Tucked among woods and water, the home captures the serenity of rural living and invites you to consider how your own spaces can better reflect your life and region.

Wherever you find yourself this season, may these articles encourage you to embrace the character of each place you encounter, whether it's across the country or right at home. As always, it's a pleasure to send you this magazine.

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COURTESY OF VISIT GOLDEN



A GOLDEN CELEBRATION

Written by **LJ Ramos**



The city of Golden, Colorado, honors this fair-haired four-legged friend every February with a day of celebration, Goldens in Golden.

into a fluffy phenomenon that the city has dubbed the largest unofficial gathering of this breed in the world.

A RECORD-SETTING RETRIEVER AFFAIR

In 2026, over 16,000 people descended on this Denver suburb (population: 20,000) with over 5,500 goldens, both record-high numbers for the event. The attendees reportedly came from forty-four states and from countries as far away as Taiwan and New Zealand, showing just how buzzworthy Goldens in Golden has become. To accommodate the throngs, the organizers doubled the length and number of vendors.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Activities are available here for the whole family, from entertainment, contests, parties, and photo-ops to dog-friendly restaurants, retail shops, and trails. And feel free to shop to your heart's

Dogs are Americans' most popular pets, being in almost 50 percent of homes. One of the most beloved breeds is golden retrievers, which combine friendliness, smarts, and loyalty.

Appropriately, the city of Golden, Colorado, honors this fair-haired four-legged friend every February with a day of celebration, Goldens in Golden. Started in 2019 as a small get-together to honor National Golden Retriever Day (February 3), it has since blossomed



content since a portion of proceeds from the sale of event merchandise are donated to local pet nonprofits.

To attend this pup party in the future, keep a few important details in mind. RSVPs are requested so the city can plan properly, and it's held rain or shine, so prepare accordingly for Colorado winter weather. In addition, its primary thoroughfare, Washington Avenue (home of its famous Welcome Arch), is closed for the occasion, so take advantage of the free shuttles.

Nothing warms winter like the wagging tails and unbridled joy of dogs. If you love golden retrievers, consider heading to the Denver area for this day that's filled with fun and joy for both humans and animals alike.

For more info, visit visitgolden.com/goldens-in-golden

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A GLASS craftsman

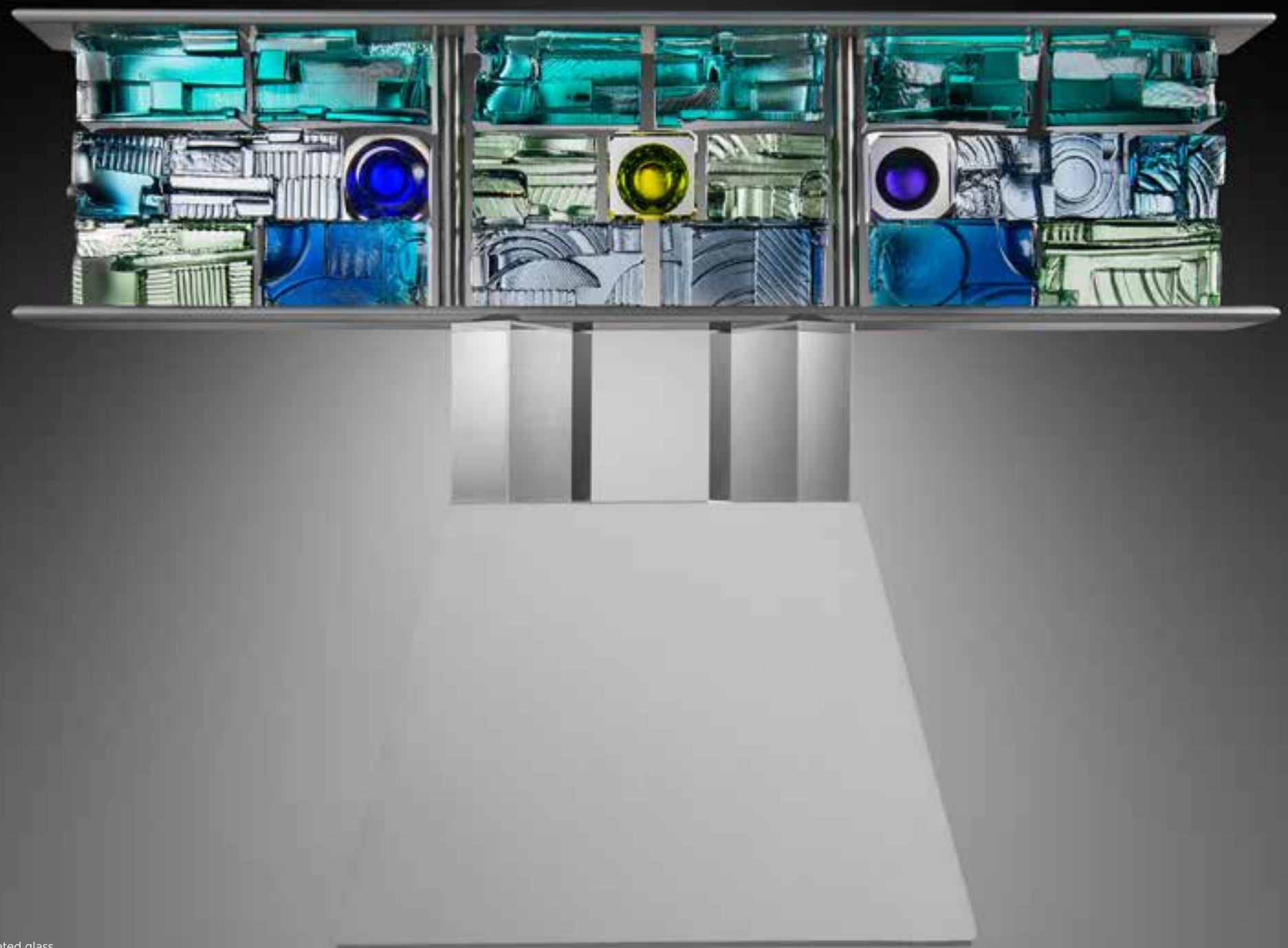
Interview with **Michael Mikula**
Written by **Matthew Brady**
Photography courtesy of **Dan Fox / Lumina Studio**

Cleveland-based glass sculptor **Michael Mikula** discusses the artistic and architectural influences behind his one-of-a-kind pieces.

What drew you to being an artist?

I grew up in rural western New York in a family that worked in timbering and farming, but I knew early on that I wanted to be an artist. As the first in my family to head off to college, I relied heavily on my high-school art teacher, John Paul Wolfe, for guidance. He suggested the Cleveland Institute of Art, a smaller private art school. As someone coming from a small rural high school, I knew immediately that it was a good fit.

I enrolled thinking that industrial design would be my major. However, I realized that while I was a good designer, I wanted to be more hands-on. So I switched my major to glass, earned my undergraduate degree, and immediately began working out of the studio of my glass professor, Brent Kee Young. He taught me how to think deeper and has been a true mentor.



MOON TEMPLE TRIPTYCH
2026
28 X 7.5 X 3 inches
Mold formed blown, cut, faceted glass,
anodized aluminum, stainless steel,
presented on acrylic risers.



You call your art “architectural blown glass.” Would you elaborate?

I’ve always been fascinated by architecture and in high school briefly considered that profession. Now, whenever I travel for art fairs and exhibitions, I visit historic buildings and photograph architectural details. My current body of work is heavily inspired by this ongoing research.

In addition, several years ago I took a monthlong trip to Barcelona, London, Paris, and Nimes, France. Seeing ancient structures like the Pont du Gard in France and the masterworks of architect Antoni Gaudi in Barcelona profoundly shaped me. In Europe, architectural history is integrated into daily life. That sense of continuity and scale also contributes to the evolution of my sculptural work.

Tell us about your studio and materials:

My studio is located in a former factory space in midtown Cleveland. I source graphite locally and shape it into molds. For glass, I use cullet—pre-melted glass—because it’s cleaner and more efficient to melt in my own glass furnace. To add color, I purchase bars of colored glass formulated to be compatible with the clear cullet. I think of it



WAVELENGTH
2022
10 X 10 X 5 inches
Blown, cast, cut and faceted glass.
One of a kind.

like a painter buying tubes of paint. Some of my sculptures incorporate many colors.

Is color secondary to form in your craft or vice versa?

Color and form are inseparable in my work. Color draws people in; form sustains their attention. The graphite molds create intricate exterior geometry, while the interior of the blown form remains fluid and organic. Light transforms negative space into positive form, creating dynamic visual shifts.

What’s your process for creating the glass?

Once I have an idea, thumbnail sketches are made and worked into scale drawings.

From there, I compose the graphite molds using various cutting, grinding, and sculpting tools. I then set the molds in place on the floor surrounded by concrete blocks, creating a frame to hold the mold parts in place.

Next is the glass blowing. A layer of colored glass is melted onto the end of the blow pipe, followed by adding successively thicker layers of clear glass, gathered out of the furnace at 2,100 degrees. Once I have the desired amount of glass, I quickly place it into the mold, inflating and expanding the molten glass into every crevice.

That blown form is then placed into a kiln to cool. Once it reaches room temperature,



**POLYCHROMATIC
HANUKKIAH**
2024
18 x 6 x 3 inches

I cut it apart, grind and polish those individual elements, and recompose them into the sculptural design.

Do you do everything yourself?

I'm essentially a one-man operation, though I hire metal fabricators and assistants while blowing larger forms and later for polishing components. For some time now, I've been finishing work in my studio after blowing glass off-site, but I'm now installing my own furnaces again. That will give me greater creative control and flexibility.

How long does a piece take from start to finish?

From conception to completion, a sculpture or commissioned piece can take weeks or even months. I follow where the design process takes me, as needed.

What tools are essential to your work?

In addition to carved molds, I use traditional glass-blowing hand tools, essentially unchanged for centuries, but also adapt tools from other trades: a brick saw fitted with a diamond blade and faceting tools used for decorative glass windows. I even use a thick pad of wet newspaper to hand-shape the molten glass.

How often do you travel to exhibit your sculptures?

In a typical year, I will exhibit in about a dozen fine art and fine craft fairs and special exhibitions. I've participated in over five hundred shows across the country since 1988. It requires enormous energy to pack, transport, set up, and break down displays. Lately, I've

been intentionally shifting toward commissions, gallery representation, and online sales and fewer art fairs.

What do you wish the public knew more about artists?

I encourage people to reach out and meet artists directly and not be intimidated. Ask questions. Visiting us at exhibitions creates a human connection, making art more accessible and meaningful.

For more info, visit mikulaglass.com

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In a typical year, I will exhibit in about a dozen fine art and fine craft fairs and special exhibitions. I've participated in over five hundred shows across the country since 1988.



TWENTIETH CENTURY TOTEMICS
Each 45 X 9 X 5 inches
Blown, cast, cut and faceted glass, anodized aluminum, stainless steel. One of a kind.

WINTER RESET RITUALS

Written by **Andre Rios**



When people set challenges for themselves this time of year, it's widely assumed that they'll fail to do so for a significant amount of time. Often, the problem is that resolutions force you to make strict adjustments to your routine (e.g., longer sessions at the gym or no more chocolate).

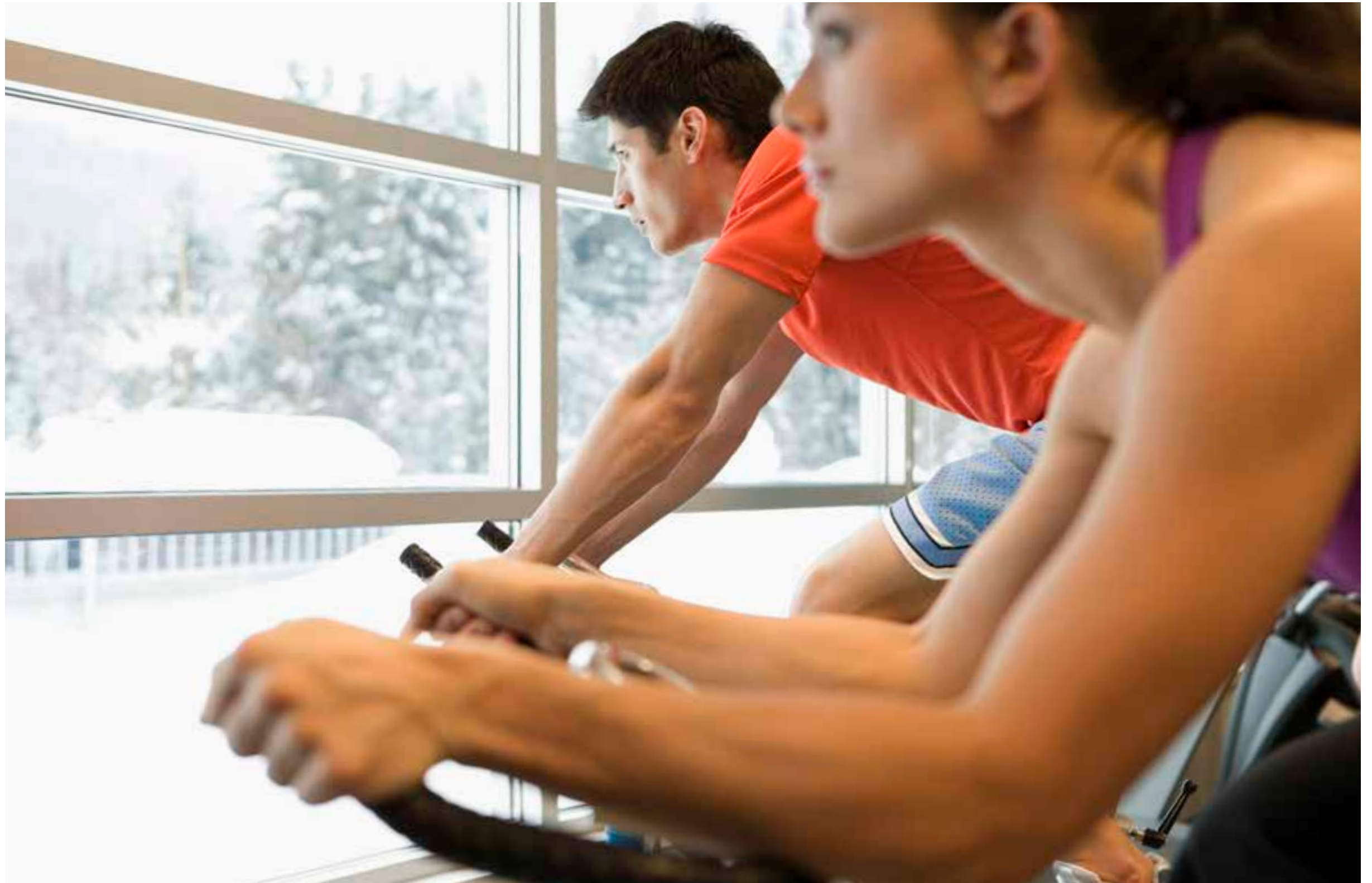
Instead, consider doing a reset in the new year. The following ideas are pleasant additions you can make to each day that can help you feel more grounded, refreshed, and—most importantly—eager to stay on course as 2027 progresses.

Block time for bonding

One of the simplest and most heartwarming ways to change up your lifestyle is to prioritize the people who matter most to you. Set aside time at least once a day for intentional and meaningful social connection with your romantic partner, children, parents, siblings, or friends.

Throughout each week, mix up quick, low-effort activities with creative ones that every participant will enjoy. This could include something as small as a check-in call or an adventure as exciting as a midweek visit to a local museum.

Naturally, your weekends may be easier to schedule around. But making a daily effort to converse, soak up entertainment, or make valuable memories with your loved ones can help you foster stronger relationships and decompress from life's stressors.





The National Park Service reports that visiting nature for just half an hour can positively impact your cardiovascular health, including your circulation and blood pressure, your glucose levels, and inflammation.

Create relaxing indoor rituals

Your home is more than just a place to decorate. It's also your retreat from the outside world—everything from your work to-do list to local traffic. The ideal antidote to all this negativity is to weave more self-care into your home environment.

That could mean taking a long bath with salts and essential oils or propping up a seat by the window to read and drink tea. Just make sure to dedicate at least one area of your home for a little R and R. Even just ten minutes of watching funny videos at your kitchen bar can help you live in the moment and forget all about what's on the calendar first thing tomorrow.

Enjoy the outdoors

The National Park Service reports that visiting nature for just half an hour can positively impact your cardiovascular health, including your circulation and blood pressure, your glucose levels, and inflammation. So when the occasional sunny, warm winter afternoon arises, bundle up for a walk in nature. Just be sure to wear winter-safe clothing, whether that's high-traction boots for icy surfaces or sunglasses for bright snow. (And don't forget the sunscreen for sunny conditions, even in winter.)

If you'd rather wait out the cold, you don't have to shun the outdoors altogether. In the meantime, open your window treatments to let some sunshine into your interiors; this is especially beneficial on chilly, gloomy days. Any way you

can incorporate fresh air, natural scenery, and sunlight into your daily routine could transform your life and wellness. Then set a firm reminder for a spring day to visit a local park, take a cycling session through a forested trail, or simply jog around your neighborhood.

Add, don't subtract

Dieting is a classic New Year's resolution, and it's famously one of the least adhered to. That may be due to its restrictive regulations and renouncing of beloved foods. These changes won't necessarily make you happier, even if they stand to make you healthier.

If you're eager to transform your diet in a way that you're more likely to enjoy and stick to, consider nutrition as a form of addition, not subtraction. In other words, try to include more healthy foods—such as nuts, green vegetables, and lean protein sources—into every meal. If this still doesn't excite you, remember that the internet is packed with ideas for making these foods as flavorful as they are beneficial. Even better, as you make more space in your diet for more nutrient-packed eats, you might save less room for dessert.

Schedule hobbies and interests

This year, try to make more time for the things you enjoy—and perhaps even take up some new pursuits. For example, read at least one new book a month. Don't feel pressured to choose highbrow novels if you'd rather take up page-turners like celebrity biographies, art books, or other special-interest works. Anything that helps you avoid the stresses of everyday life and offers an opportunity to unwind will suffice.





One of the simplest and most heartwarming ways to change up your lifestyle is to prioritize the people who matter most to you.

What if you have trouble making time for these activities (perhaps because a child's constantly tugging at the bottom of your shirt)? Consider scheduling them like appointments in your calendar. Dedating even just an hour to partake in healthy, enjoyable activities—maybe including said child—can help you overhaul your routine in ways you'll look forward to every day.

TRY A NEW YEAR TRADITION

Written by **Dan O'Brien**



January often begins with the same thing every year: a list. Eat better, save more, get organized, and wake up earlier.

You may have written one yourself. It probably felt good for a few days or weeks, but once work filled the calendar again and school started up, everyday life settled back in and the list likely faded into the background.

Lately, a new trend has emerged: People have chosen to do one specific thing January 1—and keep doing it annually.

While this sounds easy enough, it changes the tone of this holiday. Making a resolution requires you to change your life, while keeping a tradition has you begin the year the same way each time.

Sometimes it happens around food. You might plan a potluck with friends and family. Or it could be something much simpler, like a photo at the table every New Year's morning before anyone in the house has changed out of sweatshirts, taken in the same place with the same sleepy smiles. You could also share a moment, in person or over video, when everyone talks about a hope for the coming year or remembers the funniest thing that happened over the holidays. None of it takes much effort, and that is exactly why these traditions last.

If what you choose is predictable, it doesn't feel like just another task on the calendar. Instead, it becomes part of the day and gives the year a clear beginning and a moment everyone recognizes. You may notice that after a few years, people start to look forward to it in ways that may surprise you.

Cook the same meal. Take the same walk. Gather in the same place and take a picture. Because over time, the tradition becomes something else entirely: the way loved ones mark the beginning of another year together. Years from now, such moments will likely be far more memorable than any New Year's lists you once wrote down.

SWEET MORSELS, *PROUD HISTORY*

Interview with **Terry Andrianos**
Written by **Andre Rios**
Photography courtesy of **Hercules Candies**

Treat yourself to this conversation with **Terry Andrianos** from **Hercules Candies**, who unwraps the story of the company she co-owns and operates with her husband.

Who founded Hercules Candies?

It was started by three brothers, Robert, Peter, and James Andrianos, in 1910. My husband, Steve, who is Robert's grandson, started making candy with his father when he was twelve years old. His father was the last one to run the original store in 1962, and he eventually closed it in 1972. But Steve always dreamed of running Hercules Candies.

In 1977, he saved up \$500, bought some ingredients, and reopened the store at just twenty-one years old. He used the same equipment and utensils that had been left idle for five years.



Terry and Steve Andrianos



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It was started by three brothers, Robert, Peter, and James Andrianos, in 1910. My husband, Steve, who is Robert's grandson, started making candy with his father when he was twelve years old.

What inspired the shop's name?

It was originally called the Boston Candy Kitchen. Even though they relocated to the Syracuse, New York area to open the shop, they named it that in honor of where the family first lived when they came from Greece.

Hercules was the name of the founding brothers' father, and Robert named his firstborn son Hercules. Once Robert and Hercules ran the shop together, when the latter was an adult with his own family, they decided to rename it Hercules Candy. It turned out that they couldn't generate enough business to support both families, though, so Herc (as he was called) went to work for General Electric.

What did the original menu look like, and how has it changed?

The original offerings included Cashew and Peanut Brittles, Spice Hard Candy, and Spice Ribbon Candy. For chocolate, they made clusters, assorted chocolates, and other molded items.

Since then, we have essentially expanded upon these original offerings with many new flavors, including our popular Super Sour Hard Candy. We have also added a variety of bark options and even Chocolate-Covered Potato Chips (my personal favorite)!



How has your company stayed true to its past while also remaining current?

We haven't changed the original recipes in any way. At the same time, we've embraced the future by leaning heavily into social media to get our name out there. Steve and I have also used new technology to run our business and ship products all over the nation.

Why did you choose to keep making candy by hand rather than by machine?

There is more control when making candy by hand. You can also taste it along the way to catch any changes in flavor before it becomes a problem.

Does your menu change around certain major holidays?

Yes. We have many seasonal items for the major holidays, like assorted chocolates for Christmas, Valentine's Day boxes, and Easter bars.



“

In a nutshell, candy makes people happy. So if a customer arrives in a less-than-jovial mood, once they wander around and check out our unique creations, they are usually pretty happy.

Do you plan to pass the business down to your own family?

All three of our children are already involved in the business. Leah (our oldest daughter) works here full time, Cara (our younger daughter) is the store manager and plans to take it over when we retire, and her twin brother, Craig, is in charge of social media.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?

In a nutshell, candy makes people happy. So if a customer arrives in a less-than-jovial mood, once they wander around and check out our unique creations, they are usually pretty happy.

We are proud to be a traditional part of so many family celebrations over the years and to continue using our founding fathers' recipes. Christmas is the best because folks tell us that it's one of the highlights of their holiday season. For many people, the trip to Hercules Candies is part of their holiday tradition, just like trimming their tree.

For more info, visit herculescandy.com



THE GIFT OF DONATING

Written by **Dan O'Brien**



▲
WHEN DECIDING WHICH TOYS TO GIVE, MAKE SURE THAT YOU'RE SORTING COMPLETE SETS AND INTACT PIECES AND THAT ITEMS ARE SAFE FOR OTHERS.



The holidays create a familiar pressure: to spend more, give more, and do more. Yet for many households, generosity doesn't come from excess. It comes from fulfilling the essentials. Food pantries fill faster; people look to shelters for warmth. Families seek small comforts that matter. When approached with care, donating can become a regular part of your domestic life, helping you extend more kindness outward without overwhelming yourself.

Food

Most residences contain opportunities for generosity waiting to be noticed, such as food staples bought with good intentions and set aside for later. A good look often reveals soups, grains, and canned goods ready to move on. Checking dates and choosing items that would still be served at one's own table sets a simple, respectful standard.

The way these items are gathered matters; small acts of care travel with the donation. Grouping similar foods and packing boxes with order rather than haste turns the task from disposal into offering.

Clothing

As temperatures drop, outerwear becomes more than clothing; it offers much-needed protection. In addition to sweaters and other cold-weather options, check your closets and storage for forgotten or ill-fitting coats and jackets that could be passed along. Just remember: If it wouldn't stand up to a cold walk outside, it isn't ready for donation.

Toys

These items often require a different kind of attention because they hold memories and have sentimental attachment, marking stages of childhood and growth. As a result, letting them go can be difficult. However, inviting your children to participate can make the transition smoother while also teaching them an important lesson: that joy can be found as much in giving as in receiving. When deciding which toys to give, make sure that you're sorting complete sets and intact pieces and that items are safe for others. Placing small parts in labeled bags and taping instructions to a box also makes it easier for recipients.

Clearing out spaces like pantries, closets, and playrooms benefits everyone living in your home. Practiced thoughtfully, small donations become a seasonal habit rather than a scramble, a reminder that what is already present may be exactly what someone else needs.

BREAK WINTER'S MONOTONY

Written by **Dan O'Brien**

BY THE TIME JANUARY FINALLY ENDS, WINTER MIGHT feel less charming and more like it's overstaying its welcome. That's exactly why February 2 matters to many people: It offers hope. However, Groundhog Day can be more than a novelty on the calendar. You can also treat it as an annual reason to pack your bags.

A postholiday pivot point

Groundhog Day traces back to European Candlemas traditions and German folklore linking animal behavior to seasonal change. In Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club has hosted its sunrise ceremony at Gobbler's Knob since 1887, drawing thousands of visitors annually. The spectacle begins with music, fireworks, and the much-anticipated prediction around 7:30 a.m.

The date lands squarely in the postholiday lull, and travel in early February often aligns with shoulder-season pricing before spring break surges in many destinations. By anchoring a trip to a symbolic date, you can transform a weekend into an annual ritual.

Folklore festivals

If you want the full folklore experience, Punxsutawney delivers. You arrive bundled in layers and join a crowd gathered in the dark at Gobbler's Knob. The Inner Circle members, dressed in

tuxedos and top hats, lead the ceremony with theatrical flair. Beyond the main event, you can visit the Punxsutawney Weather Discovery Center and see Phil's home at the local library. Restaurants roll out themed menus, and shop windows lean into groundhog iconography with cheerful enthusiasm.

Other towns embrace their own versions of the tradition, similarly creating travel opportunities for families who enjoy pageantry, couples who love quirky Americana, or anyone who finds comfort in shared rituals. Woodstock, Illinois, the filming location of the 1993 movie *Groundhog Day*, hosts walking tours and themed events each February. Wiarton, Ontario, celebrates Wiarton Willie with a multiday festival that includes fireworks and winter activities.

Winter-loving towns

You may prefer to broaden the idea and choose a place that celebrates winter itself. In Lake Placid, New York, for instance, you can skate on Mirror Lake, tour Olympic venues from the 1932 and 1980 games, and explore a walkable Main Street lined with Adirondack-style lodges. February brings crisp air and reliable snow, yet visitation typically dips after the New Year holiday peak.

North Conway, New Hampshire, offers classic New England architecture framed by the White

Mountains, along with access to cross-country skiing and snowshoeing trails. In Bayfield, Wisconsin, when conditions align, take a trip to Apostle Island ice caves to see sculpted formations along Lake Superior's frozen edge. Many winter festivals and ice sculpture events unfold in late January and early February, giving you festive energy without peak-season congestion.

Plan your getaway

Book enough nights to enjoy your chosen activities, and schedule far enough in advance to take advantage of better pricing. A destination within driving distance can keep a long weekend financially manageable depending on lodging choices, while short flights vary based on route and demand.

Structure your itinerary around one event you don't want to miss. It might be the sunrise ceremony in Punxsutawney, a Saturday ice festival, or a beachfront dinner reservation you refuse to rush. Let that focal point shape the rest of your plans, and treat February 2 as a recurring appointment with yourself and your loved ones.

Winter will likely always test your patience, yet Groundhog Day offers a built-in pause. You can watch the prediction from your couch, or you can use the date as an annual invitation to go somewhere that surprises you.



TOOLS FOR PREPPING A SCRUMPTIOUS FEAST

Written by **Dakota Damschroder**

As much as everyone may look forward to digging into a beautiful spread of succulent turkey or ham, mouthwateringly rich sides, and indulgent desserts, the idea of creating such a large, elaborate meal can be daunting. If you're picking up the mantle this season, equipping your kitchen with the right tools can help streamline preparation to save you time and effort, transforming holiday cooking from a stressful task into a joyful experience.



FOOD PROCESSOR

Why go through the tediousness of chopping vegetables yourself when a food processor can do it in less than half the time? Simply select the blade attachment for either large or fine dice, toss the food in the bowl (cutting each piece into smaller chunks as needed to fit), and turn on the device at an appropriate speed. Plus, this versatile machine can shred cheese, make dips and sauces, and even knead dough. From creating smooth cranberry sauce to finely mincing herbs for stuffing, it will have you moving through meal prep with ease.



AIR FRYER

This countertop marvel uses rapid air circulation to cook food quickly and evenly with minimal oil, enabling it to deliver crispy texture without excess fat. Its different functions for baking, grilling, and roasting make it ideal for appetizers, vegetables, and a small turkey or chicken, depending on the size of your air fryer. In turn, you can free up valuable space in the oven for other dishes like casseroles, helping you maximize your efficiency in the kitchen.



SLOW COOKER

A slow cooker is a hero for hands-off cooking. All you need to do is add your ingredients, set the timer, and let everything simmer over the course of several hours. Whether you're crafting a hearty stew, braised meat, or warm dip, such a gradual process will allow the flavors to meld beautifully for an irresistible dish. Just as valuable, this gadget will keep food warm ahead of and throughout the festivities so you never have to worry about reheating.



STAND MIXER

For bakers, a stand mixer is a must-have. Its powerful motor and various attachments effortlessly mix batters, knead dough, and whip cream with consistent results, ensuring that everything is perfectly combined. It doesn't matter if you need to make a hearty loaf of bread for an appetizer or cookies for dessert—this appliance will be your best friend.

REFRESH **YOUR ROOMS**

Written by **Andre Rios**

While the arrival of a new year might prompt you to transform your work, health, and other aspects of your lifestyle, you can invest this energy into polishing your home environment as well. After all, it's far easier than you might think to renew your interiors and bring more style and ease back into your daily life.

Making even just a few simple, inexpensive shifts can offer major impact. The examples that follow can help your home feel optimized for 2027—and carry the excitement of fresh, updated surroundings.

Restore how your living spaces work

Starting in the central gathering areas of your home, including the living room, dining room, and formal den, focus on rearranging furniture. This is the fastest way to change how each of these areas feels. Float your sofa off the wall in the middle of a space, angle chairs toward the coffee table or hearth, and create walkways that encircle furniture so movement feels instinctive. Even small layout changes can dramatically shift how these areas function, especially when you open up sightlines to make conversation feel cozier and more intimate.

Textiles can also make a big impact on any room. A new area rug can introduce prevalent color or texture, subtly hide wear on older floors, and anchor furniture to lend it a cozier vibe. For your seating areas, swap in fresh throw pillows or lighter-weight throw blankets to signal a new start this year as well. Then layer your lighting with warmer bulbs, updated shades in a variety of neutrals, or even task lamps—no rewiring required. You could even replace builder-grade can lights with more unique pendants

for more thoughtful, inspired design. Additionally, hanging a mirror opposite a window or lamp will bounce light and visually expand compact square footage, a technique interior designers use to add depth and brightness.

Next, edit surfaces intentionally to make stylish swaps. Clear off consoles, buffets, and coffee tables, then add back only a few objects you genuinely enjoy or that have special meaning. When every item has a practical purpose or story worth sharing, these areas will immediately be perceived as calmer and better curated.

Craft a new kitchen

Updates here can shift the mood of the room without disrupting how it runs. Consider repainting your cabinetry to refresh its tone and cover any visible wear-and-tear—a DIY project that could cost as little as about \$180, per Angi. You might even opt to paint only the upper or lower cabinets to save time and money while crafting an imaginative two-tone look. For more storage solutions, roll in a moveable cart for flexible prep space that you can tuck away when not in use or shift into the dining room for serving when needed.

Hardware swaps can also make a tremendous impact. Installing drawer knobs, cabinet pulls, or statement pendant lights can instantly modernize the room without the need for expensive and time-consuming renovations. For an additional affordable lift, add peel-and-stick tiles or a mirrored backsplash panel to refresh tired walls without a full demo. Then finish the space with under-\$50 accents like fresh dish towels, a sculptural cutting board display, or a beautiful vase that earns its place on the counter.



Turn your bedroom into a serene retreat

Your place of rest should signal relaxation the moment you walk in. One of the best ways to do so is by incorporating calming colors, like muted green and soft gray. Repainting delivers major design impact for only \$2 to \$6 per square foot, according to Angi. Trying a new pigment, or even color drenching the walls, trim, and ceiling in one shade, to create a sense of cohesion and calm, especially in tinier spaces.

Updating your bedroom fabrics can also revamp the space for superior style and rest. To add visual softness and height, hang your curtains higher and wider than the window, letting the panels skim the floor. Additionally, swap any bulky bedding like comforters for thick, warm quilts in brighter textures to reflect a new season. To finish your new bed, reduce your pillows to just a few large ones and a

single patterned accent piece to marry elegance and simplicity.

Then upgrade your ceiling lights and fixtures with creative options in deep neutral shades to craft a boutique feel with minimal effort. Putting a plant on your bedside table, such as aloe, basil, or a peace lily, will add comfort and character, while scented products like candles will help complete the refresh.

At the end of the day, you'll feel these design differences in the small moments: switching off a new bedside lamp, drawing freshly hung curtains, or moving through rooms that feel lighter and more intentional. While refreshing your interiors won't make you feel like you're starting over, that may not be what you're after—you may instead prefer to retain the familiarity of home while making these impactful swaps that hint at new steps forward.



TAKE THIS **FIVE-MINUTE** MOOD REFRESH

Written by **Anthony Coffman**

Need a recharge? When daily stressors like work, relationships, and finances hang a dark cloud over your mood, practice these five steps to let in some sunshine. In just a few minutes, you could face the rest of your day with a brighter temperament.

1

PAUSE

If you feel your mindset or emotions becoming overwhelmingly negative, stop what you're doing. Then find a spot where you can safely sit down, close your eyes, and ignore stimuli like phone notifications.

2

BREATHE

Try alternate-nostril breathing. Inhale and exhale slowly, then block your right nostril before taking another breath in. Exhale through the left side of your nose. Repeat this, blocking the other nostril each time you inhale. Do this cycle ten times, focusing only on your breath.

3

GROUND YOURSELF

Open your eyes, and begin "grounding." This is the process of shifting your focus away from negativity and toward basic sensory stimuli. What does the surface you're sitting on feel like? How does the air smell? What's one pleasant thing you hear?

4

BRAINSTORM SOLUTIONS

Next, it's time to actively concentrate on turning your mood around. Think of a proactive way you could improve how you feel. Perhaps write down your honest feelings and three changes you could make. Even if you're dealing with factors beyond your control, you can at least try the next step.

5

DISTRACT YOURSELF

Finally, seek a pleasant amusement. Maybe take a brisk walk outdoors or give a loved one a big hug and spark a conversation. Avoid looking up distractions on your phone, though, since it's also a source of emails, news, and other potential stressors. You could even just enjoy some coffee or a snack. Tell yourself that you deserve it, and embrace the opportunity as you welcome the start of a better day.

RON LACH/PEXELS



A TASTE OF THE **BIG APPLE**



New York City is renowned for many things, including its iconic food, which you can sample with these selections from the *Eat NYC* cookbook.



SCAN THE QR CODE
to get the full cookbook.



Recipes from *Eat NYC: Iconic Recipes That Feed the City* by Yasmin Newman. Smith Street Books, 2024. Photography by Alan Benson.



RIGATONI

alla vodka

The creamy tomato pasta with a hit of chili and booze, penne alla vodka has many origin stories. None are definitive, but it gained a foothold in America in the 1970s and 80s and now proudly claims a position among the most loved pasta dishes in the country. Deglazing with liquor is common in cookery, but the combination of clean-tasting vodka with sweet, acidic, savory tomatoes heightens the flavors; the alcohol also binds the flavorful cream fat for a glossy, emulsified finish.

In New York, penne alla vodka is a faithful addition to Italian-American menus, and is done with class. The recipe below is inspired by the one served at Carbone's restaurant, with a juicy, oil-slicked Calabrian chili paste imparting more dimension than dried chili flakes, and tossed through rigatoni for more pasta bite.



Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

14 oz. rigatoni or penne	½ cup vodka
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil	1 cup pouring cream
1 large onion, finely chopped	¼ teaspoon white sugar
3 garlic cloves, finely chopped	¾ cup finely grated parmesan, plus extra to serve
1½ tablespoons Calabrian chili paste	
½ cup concentrated puree (tomato paste)	

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1/** Bring a large saucepan of salted water to the boil. Add the pasta and cook for 2 minutes less than recommended on the packet.
- 2/** Meanwhile, heat the olive oil in a large deep saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring, for 5 minutes, or until soft. Season well with salt and pepper, then add the garlic and chili paste and cook, stirring, for 1 minute, or until fragrant.
- 3/** Add the tomato paste and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes, or until slightly darkened and thickened. Pour in the vodka and cook for 2 minutes, or until reduced slightly. Stir in the cream and sugar and cook for a further 2 minutes, or until well combined.
- 4/** Drain the pasta, reserving 1 cup of the cooking water. Add the pasta and half the cooking water to the sauce and bring to a simmer, gently tossing the pasta to combine. Add the parmesan and remaining cooking water and cook, tossing gently, until the pasta is al dente and the sauce is just thickened. Remove from the heat and season with salt and pepper.
- 5/** Divide the pasta among bowls and scatter with extra parmesan to serve.



CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

for days

If there was one flavor that elicits Gotham's devotion, it's chocolate chip. This cookie—generous in size, perfectly round, chewy yet soft, and studded throughout with chocolate—follows in these footsteps, with an addictive sprinkling of hazelnut meal and roasted hazelnut chunks.



Makes 10

INGREDIENTS

7 oz. unsalted butter, melted	1 teaspoon baking soda
10½ oz. brown sugar	1 teaspoon baking powder
⅓ cup superfine (caster) sugar	1 teaspoon fine sea salt
1 egg	7 oz. dark chocolate, roughly chopped
2 teaspoons natural vanilla extract	⅓ cup roasted skinless hazelnuts, roughly chopped
1⅔ cups all-purpose (plain) flour	
1 cup hazelnut meal	

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1/** Using a stand mixer or electric beaters, beat the melted butter and sugars in a bowl until well combined. Add the egg and vanilla extract and beat until glossy.
- 2/** Sift the flour, hazelnut meal, baking soda, baking powder, and salt into a separate bowl and mix well. Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and beat on low speed until just combined. Add the chocolate and roasted hazelnuts and stir until just combined.
- 3/** Line two baking trays with baking paper. Using a large ice-cream scoop or spoon, measure out the dough into 10 balls, weighing about 4½ oz. each. Place on the baking trays 2 in. apart. Refrigerate for 20 minutes to firm up.
- 4/** Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 350°F.
- 5/** For perfect circle-shaped cookies, place each dough ball in a 4 in. metal egg ring and press the dough right to the edge. Bake for 14 minutes, or until the tops are golden. Remove from the oven and gently work any cookie that's risen over the edge back into the ring, so it's easy to remove once cooled.
- 6/** Alternatively, bake as balls for 14–16 minutes, until golden and crisp around the edges.
- 7/** Cool on the baking trays for 10 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. Remove the rings from the cookies and serve.



PANCAKES

on Sundays

A fixture on menus across the city, New York pancakes range from fluffy mile-high stacks to Dutch babies and thick old-school griddle cakes. While no one version reigns supreme, all conjure comfort, especially for brunch, when restaurants pull out all the stops. These Sunday-style flapjacks are light-as-air, drowned in syrup and finished with whipped salted honey butter—with a distinctive crisp edge from cooking in a generous pool of butter.



Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

1 cup all-purpose (plain) flour
1 tablespoon baking powder
2 tablespoons superfine (caster) sugar
½ teaspoon fine sea salt
2 eggs
1 cup buttermilk
2 teaspoons natural vanilla extract
4½ oz. unsalted butter, melted warm
Maple syrup, to serve

Whipped honey butter

2½ oz. unsalted butter,
chopped, softened
1 tablespoon honey
Large pinch of sea salt flakes

INSTRUCTIONS

1/ Place the whipped honey butter ingredients in a large bowl. Using electric beaters, whisk until light and fluffy. Alternatively, whisk by hand.

2/ Sift the flour, baking powder, sugar, and salt into a large bowl. Whisk the eggs, buttermilk, and vanilla extract in a separate bowl until smooth. Slowly whisk the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients until combined, then whisk in 2 tablespoons of the melted butter.

3/ Heat an 8 in. heavy-based frying pan over medium–low heat until hot (to ensure the pancake edges crisp up). Add 1 tablespoon of the melted butter, then add ½ cup of the batter. Cook for 2 minutes, or until the top of the pancake starts to bubble and the edges are slightly crisp. Carefully flip the pancake and cook for 1–2 minutes, until puffed and golden. Transfer to a plate and repeat with the remaining melted butter and batter.

4/ Stack two warm pancakes on each plate and top with a spoonful of the honey butter. Pour over maple syrup to drown and serve immediately.

Recipe by **YASMIN NEWMAN**
Photography by **ALAN BENSON**

A COZY NEW ENGLAND CABIN

Kevin Browne, founder and owner of Kevin Browne Architecture in Falmouth, Maine, details how he created a cozy wooden getaway for a family in a rural section of the state.

Interview with **Kevin Browne** / Written by **Matthew Brady**
Photography by **Jeff Roberts Imaging**

HAVE YOU ALWAYS BEEN INTERESTED IN ARCHITECTURE?

I became interested in it in high school through drafting classes. I later earned my bachelor’s degree in architecture and joined a Pennsylvania firm where I had been a summer intern. Eventually, I moved to Maine to work where my college roommate was employed.

The state became my home. It felt like a great fit for the way I wanted to live: more snow, more access to the outdoors, and a more peaceful rhythm of life.

WHEN DID YOU OPEN KEVIN BROWNE ARCHITECTURE? HOW BIG IS IT?

We’ve been in business since 2008 and now have a team of twelve. While I steer the ship, everyone’s voice matters concerning where the firm is headed.

In fact, we transitioned to an employee-owned cooperative in 2024: I literally sold the company to my employees. I decided that I didn’t want to sell the firm to an outside buyer or adopt a traditional hierarchical buy-in structure. Instead, I wanted my team, the people who are invested in the work and in each other, to shape its future. When I eventually retire, the firm will continue with people who care about it.

YOUR WEBSITE SAYS THAT YOUR WORK DRAWS FROM THE PAST WHILE LOOKING FORWARD. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

Much of my early work experience was rooted in Maine shingle-style architecture, and a lot of it looked similar. I’ve come to value projects that blend traditional forms with contemporary detailing, such as gable forms and proportions that feel rooted in history but are reinterpreted through modern windows, siding, trim, and detailing. As a result, they feel recognizable yet fresh, grounded without being nostalgic, and current without being trendy.



The home itself is secluded—a true oasis in the woods—but still only about ten minutes from the town center.

WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR PROCESS?

We work in three phases. Phase one is collaborative and client driven. We begin with sketches and inspiration, then develop floor plans and elevations in 3D to clarify the concept. Builders are often brought in early to provide pricing feedback.

Phase two is when we detail everything. We have a good idea of what the budget's going to be, so we develop how the house will be built, how materials meet, and how systems perform. Thorough documentation at this time minimizes surprises during construction. We get pretty extensive with every little detail because it's always cheaper than making changes later.

The final phase is construction administration. We coordinate with the builder, answer questions, review the drawings, and meet regularly on site—usually every other week if it's a local project.

WHO ARE THE CLIENTS FOR THE RANGELEY RETREAT PROJECT? WHAT WERE THEIR GOALS, AND HOW DID YOU ACHIEVE THEM?

They're a very active, outdoors-oriented couple. Both are avid fly-fishers and skiers. They have grown children and wanted a house that would serve them long-term.

From the beginning, they were clear that they didn't want something ostentatious.

The overall goal was to build a mostly one-level home designed for aging in place that felt like a camp. We approached that by breaking down the massing into a series of connected gable forms rather than creating one long ranch home.

Inside, though, it flows seamlessly. The materials are consistent, and the experience is unified. We also angled



The overall goal was to build a mostly one-level home designed for aging in place that felt like a camp.





portions of the house to capture specific views of the nearby pond. It's a play on the idea of separate campsites but functioning as one cohesive home.

Overall, the footprint is intentionally restrained, echoing older Maine camps, but the materials are contemporary. We used a dark-stained, thermally modified poplar that will weather over time, turning silver naturally, and help the home settle into the landscape.

WHAT MAKES THE LOCATION UNIQUE?

Rangeley is a rural area in western Maine that's surrounded by lakes and mountains.

It's known for fly-fishing, snowmobiling, and skiing. Saddleback Mountain is nearby, and Sugarloaf is about an hour away. It's very much a four-season place with long winters and deep snow, making the environment beautiful yet demanding.

The home itself is secluded—a true oasis in the woods—but still only about ten minutes from the town center. It sits within several hundred acres that the clients purchased and has a pond nearby. Part of the land is protected under Maine law, and the rest had once been subdivided into multiple lots, which they dissolved to create a private retreat.

WERE YOUR CHOICES EQUALLY ABOUT AESTHETICS AND PRACTICALITY, ESPECIALLY GIVEN MAINE WINTERS?

Absolutely. In Maine, resilience is essential. Good design here means the house performs as well as it looks. Air leakage and moisture are big issues, so we pay close attention to the building envelope, especially insulation levels above code, tight air sealing, and high-performance windows.

In addition, the cladding of this house includes a drainage plane behind it, allowing water to escape and extending the life of the materials. The clients also heat with wood, so we incorporated ample storage for drying and accessing firewood efficiently. The goal was durability and low maintenance, which is especially important for a second home in a climate where winter temperatures can drop well below zero.

TELL US ABOUT THE STRIKING ANGULAR CEILING OVER THE PRIMARY LIVING AREA:

That was one of the more complex elements of this project. Two cathedral gables intersect there, one from the screened porch side and one facing the view. Structurally and visually, that intersection required careful coordination.

The clients wanted a ceiling treatment inspired by board-and-batten textures with layered wood detailing and exposed beams. The structural work itself is concealed within it. Achieving



that openness while managing the engineering was challenging, but it gives the space its character.

WHAT OTHER CHALLENGES DID THE PROJECT PRESENT?

Site work was difficult. We first walked the property in winter, on snowshoes, before any tree clearing had happened. Understanding the views and orientation required some imagination.

Designing the driveway was another challenge. The site had significant grade changes, so we worked with a civil engineer to ensure safe access. The finished driveway is about a quarter mile long, plus another stretch through the subdivision. It's a journey to get there—but that's part of the experience.

HOW DID WINDOW DESIGN FACTOR IN?

With any project, we're always balancing the windows' solar orientation, energy performance, and view. Windows were especially critical with this project, though. Initially, we explored larger expanses of glass, but that didn't align with the clients' vision of a traditional camp feel.

Instead, we studied historic precedents: breaking up window groupings, incorporating grills, and exaggerating proportions

slightly to maintain scale without creating a modern glass wall. As a result, the long elevation faces the view, articulated through those gable forms. Meanwhile, the garage door faces south to help with snow melt. Every orientation decision was intentional.

HOW SATISFIED WERE THE CLIENTS?

They were thrilled, particularly with how comfortable the home feels. It holds heat well, requires minimal upkeep, and functions exactly as they hoped. For us, that feedback is as meaningful as the visual result.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOUR FIRM?

Since completing the Rangeley Retreat project, we've brought interior design in-house. We still collaborate with outside designers, but having an integrated team allows for a more cohesive process. Clients can work with the same group from concept through completion. At the end of the day, architecture is about relationships between clients, builders, and designers. When those align, the work speaks for itself.

For more info, visit [kevinbrownearchitecture.com](https://www.kevinbrownearchitecture.com)



DELIVERING FUN POST OFFICE FACTS

Written by
Matthew Brady

While you might expect friends and family as guests this time of year, an often underappreciated visitor is your mail carrier. These government employees become even more important with their delivery of cards and other holiday items (and the bills that follow in January). In all, the US Postal Service processes billions of mailings and packages during the holiday season alone.

In honor of the long-time institution's efforts, here are some interesting, if not downright jaw-dropping, facts.

- ★ The USPS is older than the United States, having been founded in 1775.
- ★ Its first postmaster general? None other than Benjamin Franklin.
- ★ Among pricey items that have been sent via registered mail are the Hope Diamond and \$9 billion worth of gold bullion (both via registered mail).
- ★ In the early 1900s, some folks mailed children through parcel post. The practice was quickly outlawed.
- ★ Coconuts, potatoes, and bricks can be mailed without packaging.
- ★ The ZIP (Zoning Improvement Plan) code was introduced in 1963. The first number indicates the part of the country (east to west), the next two the region, and the fourth and fifth the post offices.
- ★ Today, there are over 41,000 ZIP codes in the United States, including 12345: the one dedicated to General Electric's plant in Schenectady, New York.
- ★ You may associate the phrase "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night . . ." with postal carriers, but it's not actually the USPS motto. It's a quote from the Greek historian Herodotus that's prominently displayed on a New York City post office.
- ★ How many blue postal boxes are located throughout America? A whopping 124,000. However, the country's first ones were green, not blue.



For all that you put into your home,
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most **OUT.**



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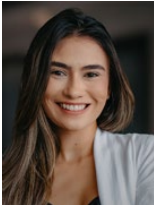
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Front of Tear Out Card 2



**CHOCOLATE
CHIP
COOKIES**
for days



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Back of Tear Out Card 2

**MAKES
10**

CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES *for days*

INGREDIENTS

- 7 oz. unsalted butter, melted
- 10½ oz. brown sugar
- ⅓ c. superfine (caster) sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 teaspoons natural vanilla extract
- 1½ c. all-purpose (plain) flour
- 1 c. hazelnut meal
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. fine sea salt
- 7 oz. dark chocolate, roughly chopped
- ⅓ c. roasted skinless hazelnuts, roughly chopped

INSTRUCTIONS

1/ Using a stand mixer or electric beaters, beat the melted butter and sugars in a bowl until well combined. Add the egg and vanilla extract and beat until glossy.

2/ Sift the flour, hazelnut meal, baking soda, baking powder, and salt into a separate bowl and mix well. Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and beat on low speed until just combined. Add the chocolate and roasted hazelnuts and stir until just combined.

3/ Line two baking trays with baking paper. Using a large ice-cream scoop or spoon, measure out the dough into 10 balls, weighing about 4½ oz. each. Place on the baking trays 2 in. apart. Refrigerate for 20 minutes to firm up.

4/ Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 350°F.

5/ For perfect circle-shaped cookies, place each dough ball in a 4 in. metal egg ring and press the dough right to the edge. Bake for 14 minutes, or until the tops are golden. Remove from the oven and gently work any cookie that's risen over the edge back into the ring, so it's easy to remove once cooled.

6/ Alternatively, bake as balls for 14–16 minutes, until golden and crisp around the edges.

7/ Cool on the baking trays for 10 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. Remove the rings from the cookies and serve.

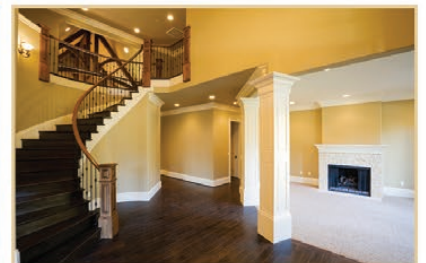
Recipe from *Eat NYC: Iconic Recipes That Feed the City* by Yasmin Newman. Smith Street Books, 2024. Photography by Alan Benson.

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