Compliments of Stacey Shanner

Good to Be HOME

ISSUE 38

DID YOU KNOW:
The magazine is typically displayed in the home for 3–4 weeks per issue. Half of recipients rank it as the most valuable branded product they receive from businesses.

let there be LIGHT



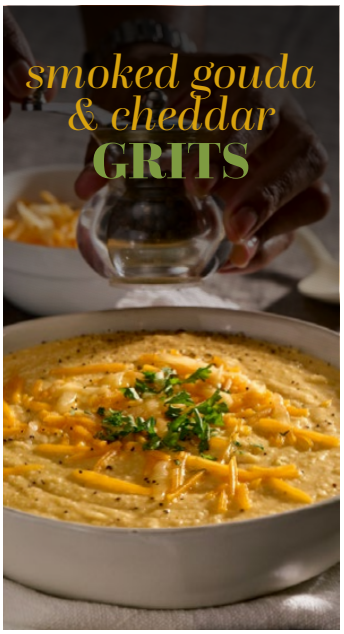
Stacey Shanner
REALTOR®

WHAT'S YOUR HOME REALLY WORTH?

SHANNER REALTY

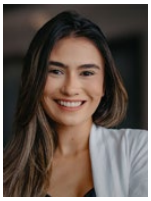
SCAN TO SEE YOUR ESTIMATED HOME VALUE!

Front of Tear Out Card 1



SHANNER REALTY

57 percent of readers save these tear out cards to reference recipes and other helpful tips and pass along your contact info to referrals.



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Back of Tear Out Card 1

INGREDIENTS:

6 c. chicken stock

1½ c. old-fashioned grits
(I use Quaker brand)

½ c. heavy cream

4 tbsp. unsalted butter

1 c. freshly shredded smoked gouda cheese, or to taste

1 c. freshly shredded sharp yellow cheddar cheese, or to taste

Kosher salt, to taste

Black pepper, to taste

Chopped fresh Italian parsley, to garnish

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. In a large pot over medium-high heat, bring the chicken stock to a boil. Once the stock is boiling, slowly pour in the grits while whisking or stirring constantly.
2. Reduce the heat to low and cover the pot. Cook the grits for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until they have begun to thicken. After 10 minutes, remove the lid and add the heavy cream and butter. Whisk continuously until the butter is melted and fully mixed in.
3. Simmer the grits, stirring occasionally, 5 to 10 minutes longer, until they reach your desired thickness. (I like mine thick and creamy.)
4. Add the gouda and cheddar cheeses and stir until melted. Remove the pot from the heat and stir in salt and black pepper to taste. Garnish with parsley. Enjoy hot.

Serves 6

Recipe from *Let's Get Into It: 130+ Comfort Food Recipes for Novice Cooks* by Davon Moseley. DK Publishing, 2025. Photography by Stephen Buchanan.



Dear Bill and Judy,

There's a particular energy that settles in during these months: the sense that spring is close enough to plan for, even if it hasn't fully arrived. This issue is built around that anticipation of getting ready, both inside your walls and out in your yard.

Indoors, practicing a little foresight goes a long way. Before pollen and dust make their seasonal comeback, use the enclosed tips to discover deliberate changes you can make, from filter upgrades to smarter cleaning routines, that can set you up for easier breathing next season.

Beautifying the outdoors usually begins with your landscaping. While waiting to tackle yours, read about a lawn-care nonprofit that encourages kids across the country to help neighbors in need while building character, compassion, and community.

Meal prep requires its own kind of readiness, and it helps to have inspiration on hand. Chef Davon Moseley discusses how he went from home cook to published author, explains why he loves building confidence in the kitchen, and shares recipes from his new cookbook.

Remember to make the most of every season by enjoying the present while looking forward to what's next. As always, it's a pleasure to send you this magazine.

Stacey Shanner



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Add a personal letter to the front inside cover that speaks to your connections. This personalization leads 77 percent of recipients to better appreciate the sender.

SHANNER REALTY

REALTOR® EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

HANDLING SPRING AIR *at home*

written by ANDRE RIOS

Each issue is filled with feel-good content that engages your audience and makes 80 percent of recipients more likely to do business with you.



Spring's arrival brings warmer days and more colorful landscapes, but it also ushers in a surge of pollen and other pollutants that can easily make their way indoors. In fact, the EPA notes that indoor air can be two to five times more polluted than what's outside, a staggering figure given how much of your life takes place at home. Managing your environment isn't necessarily complex, though. Simply pay extra attention to the areas where allergens gather.

WHY REVIEW?

Your HVAC system works steadily through the season, drawing air through filters that may not capture enough particles. A high-efficiency pleated filter—MERV 11 or higher—can capture finer pollutants like pollen. Just be sure to change it every sixty to ninety days.

To manage humidity, which can encourage mold and dust mite growth this season, aim for a range between 30 and 50 percent. Use a hygrometer to monitor levels accurately, and consider using a dehumidifier to bring levels back into balance.

Further, be mindful of when you let spring breezes indoors. Early mornings tend to carry greater pollen counts, while late afternoon may be more ideal for opening your windows and doors.

CLEANING WITH PURPOSE

Make spring-cleaning a priority, especially to target top allergen trappers like fabrics. Wash your bedding weekly, including pillow covers and mattress protectors. Curtains can also collect dust over time, so launder them or use an upholstery attachment to remove what's settled.

As for floor care, vacuum at least twice a week with a sealed HEPA machine, then follow up with a damp mop to gather what suction leaves behind. Dry dusting can scatter particles, so use a lightly damp microfiber cloth to grab more allergens.

Also, leave your shoes at the door. This simple habit keeps significant outdoor allergens from being tracked indoors.

HOME IMPROVEMENTS THAT PAY OFF

If your home has older carpeting, consider replacing it with hard flooring in areas where you tend to linger, like the living room and bedrooms. To reincorporate softness, lay washable area rugs.

Your ductwork also needs periodic attention. A professional cleaning every three to five years can clear out built-up debris, particularly in older systems. If you're renovating, consider using a whole-home air purifier integrated with your HVAC system for steady, unobtrusive filtration. Window maintenance can be effective too; reseal frames where air escapes to help keep outdoor irritants at bay.

Spring doesn't have to feel like a trade-off between fresh air and comfort. Make a handful of deliberate choices, and your home will support the season rather than resist it—something you'll notice when you feel yourself breathing more easily.

reminder**media**

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All photos inside are provided by Getty Images unless noted.

LAWN CARE *that cares*

interview with **RODNEY SMITH JR.**
written by **MATTHEW BRADY**
photography courtesy of
RAISING MEN AND WOMEN LAWN CARE

Rodney Smith Jr.

Rodney Smith Jr., founder of Raising Men and Women Lawn Care, reveals how his nonprofit has inspired thousands of kids across all fifty states to mow lawns for those in need.

Tell us how your company came to be:
I originally pursued a degree in computer science. But along the way, I realized that my true calling was helping people. That led me to start this organization and eventually pursue my master's in social work to better serve others.

How did you come up with the idea of the 50 Yard Challenge? Did people take to it right away?
The idea started here in Huntsville, [Alabama], where I wanted to motivate kids to serve by earning progress merits, much like karate belt levels. Two mothers from different states discovered what we were doing and wanted their kids involved. I told them that if their kids would mow fifty free lawns for those in need, I'd personally deliver brand-new equipment.

In 2016, their young men completed the challenge, and I kept my word. That moment gave birth to the 50 Yard Challenge, which encourages kids ages eight through seventeen to mow lawns for anyone in need in their community. If they accept it, we send them a T-shirt plus eye and ear protection. For every ten yards they mow, they get another shirt. If they reach fifty, we personally deliver a new lawn mower, weed eater, and leaf blower.

At first, it spread slowly through social media, but once people began sharing their stories, it took off. During COVID, it grew even faster as kids looked for meaningful ways to give back. From there, powered by word of mouth, community, and the desire to make a difference, it grew into a nationwide movement.

What practical, social, and compassion skills are you teaching to young kids?
Through the 50 Yard Challenge, kids are learning responsibility, work ethic, and the value of helping others. They also develop communication, time management, and even entrepreneurial skills, as many go on to start their own lawn businesses. To me, that impact is far more important than any measure of business success. We're not just mowing lawns; we're building the next generation of leaders who understand compassion and service.

Would you tell us about how it impacts the recipients?
I've met elderly individuals and veterans who were overwhelmed with gratitude, some even brought to tears, just from having their lawn mowed. It's those moments when a young person also truly realizes the impact they make. And when someone in need feels seen and cared for, that truly defines what this organization is all about.

What does it mean to you to change so many lives?
It means everything to me. What started as one simple act of kindness has grown into something that's impacting thousands of lives across the country. To know that kids are stepping up and serving their communities because of this movement is truly humbling. It's a reminder that one small act *can* create a ripple effect. That's what keeps me going every single day—knowing we're making a difference, one lawn at a time.

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



EXPANDING *the* POSSIBILITIES

interview with **REED SUTHERLAND**
written by **ANDRE RIOS**
photography courtesy of **EXPAND FURNITURE**

Reed Sutherland, a support specialist at Expand Furniture, explains how this company has cleverly reinvented household essentials.

Tell us about the founding of Expand Furniture:
It was cofounded by brothers Jared and Adam Joubert in 2012 in Vancouver. They were inspired by their personal struggles with living in a compact apartment. Then they realized there was a massive gap in the market for high-quality "transforming" furniture that actually looks good. While our headquarters remains in Vancouver, we have grown into a global operation.

How do you differentiate yourself from other furniture companies?
Our design philosophy is "Function first, without compromising form," and our style is modern, clean, and minimalist. We don't view our products as "small-space furniture," which often implies a compromise, but as adaptive systems. Your home should be as flexible as your life is!

We also hide the mechanical complexity and invest heavily in the mechanics to ensure effortless transformation. And unlike "disposable" flat-pack furniture, our pieces are built to last.

Your website mentions that your company went viral. What was that experience like?
It was a whirlwind! A few years ago, videos of our transforming tables and beds began circulating across social media, racking up tens of millions of views. It validated that people everywhere were hungry for smarter home solutions.













Have your products changed over time?
Yes, significantly. We started with a few core items like the Junior Giant Curve table. Over time, we've moved toward modular designs and specialized Inverse Murphy Beds. We constantly iterate based on customer feedback. For example, we developed wall beds that fit in spaces with low ceiling heights and expanding tables that shrink down to only nine inches!

What's your personal favorite piece in the collection?
If I had to pick one, it would be the Junior Giant Extending Table. It is the Swiss army knife of furniture, starting as a small console table or desk then expanding to seat ten to twelve people. It perfectly encapsulates Expand Furniture: giving you a full dining room only when you need one and an extra room when you don't!

However, the Coffee to Dining Tables are our most popular entry points because almost everyone can benefit from their multifunctionality. They are the easiest way to see the magic of transforming furniture in action.

Would you elaborate on your sustainability and charitable donation initiatives?
Sustainability is built into our core. By creating furniture that serves two or three purposes, we help customers reduce their total consumption. Our products are designed to move with you from apartment to house, reducing the "fast furniture" landfill cycle.

Also, we partner with local organizations to donate furniture to people transitioning out of homelessness or into social housing, helping them make the most of limited square footage.

What's next for Expand Furniture?
We are looking further into integrated technology, incorporating charging, smart lighting, and even more effortless motorized transformations. We are also expanding our work-from-home line, as more people need their spaces to double as professional offices during the day.

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

A New Chapter AT ADAIR ESTATE

interview with **SETH VAN DEN BERGH**
written by **MATTHEW BRADY**
photography by **GAREY GOMEZ**

Seth van den Bergh, founder and creative director of The Drawing Room ATL, shares how he helped a longtime client reimagine her life through design at Atlanta's historic Adair Estate, creating a home rooted in story, individuality, and emotional connection.

What's your design story?

My family moved around constantly when I was growing up, so reinvention was part of our home life. Every move became an opportunity to rethink how we lived and what we carried forward with us. Looking back, that probably planted the design bug early in me.

I initially studied biology in college. I remember venting to my mom during my sophomore year about feeling disconnected from what I was doing. She suggested interior design because of our family's long history with home renovations, antique shopping, and DIY problem-solving. I transferred to another school and eventually studied in Washington, DC, before receiving a scholarship to study interiors in Dubai.

Dubai changed the way I thought about design, exposing me to a level of ambition and experimentation that was completely different from what I had known. It also taught me that constraints can actually sharpen creativity. Budgets, architecture, and history create tension, where the most compelling ideas often emerge.

Afterward, I ran a showroom in Atlanta before eventually launching my own company. Ten years later, I'm still designing homes that feel deeply personal, layered, and impossible to mistake for anyone else's.



Who is this client, and how did you become involved with this project?

I've known this client for years. After being married for four decades, she used this home as an opportunity to rediscover herself.

She's an avid cyclist, painter, sculptor, and collector with a wonderfully contrarian spirit. Honestly, those are often the clients we work best with. At The Drawing Room, we are not interested in creating consensus-driven interiors. We're interested in helping people uncover spaces that feel authentic to who they are, even if those ideas challenge expectations.

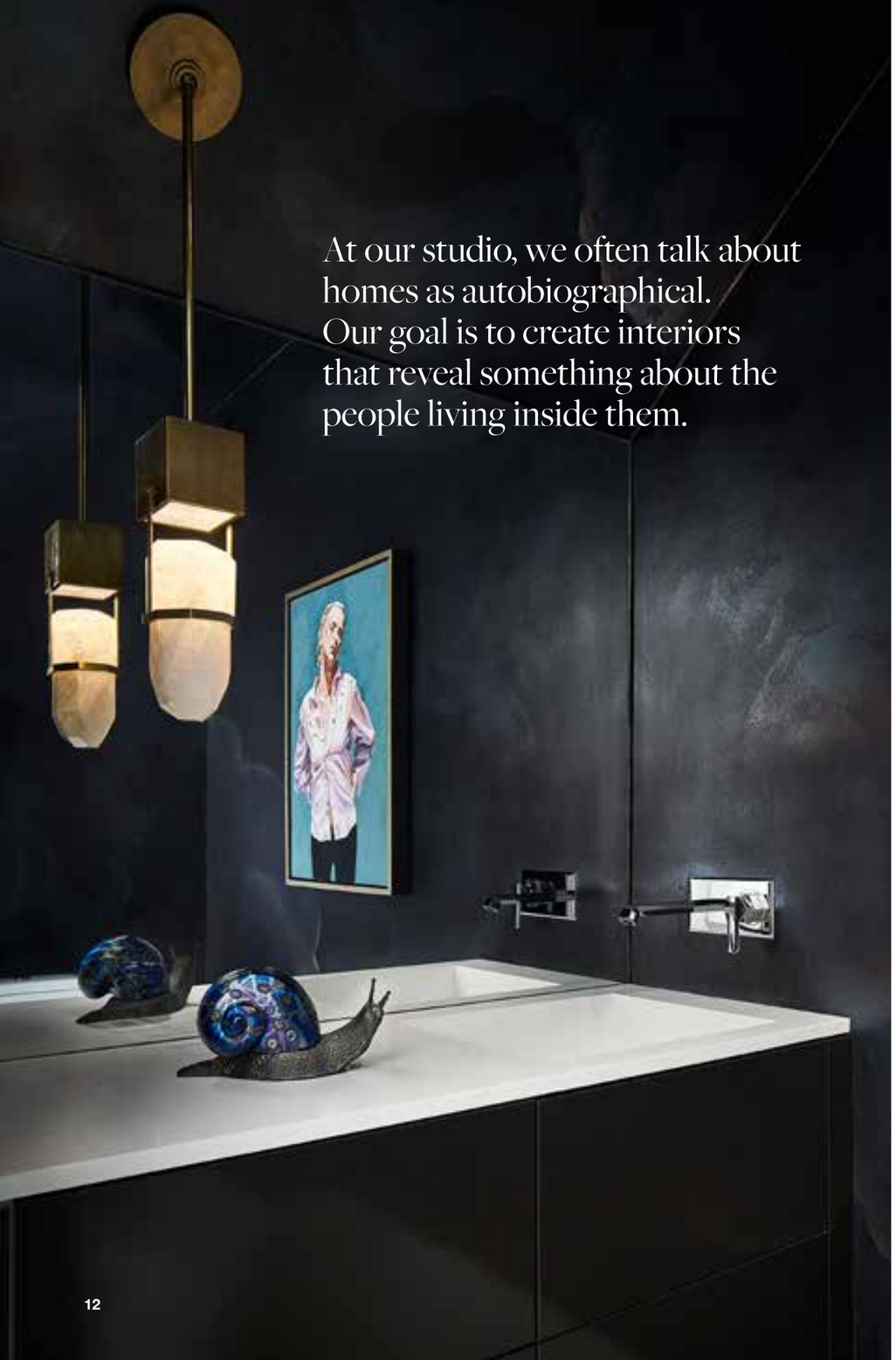
Early in the project, she leaned more heavily on my direction. But over the course of six years, I watched her confidence evolve. By the time we designed the primary bedroom, the final room we completed, it carried a softness and emotional clarity that reflected her personal evolution.

Tell us about Adair Estate. What drew her there?

Adair Estate carries this fascinating tension between history and reinvention. The original mansion was converted into residences, while surrounding townhomes borrow from its Tudor vocabulary and architectural style.

Both the architecture and the lifestyle surrounding it appealed to her. The property sits near trails, green space, and parks, which support her love of biking and being outdoors. It also brought her closer to her son and granddaughter. Equally important, the scale of the home felt manageable, intimate enough to personalize fully yet still architecturally rich enough to create moments of drama.







What were her goals for the home?

It was a new beginning, so she wasn't interested in re-creating her previous home or preserving things out of obligation. Outside of her artwork and a few meaningful objects, there was a real willingness to experiment. That openness allowed us to create spaces that feel collected emotionally rather than simply decorated.

At our studio, we often talk about homes as autobiographical. Our goal is to create interiors that reveal something about the people living inside them. The powder room here is a perfect example. Every decision carried a certain emotional weight. It became unapologetically expressive, almost like a small jewel box hidden within the larger home.

Tell us more about that room:

Originally, it had a fairly traditional *trompe l'oeil* mural featuring a fountain and garden fence. We transformed it into something moodier and far more seductive. I always describe it as a "stiletto" of a room: There's tension, glamour, and a sense of intrigue packed into a very compact space. Even the composition of the photography pulls you inward intentionally. Moments like that are important to us. We believe homes should evoke emotion and curiosity rather than simply function.

Did her artwork influence your design choices?

Completely. Here, art served as an anchor point in many ways, and many carry emotional history. There's a triptych in the living room painted by one of her former college professors. The painting in her bedroom was created by a close friend in Montgomery.

We often approach interiors cinematically. Not every object can be the lead actor—some pieces support the narrative, while others command the scene. In her bedroom especially, the artwork became the center of gravity and everything else was designed to orbit around it.





The living room feels especially personal. Would you elaborate on your choices there?

Absolutely. The built-ins surrounding the fireplace were reworked in walnut and backed with a printed grass cloth featuring a black-and-white Xerox image of a feather. That detail references a deeply personal moment involving her late daughter while she was in Santa Fe: She asked for a sign, and a feather fell at her feet. That's the kind of storytelling we care about. Design becomes far more meaningful when it carries emotional memory rather than simply a visual trend.

The room itself also demonstrates our philosophy of layering eras and energies together. There are contemporary furnishings, inherited pieces, whimsical objects, and deeply personal artifacts all coexisting in dialogue. That tension creates richness.

How did you approach the dining room?

The room needed softness. Architecturally, it was filled with harder elements, including millwork, flooring, sculptural furniture, and strong geometry. So we introduced a large, custom pleated screen that wraps the room almost like fabric drapery would. It softened the acoustics and atmosphere while adding movement and rhythm.

There's always a push and pull in our work between restraint and drama. The best interiors rarely sit entirely in one camp.

Overall, was it a challenge balancing Tudor architecture with a more modern sensibility?

Not really, because we never tried to erase the Tudor character. If anything, we leaned into it selectively while introducing moments of contrast and clarity.

We love juxtaposition. In fact, we believe that every project should contain something historical, something contemporary, and something unexpected. That balance keeps a home from feeling frozen in time or overly trend-driven.

The client ultimately embraced that philosophy fully, becoming fearless in the process. Many of our clients are empty nesters entering a new chapter of life, and there's something beautiful about watching people finally give themselves permission to live with what genuinely inspires them.



What does she love most about her home today?

Her bedroom, without question. It represents the clearest expression of who she's become. For perhaps the first time, she created a room entirely for herself emotionally, visually, and spiritually. There's a lightness and intimacy there that feels incredibly personal. She jokes that she barely used to spend time in her bedroom beyond sleeping. Now she takes lunch there.

Ultimately, that transformation is the most rewarding part of what we do. At The Drawing Room, we often describe ourselves as storytellers as much as designers. Our role is not simply to make homes beautiful. It's to help people articulate who they are and, sometimes, who they're becoming.

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





SEATING BUYING AND STYLING GUIDE

written by **THOMAS MAYE**

Your living room can seat ten people and still feel like no one belongs in it. The problem is rarely the furniture itself; it's where the furniture is pointing.

CHANCES ARE, YOUR SEATING IS ARRANGED around the television, which means every chair and sofa faces the same fixed point. That setup works well for watching, and conversation can still happen that way. But when talking is the point, a room designed with the occupants in mind tends to work better.

Placement and orientation

Before you consider buying anything new, try rotating what you already have. Sofas and chairs angled toward each other create a natural pull, the way people lean in across a table. Interior designers generally put the ideal distance between facing seats at six to eight feet: close enough to talk at a normal volume, yet far enough that no one feels crowded. In smaller rooms, even four to five feet can work if the chairs are slightly angled rather than directly head-on.

If you have two armchairs, place them at ninety degrees to the sofa instead of parallel to it. That is the same geometry that makes a fireside corner or a restaurant banquette work—and you can recreate this arrangement deliberately in your own home.

Seeking new options

Pay attention to scale. A deep armchair holds its own beside a generous sofa, while a slipper chair usually doesn't. Finally, the coffee table matters more than most people think. A round or oval table tends to work well at the center of a seating grouping because there are no corners to bump into and every seat has roughly equal access. A rectangular table can work too, especially in a longer arrangement—just make sure every seat is within comfortable reach. Leave enough room around the table to stand up without shuffling sideways, and the layout takes care of the rest.

Rearrange your seating on a weekend afternoon and sit in the room that evening. You'll notice a difference immediately.

let there be LIGHT

written by **MICHAEL RUSSELL**

YOUR HOME MAY HAVE MORE LIGHT available than you're currently taking advantage of. Before you call an electrician or price out skylights, consider how much you could gain just by changing the way you've arranged and finished your spaces.

Rethink your curtains

Natural light is free and flattering, but you may not be getting as much of it as you should. If a room has windows and the curtains hang at window height rather than ceiling height, they're making this feature look smaller and blocking the upper portion of it. Rehang the rod as close to the ceiling as the wall allows, and extend it three to six inches past the window frame on each side. Doing this will make the window appear significantly larger, according to bobvila.com.

Work the angles

In any sunny room, mirrors can do the work of moving light around, but only if placed deliberately. A large mirror placed on the wall directly opposite a window will bounce daylight deeper into the room than any lamp can manage.

Layer your artificial light

If a room relies on a single overhead fixture, you're working with one-dimensional light that flattens everything it touches. Add a dimmer to the overhead if it doesn't have one, then add light at two lower levels: a table lamp or two at seated eye height and something at floor level, such as a slim arc lamp or a floor uplight tucked behind a plant or chair.

Choose paint that cooperates

Your wall color is doing more than you realize. Warm whites and pale off-whites with yellow or pink undertones tend to work better in rooms with limited natural light, while cool blue-toned whites can read gray under artificial light. If a room feels dim despite good fixtures, the paint is often the culprit. A sample-size paint pot is a cheap way to test before committing.

When you address light as a system (what comes in, where it goes, and how it's supplemented), you'll get more out of the space you already have.





WHERE THE ***BIG PIECES*** GO

written by **THOMAS MAYE**

A large piece of furniture, such as a sofa, bed, or armoire, defines the living space it's in, compelling you to reorganize around it. Get the placement right and everything else falls into order. Get it wrong and no amount of styling will fix the feeling that something's off.









Pull it away from the wall

If your instinct is to push your sofa or bed flush against the wall to free up floor space, you're likely achieving the opposite effect. Seating and sleeping pieces lined along the perimeter create a wide-open center that can read as empty rather than spacious. Pulling your sofa eight to twelve inches from the wall (or floating your bed with room on three sides, headboard against the wall) creates a defined zone that looks intentional. The space around a piece is part of the arrangement, not leftover floor.

Anchor to architecture, not habit

Rather than defaulting to where the previous owners put things, look at where your room's fixed points are and let those guide placement. Your sofa's back shouldn't block a doorway or interrupt a natural path through the room.

Give traffic somewhere to go

Every space needs at least one clear path through it without obstruction. If you have to angle your body or step around a chair leg to get from one end to the other, the layout is working against you. Map the routes people actually take, such as from the living room to the kitchen, and make sure your large pieces don't interrupt them. A well-chosen armoire in the wrong position is just an expensive obstacle.

Consider the vertical dimension

When a room feels cluttered despite having reasonable square footage, the problem is often that all your large pieces are the same height, creating a flat horizon line across the room. A tall wardrobe beside a low credenza or a wide dresser next to a slimmer chest of drawers introduces the kind of variation that makes a room feel composed rather than crammed.

Your floor plan is a decision, so treat the placement of each large piece as a choice with consequences for everything around it. Getting it right makes your space feel more open, more intentional, and more inviting.

THE SPACE *You Haven't Used Yet*

written by **MICHAEL RUSSELL**



MOST HOMES ARE SHORT ON INTENTIONAL SPACE. The closets fill up fast, then the shelves, and before long, everything else lands on counters and floors. But the square footage you need is already there; it's in the gaps your eye has learned to skip over.

The wall above the doorframe

Walk through your home and look up. The strip of wall above every interior door is empty in almost every room. A shallow floating shelf mounted there can hold everything from extra linens to books, baskets, and seasonal items you reach for a few times a year. It's out of the way but fully accessible, and it keeps storage off the floor, where items would otherwise compete with your furniture for space.

The dead corner

Corners get used, but they rarely get used well. A freestanding shelf or a floor-to-ceiling wraparound unit turns that awkward angle into useful vertical storage that's organized and accessible. If the corner is in a living space, choose open shelving and fill it with objects you don't mind seeing.

Under the bed (properly)

Flat bins shoved under a low-profile frame collect dust and require pulling everything out to reach one item. You need real clearance, labeled canvas bins with handles, and a system you'll actually maintain. A bed with built-in drawers solves all of this—and is worth prioritizing if you're shopping for one.

The gap beside the refrigerator

In most kitchens, there are several inches of dead space between the refrigerator and the adjacent cabinetry. If the space is at least six inches wide, a slim pullout pantry unit—a tall, narrow rolling cart that fits into that gap—can slot in precisely to hold canned goods, spices, or cleaning supplies. Most kitchen retailers carry them in standard widths, and they add meaningful storage in a space that was doing nothing.

Sometimes, people mistake unused space in their homes for lack of space. Once you start looking at gaps, corners, and vertical space, you'll often find room you didn't realize was there.

HOW TO PREVENT
LIFESTYLE INFLATION

written by: ANDRE RIOS



IT MAY FEEL LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF A DREAM: THE BIG promotion you wanted landed in your lap, a milestone graduation happened, or a lucrative job opportunity turned into an unbelievable offer. These are the moments that make all your hard work feel worth the grueling effort, knowing that larger paychecks are on the horizon.

But then something known as lifestyle inflation could come along to take all your progress away. This concerning financial effect can impact your financial well-being, even when you anticipate improvement. But if you take certain mindful steps, you may be able to prevent it.

WHAT IS LIFESTYLE INFLATION?

Commonly known as “lifestyle creep,” this term refers to an increase in spending after a person begins earning more money. Once someone attains extra funds for any reason, they may make subsequent changes to their financial habits either gradually (e.g., raising their grocery and discretionary spending budgets) or suddenly (such as splurging on a vehicle that exceeds their price range).

Concerningly, spending more when you earn more is a very natural inclination; it may even seem downright logical. “Internally, you feel the need to buy something at a higher price point than you would have in the past,” financial well-being expert Manisha Thakor told CNBC Select. Look to cultural cues, and you may very well associate career growth with a big-ticket celebration like a bigger house, shiny new car, or international vacation.

WHY IS IT PROBLEMATIC?

The downsides are simple: Lifestyle inflation can deplete your heightened earnings so dramatically that, despite you bringing in more money, your wealth doesn't actually grow. As such, you could interrupt your potential progress toward long-term goals like buying a house or retiring someday.

Likewise, lifestyle inflation could work against your efforts to build a healthy emergency fund for incidentals like hospital bills or auto repairs. You could end up taking on debt to pay for these unexpected expenses as a result.

And, when uncontrolled, lifestyle inflation may trap you in a perpetual cycle of living paycheck to paycheck. Surprisingly, high earners could find themselves in such a crisis due to spending habits such as regular fine dining or retail splurges.



WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT?

Thankfully, you can take concerted steps to prevent lifestyle inflation. These are some of the top solutions you can adopt to balance your fiscal habits.

Commit to a budget: Perhaps the most useful salve against reckless spending is establishing limits. Considering your income growth, raise your spending cautiously across certain categories, such as groceries and travel.

Prioritize debts: If you have a high credit card balance or are paying off student loans, for example, direct your enhanced income toward reducing them. Doing so can help you save on interest, improve your credit score, and qualify for major investments like a home loan.

Avoid comparison temptation: Don't spend excessively to keep up with the Joneses. The image people project often doesn't indicate their true financial health anyway, so prioritize the steps you can take to achieve your long-term fiscal goals rather than trying to emulate influencers or your friends.

A POSITIVE OUTLOOK

Remember that when you achieve more wealth for any reason, you should still celebrate the fruits of your labor. After all, living with a scarcity mindset, in which you hoard rather than enjoy your earnings, is not necessarily the answer. Life is about savoring moments like family dinners and vacations with your partner, which require financial investments.

Instead, practice moderation and factor your long-term goals into a balanced wealth strategy, perhaps with the guidance of a financial professional. Be willing to spend sometimes, yet also cut back where necessary—even as you earn more—so you can soak up the perks of increased income while mitigating the downsides.



THE BEST FURNITURE **SPLURGE**

written by **THOMAS MAYE**

If you're going to spend money on one piece of furniture in your home, spend it on a sofa. It's what your household uses often, the first thing a guest might notice, and the one that fails most visibly when you go cheap.

Consider how many hours a day your family spends on the sofa and multiply that over its lifespan. A $4,000 piece that lasts fifteen years costs roughly $267 a year—less than the average American spends on coffee. A $900 sofa that sags by year three costs you money and time.

A well-made sofa can last up to fifteen years. The frame should be made of kiln-dried hardwood or steel, which industry consensus suggests is one of the clearest markers of durable furniture construction. Opt for cushions with high-density foam wrapped in down or Dacron, not the kind that compresses to a pancake within two years. You can feel the difference before you sit (a quality frame won't flex or creak when you press the arm), and you'll feel it daily once it's in your home.

If needed, spend conservatively everywhere else you can. Buy the floor lamp secondhand, wait for the dining chairs to go on sale, or paint your own walls. But when the time comes to select a sofa, resist the urge to be practical.





The popular online chef, creator of the multifaceted brand Royale Eats, discusses what food and community mean to him and shares recipes from his new cookbook, *Let's Get Into It*.

Davon Moseley GETS INTO IT

interview with: **DAVON MOSELEY**
written by: **MATTHEW BRADY**
photography by: **STEPHEN BUCHANAN**



OVER TIME, I STARTED TO UNDERSTAND THAT FOOD WASN'T JUST ABOUT EATING; **IT WAS HOW PEOPLE CAME TOGETHER.**

Where did you grow up? How did your upbringing shape your relationship with food? I was born in DC and raised in Maryland, but both sides of my family are from a small town in North Carolina. We went back and forth a lot, so I feel connected to both areas. The traditions I grew up with, especially around food, really come from my family in North Carolina, though. Food was always present. No matter what the occasion was, we were cooking.

When did cooking shift from something you enjoyed to something you wanted to understand? I was always curious. While everyone else was in the living room or outside, I was in the kitchen watching. My grandmothers and aunts didn't necessarily explain what they were doing, but I paid attention. Over time, I started to understand that food wasn't just about eating; it was how people came together. That made me want to learn the process, not just the result.

My father was the first person who taught me cooking step by step. Of all things, he walked me through how to make spaghetti—something simple, but it mattered.

You didn't go to culinary school. Instead, you studied kinesiology and later health and wellness coaching. How did that influence your work? It helped me understand the body and how food affects it. In my master's program, I also learned how to communicate: how to guide people and explain things clearly. That's a big part of what I do now. It's not just cooking; it's helping people feel like they can do it too.

When did you kick off your brand, Royale Eats? What pushed you to share your cooking publicly? I was at home a lot during COVID, just cooking and posting on my personal page. Friends kept asking where I got the food, and I'd say, "I made it." They encouraged me to start a food page. I hesitated at first. I wasn't someone who loved posting, but I gave it a try and named it using my middle name and my passion for food. People responded to it pretty quickly, with many requesting my recipes, and it just kept growing.

Your brand feels approachable by design. Was that intentional? Completely. The foundation is comfort. I want folks to feel comfortable in the kitchen. Not everyone has confidence there, but they still want home-cooked meals. My goal is to make recipes that meet them where they are—especially beginners—and help them build from there.

Your work often emphasizes community. What role does food play in that? Food is a tool: It brings people together in a positive way. For example, it's hard to stay upset with someone when you're sharing a good meal. For me, the most rewarding part is hearing from people who tried a recipe and felt proud of it or even served it to their family and got a positive reaction. That means more than anything.

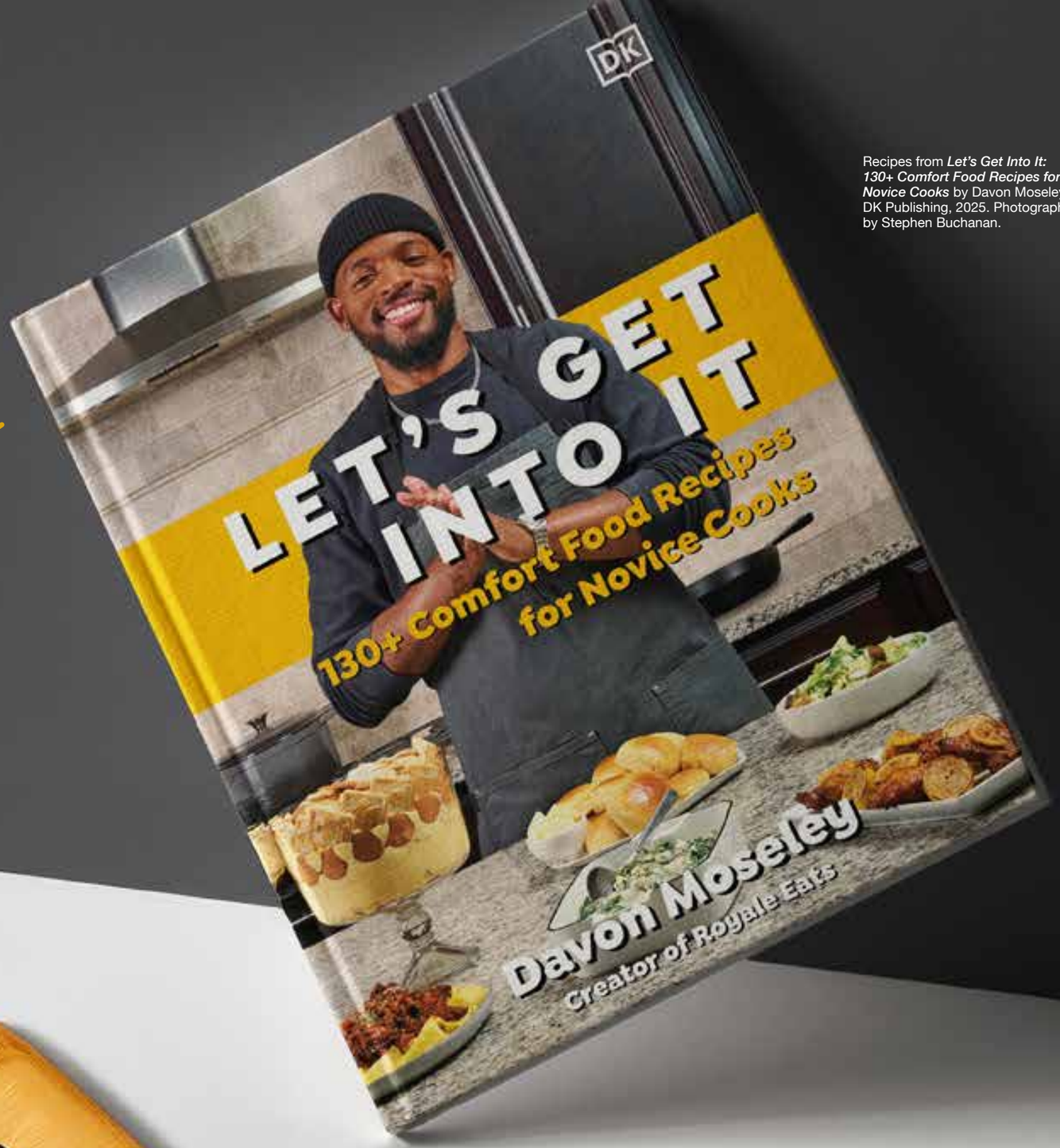
With all you do, you seemingly need to think about food 24/7. Do you ever need distance from it? Absolutely. I love food, but constantly working with it can be exhausting. Sometimes I have to step away: go out, focus on something else, and reset. If I don't take that time, I can't give everything my best effort.

What has kept you levelheaded during this venture? My mindset. I was raised to stay grounded—to never think I'm better than anyone but not to think I'm less, either. That keeps me centered. No matter where this goes, I want to remain someone people can relate to as they enjoy my cooking.

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

Keep reading to get a pair of recipes from Davon's new cookbook, ***Let's Get Into It***.

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Recipes from ***Let's Get Into It: 130+ Comfort Food Recipes for Novice Cooks*** by Davon Moseley. DK Publishing, 2025. Photography by Stephen Buchanan.



Serves 6

smoked gouda & cheddar GRITS

Growing up, I remember eating grits often on Sundays at my Aunt Patricia's house. She added so much cheddar cheese and butter that the grits were practically orange. We're not going to that extreme, but my grits are still packed with smoky gouda and sharp cheddar and are rich from just enough butter and cream.

INGREDIENTS:

- 6 cups chicken stock
- 1½ cups old-fashioned grits (I use Quaker brand)
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 cup freshly shredded smoked gouda cheese, or to taste
- 1 cup freshly shredded sharp yellow cheddar cheese, or to taste
- Kosher salt, to taste
- Black pepper, to taste
- Chopped fresh Italian parsley, to garnish

INSTRUCTIONS:

1/ In a large pot over medium-high heat, bring the chicken stock to a boil. Once the stock is boiling, slowly pour in the grits while whisking or stirring constantly.

2/ Reduce the heat to low and cover the pot. Cook the grits for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until they have begun to thicken. After 10 minutes, remove the lid and add the heavy cream and butter. Whisk continuously until the butter is melted and fully mixed in.

3/ Simmer the grits, stirring occasionally, 5 to 10 minutes longer, until they reach your desired thickness. (I like mine thick and creamy.)

4/ Add the gouda and cheddar cheeses and stir until melted. Remove the pot from the heat and stir in salt and black pepper to taste. Garnish with parsley. Enjoy hot.

recipe by **DAVON MOSELEY**
photography by **STEPHEN BUCHANAN**



Serves 6

fried FISH

My family often has fish fries to bring everyone together and eat good food. My dad would go on fishing trips and come back home to fry up the fish he caught for us. That will always be a core memory for me. Crispy fish is best served on sandwich bread with hot sauce—if you know, then you know. It's also great served with grits for breakfast.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 pounds whiting fish fillets, or flaky white fish of choice
- 1 cup yellow cornmeal
- 1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp. Old Bay seasoning
- 2 tbsp. lemon pepper seasoning
- 1 tbsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- 1 tsp. smoked paprika
- ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper
- ¼ cup Louisiana hot sauce
- ¼ cup yellow mustard
- Vegetable oil, to fry

INSTRUCTIONS:

1/ Clean the fish fillets and thoroughly pat dry.

2/ In a large bowl, whisk together the cornmeal, flour, Old Bay seasoning, lemon pepper seasoning, garlic powder, black pepper, paprika, and cayenne pepper. In a separate medium bowl, whisk together the Louisiana hot sauce and yellow mustard.

3/ In a deep, large cast-iron skillet, add about 2 inches of oil and heat to 350°F. Line a plate with paper towels.

4/ While the oil heats, coat each fish fillet in the hot sauce and mustard mix. Then, coat in the cornmeal mixture, press the mixture into the fillets to make sure they are fully coated. Shake off any excess and transfer to a plate.

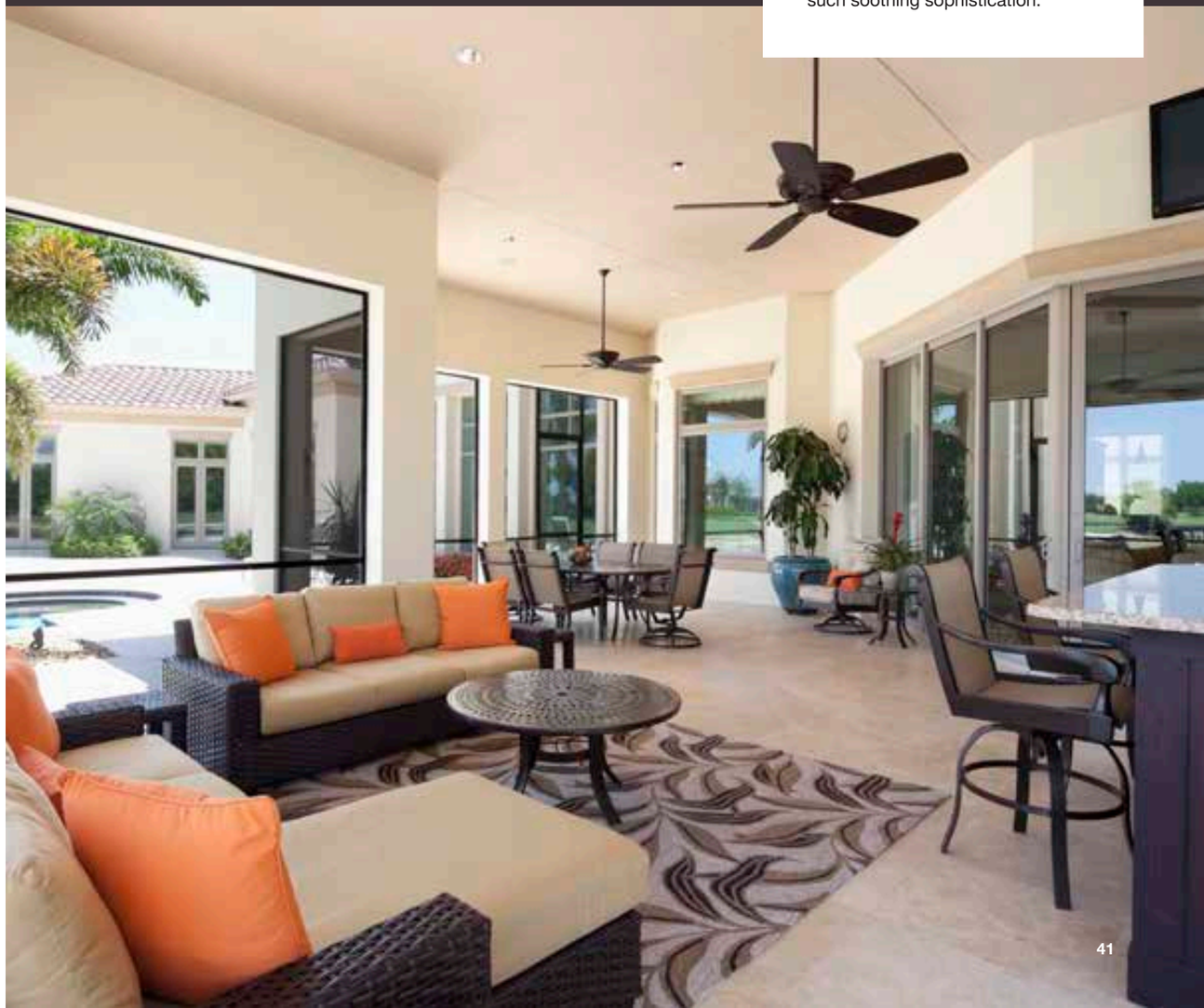
5/ Once the oil is hot, add the fish fillets in batches, making sure to not overcrowd the pan. Cook for 3 to 4 minutes on each side, until golden brown and crispy. Transfer the fried fish to the lined plate to drain the grease. Once all the fish has been fried, serve immediately.

recipe by **DAVON MOSELEY**
photography by **STEPHEN BUCHANAN**

CREATE A CLUBHOUSE AESTHETIC

written by **ANDRE RIOS**

WHILE MANY HOUSEHOLD spaces prioritize function, including the kitchen and home office, these areas may not tempt you to stay once they fulfill their purpose. But a clubhouse, an exclusive golf or resort lounge, serves different impulses: It's shaped to encourage long conversations, calming rituals, and unhurried time. Take your opportunity this spring, with its longer days and renewed social energy, to redecorate your dwelling to embrace such soothing sophistication.



What defines a clubhouse

Traditionally, these spaces serve as private refuges: places to read, enjoy beverages and finger foods, and meet like-minded individuals. The best versions balance comfort with restraint, and nothing feels incidental. Seating can help start conversations, lighting is low but deliberate, and materials are chosen for ultimate comfort as well as class. This isn't a theme, necessarily, nor does it belong to a certain time period; rather, it's about making choices that favor ease and privacy.

Bring home the vibe

To grant your home such clubhouse comforts, start by selecting which area you'd like to restyle. You don't need to commit to changing your whole home or even a dedicated wing of it. Choose one room, such as a den, an underused formal living room, or even a corner of a larger bedroom, then define it with intention.

Gather the essential elements

Next, consider color. Deep, mature tones can instantly relax you and create a feeling of privacy. Alternatively, light shades can complement open windows for an outward-facing look that welcomes natural tranquility.

Perhaps the most important step is turning your seating inward. (This is where the classic club chair, named for its environment, is especially handy.) A pair of inward-facing upholstered chairs with a cocktail table between them will encourage conversation better than a long sofa pressed against a wall. If space allows, introduce a second zone, like a card table or writing desk, so the room can hold more than one activity at a time.

Your lighting will be the hero of the space. Unlike rooms designed to flood with daylight, a clubhouse earns its mood from light that's been tamed. In spring, let daylight filter through linen or cotton drapery that softens rather than blocks sunshine. By evening, the room should feel settled and swanky. Trade overhead glare for shaded lamps, sconces, and directional fixtures.

Be sure to prioritize excellent materials too. Wood with visible grain, high-quality leather, and wool rugs, for example, are materials that elevate the room.

Importantly, give the room a purpose beyond sitting, and set boundaries for how the space is used. This isn't where laundry collects or the television runs in the background. The room's character will ultimately be defined by the comforting habits you indulge therein. Incorporate a bar cart, bookshelves, and entertainment items like tabletop games or a projector screen—small cues that motivate use.





INCORPORATE MINT-GREEN PILLOWS, PALE-BLUE LAMPSHADES, WASHED LINEN SLIPCOVERS, AND OTHER SUBTLE ADJUSTMENTS TO ACKNOWLEDGE SPRINGTIME WHILE KEEPING THE PALETTE RESTRAINED.

Embrace spring

Clubhouse aesthetics don't always have to be masculine and formal. For a sense of spring levity and positivity, replace heavy throws with lighter ones in neutral tones. Introduce a floral or botanical arrangement (e.g., branches, flowers, or even a bowl of citrus) rather than cluttering with smaller objects. When the weather allows, open a window for fresh spring breezes.

Colors can change with the season without disturbing the room's restraint. Incorporate mint-green pillows, pale-blue lampshades, washed linen slipcovers, and other subtle adjustments to acknowledge springtime while keeping the palette restrained.

Implement low-effort impact

If your budget or time is limited, you can still craft an exclusive ambience. Focus simply on your lighting (a well-placed lamp), layout (turning seating inward for conversation), and entertainment elements (bookshelves), which will revamp and repurpose the room without a total renovation. Secondhand items suit this approach too; after all, a clubhouse aesthetic welcomes history.

Draw the furniture closer. Remove anything that doesn't invite comfort. Add one substantial piece, like a quality chair, a floor lamp, or a small cabinet, rather than a collection of smaller ones.

A payoff you can feel

Creating a clubhouse at home can change how you spend your time. You'll begin to look forward to the room itself—the way it invites afternoon coffee, easy conversation with loved ones, and long hours with a book in your hand and your mind at rest.



prep your home FOR SPRING

written by **MATTHEW BRADY**

Before you know it, the season of renewal will be here—making now the time to start thinking about warmer-weather maintenance. Do it right, and you can keep minor problems from turning into major headaches.

Outdoors

Start outside by taking note of lifted shingles, loose flashing, and gutters beginning to pull away from the roofline. Also make sure that your downspouts are carrying water several feet away from the foundation. If they're not, adding extensions is a simple fix that can prevent much bigger issues later.

From there, move to your windows and doors, where winter tends to leave more subtle damage behind. Your trustworthy caulk that held up in the fall may be starting to split by early spring, and you'll usually feel drafts before you see where the seal has failed. So reseal where needed, then clean and reinstall screens on a milder day—before insects become problematic.

Inside

Now you can shift your focus to the systems that keep your interior running. For example, check the condition of your HVAC filter, cleaning or replacing it if needed, and schedule your seasonal service before experts experience backlogs. In addition, once the days feel more springlike, set ceiling fans to counterclockwise so they push air downward.

Appliance maintenance is usually straightforward yet can make a difference over time. Pull out your refrigerator and vacuum its coils before dust buildup starts affecting performance. Also clear your dryer vent fully—not just the lint trap—and run the cleaning cycles on the dishwasher and washing machine to refresh them.

If you have a basement, make sure to test your sump pump with a bucket of water; it should kick on immediately and drain without hesitation. If it doesn't, it's better to deal with it now than during the first heavy spring storm.

Facades

Finally, don't forget about surfaces, both outdoors and indoors. In March or April, power-wash your siding, patios, and walkways to clear away salt and buildup from winter. And skip the urge to deep-clean all your interiors at once, focusing instead on areas that are usually overlooked, such as baseboards, cabinet fronts, and light fixtures. You can handle the rest by continuing your normal cleaning routine.

Like many people, you're probably eager for spring's return. Having a maintenance plan in place now can help you get a jump start on the season and make its arrival even more enjoyable.



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.

For all that you put into your home,

YOU DESERVE TO GET THE *most* OUT.



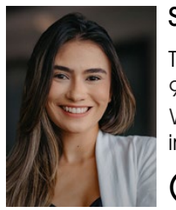








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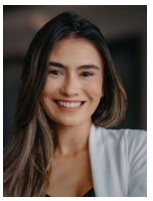
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INGREDIENTS:

2 lb. whiting fish fillets, or flaky white fish of choice

1 c. yellow cornmeal

1 c. unbleached all-purpose flour

2 tbsp. Old Bay seasoning

2 tbsp. lemon pepper seasoning

1 tbsp. garlic powder

1 tsp. black pepper

1 tsp. smoked paprika

¼ tsp. cayenne pepper

¼ c. Louisiana hot sauce

¼ c. yellow mustard

Vegetable oil, to fry

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Clean the fish fillets and thoroughly pat dry.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the cornmeal, flour, Old Bay seasoning, lemon pepper seasoning, garlic powder, black pepper, paprika, and cayenne pepper. In a separate medium bowl, whisk together the Louisiana hot sauce and yellow mustard.
3. In a deep, large cast-iron skillet, add about 2 in. of oil and heat to 350°F. Line a plate with paper towels.
4. While the oil heats, coat each fish fillet in the hot sauce and mustard mix. Then, coat in the cornmeal mixture, press the mixture into the fillets to make sure they are fully coated. Shake off any excess and transfer to a plate.
5. Once the oil is hot, add the fish fillets in batches, making sure to not overcrowd the pan. Cook for 3 to 4 minutes on each side, until golden brown and crispy. Transfer the fried fish to the lined plate to drain the grease. Once all the fish has been fried, serve immediately.

Serves 6

Recipe from *Let's Get Into It: 130+ Comfort Food Recipes for Novice Cooks* by Davon Moseley. DK Publishing, 2025. Photography by Stephen Buchanan.

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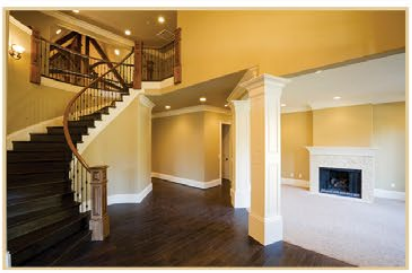
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