

Compliments of Alyson Tiedeman and Jackie Bacaris

*Good to Be*

issue 14

HOME

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Alyson Tiedeman | NMLS #2393414  
Mortgage Lender  
Cell: (954) 560-8142



Mortgage Advantage Lending  
2645 Executive Park Dr.  
Suite 123  
Weston, FL 33331



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## Front of Tear Out Card 1

### strawberry ginger *frosé*



Rosé is blended with fresh strawberries and ginger and frozen until slushy in this refreshing summer cocktail.

SERVES 4




**Alyson Tiedeman | NMLS #2393414**  
Mortgage Lender

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**Cell:** (954) 560-8142  
**Email:** alyson@malhomeloans.com  
**malhomeloans.com**

**Mortgage Advantage Lending**  
2645 Executive Park Dr.  
Suite 123  
Weston, FL 33331



## Back of Tear Out Card 1

### ingredients

- ½ c. sugar
- ½ c. lime juice
- 2½ c. strawberries, chopped
- 2 tbsp. fresh ginger, peeled and minced
- 1 bottle rosé

### directions

1. In a small saucepot over medium-high heat, gently simmer sugar and lime juice until sugar has dissolved, creating a simple syrup. Let cool.
2. In a food processor, combine simple syrup, strawberries, and ginger. Blend until pureed, and pour mixture into a large bowl.
3. Whisk in rosé, and pour into a large container. Cover, and freeze until slushy.
4. Serve with mint sprigs, candied ginger, and fresh strawberries.

Calories: 206 | Carbs: 36g | Sugar: 30g | Protein: 1g | Fat: 1g

### Garnishes

- mint sprigs
- candied ginger
- strawberry slices







Clients and colleagues describe Alyson and Jackie as a "get it done" team who is knowledgeable, efficient, professional and reliable.

Meet Alyson, a licensed Mortgage Loan Officer with over 20 years of finance experience who's passionate in serving her clients' needs and delivering a superior customer experience. Alyson is blessed to be part of a remarkable local mortgage company who just celebrated their 18th year anniversary! She is renowned for building strong and trustworthy relationships and goes above and beyond for her clients to deliver a First-Class, Concierge Service. Alyson provides personalized expert advice and tailored financing options that suit their individual circumstances and is committed to finding the best financing options at the most competitive rates! By being highly responsive and attentive, she instills a deep sense of trust and confidence in her clients, assuring them that their questions will be addressed promptly. Whether purchasing, refinancing or investing, with Alyson, you can expect a seamless and stress-free process as she dedicates herself to making homeownership dreams a reality.

Let's dive in to this edition of Good to Be Home. Summer can be one of the sweetest times of the year and a hot time for real estate. Whether you're spending time in your garden, hanging out poolside, or planning an exciting vacation, the inspiring ideas in this issue of Good to be Home will help you embrace the season to its fullest. Inside you'll find smart water-saving solutions, a guide to transforming your home into a staycation haven, and tips on preparing for a house sitter or pet sitter while you're away.

No vacation plans? No problem! If a staycation is on your agenda, be sure to read the guide to making your home a pleasurable and relaxing environment for your family.

And if you are planning a getaway, you'll want to make sure your home and pets are well cared for. The tips in this issue can help you prepare a sitter so you can set off on your trip with better peace of mind.

Here's to a sensational summer spent with friends and family! As always, it's a pleasure to send you this magazine. Alyson Tiedeman and Jackie Bacaris

**Alyson Tiedeman and Jackie Bacaris**



**Alyson Tiedeman | NMLS #2393414**  
Mortgage Lender  
NMLS #2393414  
  
**Cell: (954) 560-8142**  
**Email: [alyson@malhomeloans.com](mailto:alyson@malhomeloans.com)**  
**[malhomeloans.com](http://malhomeloans.com)**  
**[facebook.com/mortgagelenderalyson](https://facebook.com/mortgagelenderalyson)**  
  
**Mortgage Advantage Lending**  
2645 Executive Park Dr.  
Suite 123  
Weston, FL 33331



Tips for **Disguising**  
Pet Supplies

written by: ALLISON GOMES

Having a pet is a wonderful thing. They can fill our hearts with so much joy, but they can also fill our homes with a lot of stuff. Our pets’ toys and accessories add extra clutter that can quickly become an eyesore. To help your pet’s supplies blend in, here are a few ways to stylishly disguise them.

**Find supplies that match your decor style**

You no longer have to make do with silver food and water bowls or plain black crates since there’s a world of cute and aesthetically pleasing pet supplies available to you online. You can find wooden and ceramic bowls to add to your kitchen, crates of all shapes, sizes, and colors, and pet beds that will make you envious of your four-legged friend. These supplies can match your style and be fun accessories to the decor of your home.

**Make the supplies multifunctional**

Pet supplies can serve dual purposes in your home. For example, there are litter boxes that also work as side tables or plant stands, pet beds that look like living room ottomans,

and furniture-style pet crates that work as credenzas, shelves, or entryway tables. This multifunctionality helps your supplies to not just simply take up room but have a specific use for both you and your pet.

**Have a designated home for everything**

An important part of making supplies like toys, treats, walking gear, and dry food less noticeable is having a spot for everything in your home. So you can create a feeding station in your laundry room, put treats in attractive canisters on your kitchen counters, and have storage bins and baskets in your living room that you can throw excess accessories in before company comes over—making it super easy to clean up the clutter.

*Don’t let your pet’s stuff overrun your home. Instead, use these tips to seamlessly work it into your overall decor.*



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PUBLISHER

Chief Executive Officer Steven Acree  
publisher@remindermedia.com

EXECUTIVE

President Luke Acree  
Chief Marketing Officer Joshua Stike  
Chief Operating Officer Michael Graziola

MARKETING

Director of Marketing Dan Acree  
Director of Creative Services Kristin Sweeney  
Director of Content Jessica Fitzpatrick  
marketing@remindermedia.com

EDITORIAL

Editorial Manager Alexa Bricker  
Senior Layout Designer Jordan Hunsberger  
Senior Editor Matthew Brady  
Senior Content Writer Shelley Goldstein  
Content Writers Lauren Kim,  
Bonnie Joffe, Andre Rios  
Junior Content Writer Allison Gomes  
editorial@remindermedia.com

SALES AND CLIENT SUCCESS

Vice President of Client Success Ethan Acree  
Vice President of Operations Nicholas Bianco  
Vice President of Sales Michael Campanile  
hello@remindermedia.com

OPERATIONS

Vice President of IT Thomas Setliff  
Director of Projects Kelsie Schmall  
Director of Business Intelligence Daniel Gallaway  
Director of Manufacturing Shannon Mosser  
Vice President of Finance Shana Lebofsky  
Director of HR John Keogh  
hr@remindermedia.com



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please visit us at [www.remindermedia.com](http://www.remindermedia.com), email us at  
[info@remindermedia.com](mailto:info@remindermedia.com), or call us at 866-458-4226.  
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issue 14



# THE RISE OF THE *broken-plan* LAYOUT

written by:  
ALLISON GOMES

Many homeowners have actively sought open floor plans, looking for homes with a kitchen, living room, and dining room that all meld together on the main floor. It's an appealing concept since the open space has multiple functions. However, the tide has turned in recent years, bringing a new contender to the forefront of home design—the broken-plan layout.

## WHAT IS A BROKEN-PLAN LAYOUT?

Open floor plans have been the rage for many years, and they can often be achieved by knocking down walls. But the pandemic has changed many people's viewpoints of this home design since they are spending more time at home and spaces must function as living rooms, offices, classrooms, and more. This shift in lifestyle and the workforce ultimately created a need for greater privacy, something that many people now permanently want in their homes.

A broken-plan layout is the opposite of an open plan, providing a solution to the desire for more separation in the home. Instead of having one large room that encompasses the main portions of the home, broken-plan spaces are divided into smaller areas, allowing each zone to have a distinct purpose and creating more privacy between them. This layout can be achieved by building back the walls that were once removed. But since that can come at a high cost and isn't always feasible, there are other less expensive and often impermanent ways to divide your rooms for your specific purposes.

## CONSTRUCT VARYING LEVELS

While this option may not be doable for every homeowner, varying the heights of your flooring and ceilings between rooms can help further break up your spaces. For example, it could be beneficial to separate your kitchen from your living room by elevating the floors in your living space. It sets one area above the other, creating a division without actually having a wall. Since one is a place of work and the other of relaxation, this designation of what each room is can help you better use the spaces for their specific purposes.





## FLOAT YOUR FURNITURE

Floating your furniture—placing it toward the center of the room and away from walls—can help create different zones in your spaces. For example, you could pull your couch away from the wall and reposition it at a different angle in your living room. You could then set up a desk and chair for your work in that newly opened space along the wall. By simply moving around your existing furniture, you can try different layouts and see what else you might need to purchase to further separate your spaces.

## GET CREATIVE WITH SHELVES AND SCREENS

One of the easiest ways to divide your spaces and create a broken-plan layout is to use temporary wall partitions, such as the classic privacy screens that come in various colors and sizes. You could also take a more out-of-the-box approach and use bookshelves. Bookshelves give you a lot of creative freedom because you can decorate them however you want, such as by filling the shelves with good reads, ceramics, or photos. And since they come in different sizes, you also have your choice of shelves to simply move around in a space until you have a layout that works.

## DESIGN A LIVING WALL

A living plant wall offers a great opportunity to divide your home's spaces while leaning into biophilic design. This design style of bringing the outdoors into the home is known to improve productivity and mental health, so it's a good option if you're creating an office space off another room in your house. It does require a little more attention, but it's an effective way of achieving a broken layout if you're willing to continually care for the plants.

*Changing the layout of your home doesn't have to be expensive or require a lot of construction. If you're looking to create more varied areas in your home, consider using these tips to achieve a broken-plan layout.*





# SAY YES TO YARD WATER CONSERVATION

written by:  
MATTHEW BRADY

During summertime, increasing temperatures and decreasing rainfall can leave you scrambling to save your lawn, garden, and water bill.

Unfortunately, we’re often our own worst enemy when it comes to water conservation. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that homeowners normally use 30–60 percent of their water outdoors—and that half of that water is wasted because of inefficiency. Using water wisely is especially critical in drought zones, so if you live in such an area, be sure to follow your municipality’s conservation suggestions.

No matter where you are, though, if you take steps to conserve water outside, it can benefit your yard and the planet.

## BE KNOWLEDGEABLE AND INTENTIONAL

Your climate will affect how you conserve water, so get to know your yard and your geographic area to care for your lawn exactly as it needs to be. And if you do everything with a purpose rather than haphazardly, your water conservation can improve dramatically. Here are some tips to help maximize your efforts:

- **Know your outdoor space, and plan accordingly.** Every area is different, and every yard in that area may be different. For example, if your backyard is mostly shaded by trees, it likely needs less watering because it gets less sun.
- **Be sprinkler smart.** Water your lawn in the morning to prevent rapid evaporation. Also, don’t be *that* neighbor: the one whose sprinkler fans over not only their lawn but also

the sidewalk and street, which is wasteful. And try to use one with a WaterSense controller, an EPA-backed device that calibrates exactly how much water you should use for maximum efficiency.

- **Minimize hose usage.** Is your dirty driveway bothering you? Then grab a broom rather than your hose to clean it off. Plus, taking your car to a car wash rather than cleaning it yourself will use approximately 55–80 percent less water. Finally, check for any cracks or leaks in your hose and sprinkler, which can rob you of water every time they’re used.
- **Know the highs and lows.** Keeping your grass higher will allow it to slow down evaporation and absorb more water, as will watering plants at the roots rather than at the leaves.

- **Go the drought-tolerant route.** Consider updating your lawn with water-preserving grass such as Bermuda, zoysia, or St. Augustine and plants such as lavender and purple coneflower.

- **Recycle runoff.** Use rain barrels to collect and reuse water draining from your roof; just check to make sure they’re legal in your area. In addition, consider establishing a rain garden, an intentionally placed collection of native plants that absorbs runoff like a sponge.

For more info, visit [epa.gov/watersense](https://epa.gov/watersense)





# Make Your Home a staycation paradise

written by: LAUREN KIM

“  
If you vacation at home this summer, use the money you save by not traveling to augment your staycation experience.”

What makes renting a highly rated vacation home so nice? Much of it is due to the home's location and proximity to fun activities. But another factor is that, in a good rental, everything from the bedding to the furniture to the decor is carefully chosen and prepped so you can unwind and enjoy. If you can't get away this summer, or if you just want to transform your home into a cozy retreat, you can make it look and feel like a posh Airbnb with these tips.

## Get organized

Have you noticed that the best rentals have everything you need, with nothing out of place or difficult to find? To get that experience in your home, try to make it as neat and organized as you can. You can donate what you don't use or put it in storage in your attic. You could also consider having your home professionally cleaned. Once your place is tidy, you can put your feet up knowing that there are no chores that need to be done.

## Add a bit of luxury

Are your bed and sofa comfy and attractive? If not, consider splurging on a new sectional sofa or king-sized bed or dressing up your existing couch with a good-looking slipcover and stylish blanket. You could also make your bed more luxurious by adding crisp sheets, a foam topper, and fluffy pillows. Lend a spa feel to your bathroom with soft towels, a warming towel rack, and therapeutic shower steamers, aromatherapy tablets that release comforting scents when placed in the warm water of your shower.





## Add meaningful extras

Vacation rentals' special amenities are often what make them so appealing. Think about what unique features could turn your home into a fun vacay spot. You could start small by adding just one new feature and gradually bringing in more as your budget allows. Consider these ideas for upgrading your home's inside spaces:

- **Wake up well**

Enjoy your mornings by placing a Keurig machine stocked with coffee or tea in your bedroom.

- **Make a hobby room**

If you enjoy a creative activity such as crafting, jigsaw puzzles, or model building, consider reserving a room or space complete with everything you need so you can pursue your pastime.

- **Create a reading nook**

Devote a room or just a small space for reading by adding a comfy chair, some leafy green plants, and a place to store magazines and books.

- **Prep for relaxation**

Make your home more comfortable by spreading a luxurious throw on your sofa, setting out some candles, or stocking your pantry with your favorite snacks.







## Create an outdoor oasis

You might want to enjoy the beautiful summer weather during your staycation, so why not turn your backyard into a fun destination with these suggestions?

- **Set up a cinema**  
Rent or buy a projector, and hang a backdrop or set up an inflatable screen to watch movies in your backyard.
- **Go camping**  
You don't have to travel far to enjoy the great outdoors. Pitch a tent in your backyard, and bring along a mini telescope to get a better view of the stars.
- **Step up the competition**  
You can turn your backyard into an entertainment center by putting out classic board games like Monopoly and Scrabble and backyard games like volleyball, cornhole, and horseshoes.

- **Host a luau party**  
Convert your backyard into a fun luau spot by hanging string lights, stocking an outdoor bar, filling an inflatable hot tub, stoking a firepit, and adding some Bluetooth speakers.
- **Put up your feet**  
Relax by hanging a hammock and adding a water feature for the soothing sounds of trickling water.

## Enjoy the good life

If you vacation at home this summer, use the money you save by not traveling to augment your staycation experience. You could order a week of easy-to-prepare meals from a service like HelloFresh or Blue Apron, get takeout from DoorDash or Grubhub, or treat yourself to a Netflix or Hulu subscription.



written by:  
MATTHEW BRADY

# HUMIDITY

# IN THE HOME

*“It’s not the heat; it’s the humidity.”*

You’ve undoubtedly heard this saying before, especially during sweltering summer days, when, on top of the blazing sun, the outdoor air is suffocatingly thick. At times like this, being outdoors can be unbearable, if not downright dangerous.

However, people never seem to apply the same axiom while *inside* their homes. Nonetheless, if your interior’s humidity levels are out of whack, it can cause significant problems to both your health and your home’s health.

## HUMIDITY, RELATIVELY SPEAKING

To understand this challenge, you first need to understand its terminology. Absolute humidity is self-explanatory: how much water is in the air. In contrast, relative humidity is a percentage that indicates how much moisture exists relative to the maximum possible. So, for example, if your attic and master bathroom have the same absolute humidity, the relative humidity would be higher in the latter because it’s a much smaller area.

But how much is too much? Experts generally agree that relative humidity should be kept below 60 percent, with the Environmental Protection Agency saying that 30 to 50 percent is ideal.







### PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

You can usually sense when there’s a humidity problem in your home because your clothes and skin may feel sticky, especially when you try to sleep, or you may notice that your windows are fogging up. Even worse, some people have difficulty breathing oversaturated air, which is also a breeding ground for mold and dust mites.

In addition, high humidity can harm your home and its contents. It can cause wood rot and warping, flooring issues, and other structural problems and even damage electronics.

*Fortunately, there are some simple ways to help remedy this issue:*

- Consider purchasing a hygrometer, a commonly used tool that keeps constant tabs on a room's relative humidity; many also monitor the temperature.
- Keep dampness out by making sure your windows are properly sealed and that you don’t have any leaking pipes anywhere.



- Use your air conditioner, which is designed to remove humidity while providing that wonderfully cool air, and keep it working efficiently by regularly replacing its filters.
- Get a dehumidifier. As the name suggests, this machine’s primary purpose is to make your air less dense with water. There are two primary types to consider: a whole-house version that gets attached to your HVAC system and a portable model, which is typically used in a basement.
- Vent it out. Hot showers are a great source of humidity—even pushing the bathroom toward 100 percent—so if you have an exhaust vent, use it both during and after showering until the percentage ebbs. (Or just take cooler showers.) The same tip holds true for cooking in your kitchen and doing laundry.
- Air it out. After summer fades and cooler, less humid autumn air returns, take advantage of the changing seasons by opening your windows to naturally dehumidify your home.



### DON’T OVERDO IT

You may think, *Great! As long as I keep my home’s humidity low, my problem’s solved.* Not so fast—too little indoor humidity, which tends to happen more often during cooler months, can also cause problems for both people and property. Serious health reactions, such as difficulty breathing or sleeping, can result along with other issues such as dry skin. Similarly, your home can experience warping and shrinking of its wood, drywall, paint, caulk, and wallpaper if the relative humidity is too low. Reversing course on the aforementioned tips can help: purchase a humidifier, or allow shower and cooking steam to add moisture to the air.

*People love to escape to their homes to take shelter from summer’s sweltering heat and oppressive humidity. However, don’t forget to take steps to ensure that the excess stickiness stays where it belongs: outdoors.*





# DISCOVER YOUR *design style*

written by:  
ANDRE RIOS

Popular interior design styles range from traditional to contemporary, and each features distinct, eye-catching qualities. Which one aligns with your tastes? More importantly, which style can guide your interior design choices?

Think about what makes a house feel like home to you. When home interiors perfectly represent your tastes, your abode feels personalized and catered to your unique needs. But crafting the interior design scheme of your dreams may require a little inspiration.

Take this quiz to define your preferred interior design style, guide your home shopping list, and even inspire your future design choices. *See your results on the next page.*

## 1. What kind of sofa stands out to you?

- A | A big, soft, comfortable one
- B | A well-made sofa with crisp lines and a beautiful silhouette
- C | Who needs a sofa when you could have a daybed?
- D | An antique sofa with a pattern and carved wooden legs

## 2. Which of these is the best color for kitchen cabinets?

- A | A natural wood tone
- B | Sophisticated matte black
- C | A bright, unexpected color like green
- D | A deep wood like walnut with a glossy finish

## 3. Where do you look for design inspiration?

- A | Friends and loved ones
- B | High-end design publications
- C | Social media
- D | Historic buildings and hotels

## 4. Which would you hang above your fireplace?

- A | Family photos
- B | A print by a well-known contemporary artist
- C | Woven baskets from India
- D | An old-fashioned, framed oil painting

## 5. Which home would you most want to live in?

- A | A peaceful cabin on a lake
- B | A penthouse high atop a major metropolis
- C | A townhouse steps away from popular entertainment
- D | A historic English estate

## 6. How do you usually spend a weekend morning?

- A | Cooking a big meal for the family
- B | Catching up on your TV watch list
- C | Doing arts and crafts
- D | Reading the news

## 7. Finally, which style of architecture do you love most?

- A | Rustic cottage
- B | Simple contemporary
- C | Mediterranean
- D | French provincial



## The Results

Tally up your responses to all of the questions. Which letters did you select? Here is the interior design style that best aligns with your responses.

Mostly As: **Rustic**

Mostly Bs: **Contemporary**

Mostly Cs: **Bohemian**

Mostly Ds: **Traditional**

Mostly Bs and Ds: **Transitional**

Fairly split across the board: **Eclectic**

## RUSTIC

As a fan of country living, a warm soul who likes to add a touch of natural country charm to urban living, rustic design has your heart. Characterized by natural materials, a range of color shades, pastoral decor, and generally being a little rough around the edges, rustic interiors perfectly balance elegance with unassuming comfort.

Notable pieces of rustic decor include farmhouse sinks and breakfast tables, unfinished wood, metal nailhead trim, floral fabrics, leather, and references to western aesthetics like a coatrack full of cowboy hats.

## CONTEMPORARY

You crave the cutting edge of design and refuse to settle for anything less than what's hot and current in the interior design world, so contemporary design may speak to you the

most. This approach centers on furniture and decor that leading names and design outlets choose to spotlight.

For these reasons, there aren't necessarily universal, defining factors of contemporary design. Rather, look for what contemporary design *doesn't* do. It doesn't stick to a single time period for inspiration, nor does it sacrifice class for comfort. Contemporary design will always be formal, prioritize fine art and materials above clutter, and look curated to impress.

Contemporary design was once synonymous with minimalism, but today the most fashionable homes wouldn't dare reduce to stark white palettes or open-air designs. Current design trends include furniture in a variety of neutral colors, shapely pieces with sculpted silhouettes, and statement art.







## ▲ BOHEMIAN

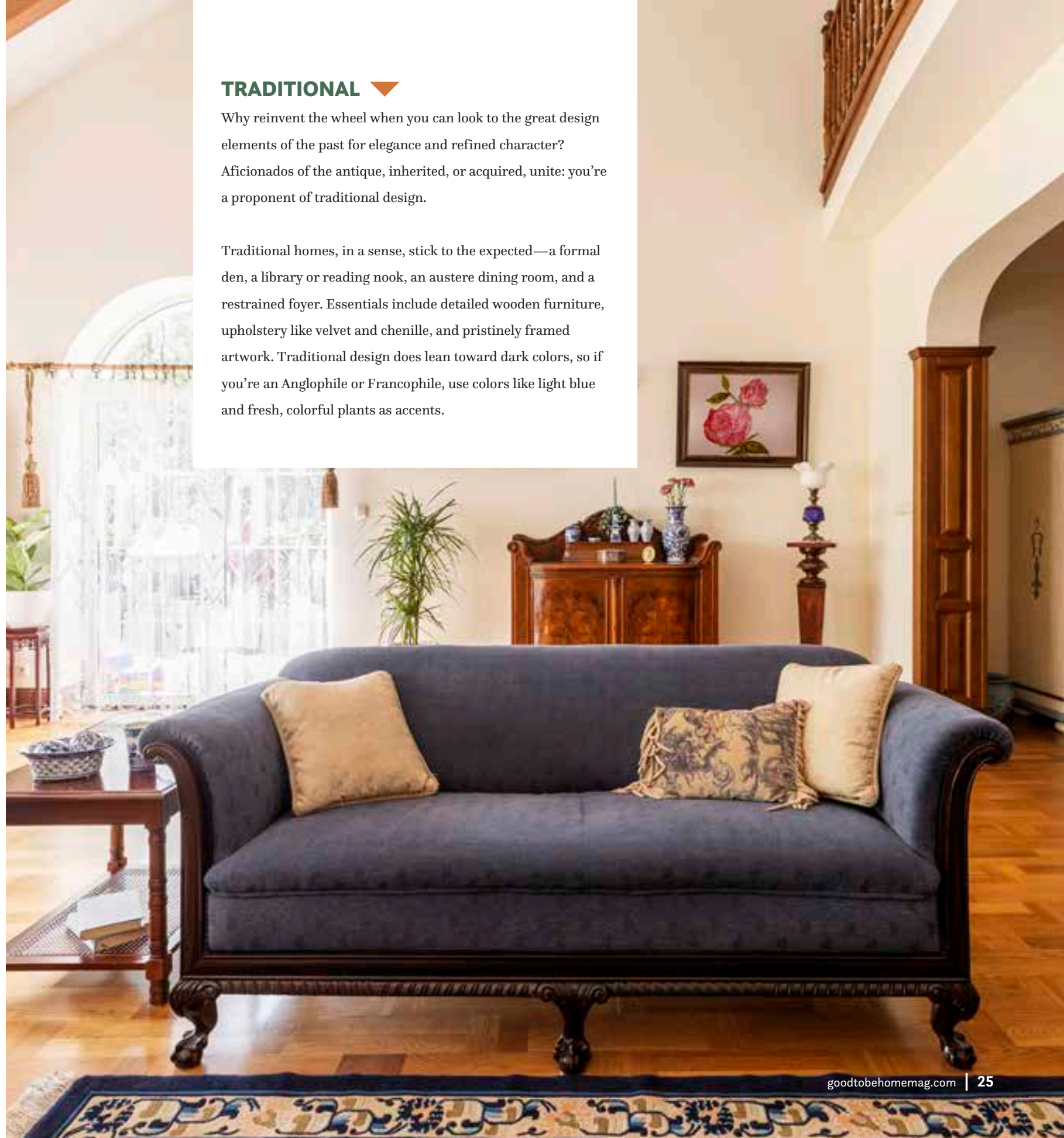
Like other fans of bohemian living, you don't follow the rules or conventions of home decor, nor do you feel that western traditions represent the pinnacle of design. While the term "bohemian" once referred to artistic social outsiders who ignored ordinary social cues, the interior design version is much milder. Bohemian homes reference multicultural motifs like African print pillows, East Asian pottery, and South American rugs.

To embrace bohemian design, consider implementing decor from your foreign travels or antiques from your unique cultural history. Focus on natural, earthy materials like bamboo, woven alpaca wool, and teak. Surround yourself with statement objects that have their own story and legacy.

## TRADITIONAL ▼

Why reinvent the wheel when you can look to the great design elements of the past for elegance and refined character? Aficionados of the antique, inherited, or acquired, unite: you're a proponent of traditional design.

Traditional homes, in a sense, stick to the expected—a formal den, a library or reading nook, an austere dining room, and a restrained foyer. Essentials include detailed wooden furniture, upholstery like velvet and chenille, and pristinely framed artwork. Traditional design does lean toward dark colors, so if you're an Anglophile or Francophile, use colors like light blue and fresh, colorful plants as accents.







## ▲ TRANSITIONAL

If you have trouble picking between any of those previous styles, you may be a transitionalist. This interior design style takes the best of history's timeless design pieces and refreshes them with innovation and modernity. Like eclectic and bohemian designs, transitional is all about the homeowner's personal tastes and inspiration rather than what's trending, and yet it feels harmonious and upscale.

Transitional rooms may feature a midcentury-modern credenza topped with antique lamps and a contemporary framed mirror. You may find a variety of materials ranging from wood to metal to even glass. However, a simple color palette takes this love of variety and makes it feel cohesive and calm. The result is an elegant, comfortable home that never goes out of style.



## ECLECTIC ▼

Who needs rules when you could create your own paradise? Like bohemian folks, eclectic design lovers enjoy taking inspiration from different sources. However, eclectic design adores color, energy, and surprising elements of unexpected decor: think lilac furniture, conversation-starting coffee table books, or even curiosity-inducing artwork.

Your tastes may go beyond ordinary rules of design restraint or order and may instead feel fun, bombastic, and lively.

Stiff-upper-lip types may have their opinions of eclectic design, but you don't live for their approval; you live in an environment full of design elements that motivate you and make you happy.

*Now that you've identified your preferred interior design style, you can look to similar homes for inspiration.*

*Afterward, shop for furnishings and decor in the design scheme that makes you feel right at home.*







# how sun exposure affects your home

— written by: ANDRE RIOS

**DID YOU KNOW THAT THE DIRECTION YOUR HOME FACES CAN AFFECT YOUR SUN EXPOSURE? DESIGN YOUR HOME AND GARDEN WITH SUNLIGHT IN MIND TO SAVE MONEY AND IMPROVE YOUR INDOOR AMBIENCE.**

Sunlight does more for your home than warm you with natural light. It can impact your heating and cooling costs, your indoor comfort, your furniture, and how well you sleep.

In fact, sunlight may have been a factor in how your home was built. Many architects and home developers consider orientation, or the cardinal direction your home faces, when making choices about windows, skylights, and more. If you're shopping for or even building a new home, orientation is a crucial feature to consider. Here is how sunlight affects different homes based on their exposure.







## north

Facing north is considered ideal for homes in warm locations. Because the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, north-facing homes get less direct natural light, making this the most sunlight-proof orientation. Since sunlight heats buildings, facing north minimizes direct indoor sunlight and therefore lowers your potential cooling costs. If you live in a hot climate or are concerned about reducing sun damage to your furniture and decor, find a north-facing home if possible.

However, north-facing homes experience certain challenges due to said sun exposure. In the winter, icicles, slippery sidewalks, and snow accumulation can be a problem for those in cold climates. And because north-facing homes cast more shade on the front lawn, you may need to select low-light plants, like ferns and hydrangeas, for your foundation and front porch.

## south

South-facing homes tend to get the most consistent sunlight throughout the day as the sun passes from east to west. Many homebuyers seek out south-facing homes for their pleasant natural light and views. However, these homes also absorb more radiant heat—the heat from infrared sunlight. This can make winters warmer but can lead to higher cooling costs in the summer.

If you're building a new home, install sunlight-resistant, insulating materials like stucco or brick on its south side, if not the whole structure. Many home builders lay inexpensive wood or vinyl siding on walls that are less visible from the curb to save money.

South-facing homes also receive less backyard sunlight, so you'll have plenty of shade for outdoor entertaining. If you want to enjoy a pool or edible plant garden, though, this may be a challenge if you own a south-facing home.



## east

As the sun rises in the east, east-facing homes will enjoy pleasant morning sunlight. However, once the sun is high in the sky, the front lawn and facade will enjoy softer indirect light.

Install curtains or blinds in bedrooms that get eastern exposure unless you want bright sunlight to wake you up at dawn. You could also plant trees or large shrubs near these windows for natural shade. However, breakfast nooks, kitchens, and home offices that face east may feel more energizing when they receive direct morning sun.

## west

Homes that face west only receive direct sunlight come midafternoon, so bedrooms with west-facing windows will experience less troublesome morning light. If your home faces west, your living room or den likely receives the most direct light. This means more heat and a bright, irritating glare in the rooms where you may spend the latter part of the day.

Install treatments like blinds and drapes over west-facing windows so you can relax in the evening without having to shade your eyes indoors. But you may enjoy some late sunset views in a west-facing dining room for a romantic ambience.

*If you're shopping for a home, consider how orientation can affect your daily life and utility costs. You can even request to view homes that face the cardinal direction that appeals to you the most.*







Did you know you can whip cheese into delightfully smooth dips? What a world of possibilities this opens! This trio of dips proves that the creativity of cheese knows no bounds.

**SERVES 5–6**

# *Orange Pistachio* **CLOUD**

Infused with orange zest and finely ground pistachios, this lightly sweet spread is perfect for your toasted bagel.

**INGREDIENTS:**

- 5-ounce goat cheese log
- 3 tablespoons plain Greek yogurt
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 teaspoon freshly squeezed orange juice
- ½ teaspoon orange zest
- 1 tablespoon whole pistachios, finely ground

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Add all ingredients to a blender or food processor, and blend until smooth.

*Whip It* **GOOD**

**recipes and photos by:**  
**SHELLEY GOLDSTEIN**



**SERVES 5–6**

# *Fry Dip* **WITH A TWIST**

Usually made with mayonnaise as a base, this tangy dip substitutes whipped cottage cheese to add a tantalizing pop to your potatoes.

## **INGREDIENTS:**

1 cup full-fat cottage cheese  
2 ounces Neufchâtel cheese  
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce  
2 teaspoons ketchup  
2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar  
¼ teaspoon garlic powder  
½ teaspoon chili powder  
½ teaspoon paprika  
Salt, to taste

## **INSTRUCTIONS:**

Add all ingredients to a blender or food processor, and blend until smooth.







**SERVES 5–6**

## *Herby Feta* **WHIP**

Featuring fresh herbs and fresh garlic, this thick spread is an impeccable foil to baguettes, crackers, roasted vegetables—anything, really!

### **INGREDIENTS:**

8-ounce feta block

⅓ cup plain Greek yogurt

1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice

1 garlic clove, pressed

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon finely chopped herbs (e.g. basil, dill, and parsley)

Pinch of pepper

Salt, to taste

### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

Add all ingredients to a blender or food processor, and blend until smooth.



# The Best Home Materials

written by:  
LAUREN KIM

for pet parents



If you have a pet, then you know they can cause accidents and other messes that can damage your floors and furnishings. Use this guide to durable home finishes so you can keep Fluffy and Fido and still have a beautiful home.

## FLOORS

Consider these flooring options that are easy to clean and are scratch, moisture, and stain resistant:

- **Luxury vinyl**

This synthetic flooring is likely the most durable choice for pet owners. Vinyl can resemble hardwood, tile, and stone. While all types of luxury vinyl floors are resilient, scraped or textured vinyl floors can be an even better choice for disguising wear and tear.

- **Laminate**

This composite flooring, which may contain both natural and man-made materials, can be made to look like hardwood and features a durable resin coating.

- **Tile and natural stone**

Porcelain and ceramic tile and natural stone like granite, quartz, and slate are available in a variety of looks.

- **Bamboo**

Bamboo flooring can be as tough as hardwood if constructed well, but inexpensive varieties can sustain damage more easily.

- **Engineered hardwood**

This cost-effective wood-floor option is more water resistant than true hardwood and mimics the real thing because of its thin top hardwood layer.

- **Hardwood**

White oak, maple, and hickory are among the hardest and most durable types of hardwood floors. An aluminum dioxide-urethane finish can add an extra layer of protection, while distressed or hand-scraped wood floors can hide imperfections.

- **Carpeting**

Carpeting can be cozy, but it can also collect dirt, dander, and stains and is susceptible to water damage. Brands like Lifeproof, Mohawk SmartStrand, Pet Perfect by Shaw, and Stainmaster PetProtect, which have stain treatments built in, can make your flooring last longer.

## FABRICS

Look to purchase sofas or chairs upholstered with materials that are easy to clean and less likely to trap fur and dirt, such as:

- **Cotton**

Canvas and denim are both sturdy cotton fabrics used to make furniture resistant to stains and rips. But they might not feel as soft as other upholstery choices.

- **Leather**

Genuine leather is puncture resistant and can be wiped free of spills and moisture. Distressed and aged leather will hide damage better than smooth and shiny leather.

- **Microfiber**

This durable polyester fabric is easy to clean, has a velvety texture, and can repel moisture.

For an added layer of protection, try using a slipcover or water-resistant pet cover on your furniture.





# THE BENEFITS OF BUYING A *Starter Home*

**written by:** BONNIE JOFFE

EVERYONE ENTERING THE HOME SEARCH PROCESS HAS LOFTY IDEAS OF THEIR DREAM HOUSE, BUT FOR FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYERS, A SMALLER STARTER HOME IS OFTEN THE PERFECT PATHWAY TO BUILDING EQUITY AND CREATING STABILITY.

A starter home is usually one that's more modest in size, typically three bedrooms or less, under 1,800 square feet, and at the lower end of the price range in a local real estate market. Starter homes will often need some repairs or updating but are a great entry point if you are a young buyer and have a limited amount of money for a down payment. You may also have an opportunity to purchase a new home that's geared toward the design, size, and financing needs of first-time homebuyers. New home builders often offer special in-house financing to make the home more affordable, which can potentially increase your buying power.

Whether you are purchasing a condominium, town house, or single-family home, a starter home is a great stepping stone to building equity. Here are just some of the benefits you can experience as you begin your homebuying journey.







### ***Lower payments***

A less expensive home can make it easier to save for a down payment and lower your monthly mortgage amount, both of which may enable you to purchase your home and start building equity sooner. In fact, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) offers state programs and federally backed loans, including those from the Federal Housing Administration, which can make it more affordable for many first-time homebuyers since the down payment amount can be as little as 3.5 percent. Also, the US Department of Veteran Affairs provides loans that require no down payment, mortgage insurance, and closing costs to service members, veterans, and their eligible surviving spouses.

### ***Lower closing costs***

Closing costs include fees like title insurance, property taxes, homeowners insurance, appraisals, and attorney fees. They are typically based on a sliding scale—the lower the home and loan amount, the less money you will need to close on your home.

### ***Lower taxes***

A lower-priced house will also result in paying lower taxes because taxes are calculated on the assessed and fair market value of a property. Be sure to check with your county when getting ready to purchase your home since each area's tax rate varies.

### ***Lower expenses***

Your overall expenses will be exponentially less in a smaller home compared to a large home. Things like your utility bills, general upkeep of the property, and even having fewer rooms to furnish will help keep your expenses more manageable.



*The benefits of buying a starter home are many. It can give you the financial flexibility you want, prevents you from being subject to rising rental costs, and can provide an easier path for making the home your own in the long term. With careful forethought and planning, you can make your dream of being a homeowner a reality.*





# A HOME AND PET *Sitter Guide*

written by:  
BONNIE JOFFE



The weather is heating up, and you've probably made vacation plans. Hiring a house or pet sitter will be essential for the safety and security of your home and your pet during your absence. Use this guide to help prep your home and pet sitters.

## ***Pet preparation***

Hiring a pet sitter can be a great alternative to boarding your pet. There are several ways to locate a professional sitter, such as through the National Association of Professional Pet Sitters, a personal or veterinarian recommendation, or a well-known company like Rover.com.

### ***Meet and greet***

Invite your pet sitter to visit before going away—it's an opportunity for them to become acquainted with your pet and for your pet to become familiar with their scent. You can also use this time to convey any specific instructions and walk them through your pet's routines.

### ***Meals***

Label food containers with the amount and time of day your pet needs to eat. If they have a special diet, leave instructions for its preparation and any medications that need to be administered during meal time. Consider leaving additional food should your return home be delayed. Also, make sure your pet sitter knows your pet's daily snack routine.

### ***Medical care***

If your pet has any medical issues or allergies requiring medication, give instructions on how and when they should be administered. Also, provide your veterinarian's contact information, and inform your veterinarian that your sitter has permission to make medical decisions on your behalf.





### *Exercise and playtime*

Communicate to the sitter how much exercise and playtime your pet should receive daily. Setting these expectations can help reduce the likelihood of your four-legged friend getting into trouble when left alone for long periods.

### *Behavior expectations*

Let your sitter know of any pet behavioral challenges in advance. For example, if your pet jumps on a sofa or chair and it's a no-no in your home, leave instructions for what action to take if they do. If they use a crate or wear a muzzle or harness, give clear directions on how to use them.

### *Pet safety*

Remove any harmful items, such as plants, trash, and cleaning supplies, and keep your pet comfortable by setting the thermostat to a cool temperature, especially in summer.

If you have a fenced backyard, make sure all gates are locked to prevent your animal companion from wandering away.

### *Supplies*

Store your first aid kit, poop bags, cleaning supplies, and ancillary items like toys, dog carriers, harnesses, leashes, litter, and pee pads readily available and in easy-to-reach places, such as in a pet-dedicated box.

## ***Home preparation***

If you've hired a house sitter, don't overlook the importance of providing a comfortable and welcoming environment for them. Supply clean sheets and towels, and be sure to stock your refrigerator and pantry with some food basics.

### *Essential information*

Provide vital information—your trip itinerary, the best method of communication (phone, email, or through the hotel), and emergency numbers—for neighbors or family members.



### *Home security*

If you have an alarm system, leave the code and alarm company information in an easy-to-access location as well as instructions for how to secure your home when leaving. Also, give your neighbor a spare key, or find a hiding spot for one outside your home.

### *Home upkeep*

Inform your sitter of any scheduled help that will come during your absence, such as a housekeeper or landscaper. Make sure they know the location of the fuse box and the water shut-off as well as where to pick up and leave the mail in your home.

***Using these tips to prep your home and pet sitter before your much-anticipated summer vacation can help you enjoy it more, knowing your pet and home are being properly cared for.***





# Five Ideas to Upgrade Your MAILBOX

written by: ANDRE RIOS

Mailboxes are home essentials, but they don't all have to look similar. If you've grown tired of a plain, neutral mailbox, consider these five creative concepts that can boost your home's curb appeal.

## 1. THE HOBBYIST

Wouldn't it be a little more interesting to pop open a fish's mouth when you check your mail? Design your mailbox around personal hobbies for a curb feature that's wholly unique to you. Companies like the MailboxWorks supply novelty boxes with hobbyist themes like fishing, golf, and the arts. You can also order custom boxes inspired by your interests from Etsy creators.

## 2. MULTICOLORED AND ECCENTRIC

Of course, you don't need to buy a whole new mailbox to boost its curb appeal. Consider painting yours a bright, adventurous color that catches people's attention from down the street. Do you need color inspiration? Match your mailbox with floral colors in your landscaping or accent colors in your home's facade.

## 3. GREEN THUMB PLANTER BOX

You can also use your mailbox to bring lush foliage right up to the curb. Install a brick or wooden planter beside your mailbox, and plant attractive flora to share a little sweet aroma and color with your mail carrier.

## 4. FLAGGED

Show your pride with a mailbox that doubles as a flag post. Install a simple flag bracket on one side of your mailbox to hang a flag at a 45-degree angle, or install a horizontal post so your flag can droop straight downward. Fly the US flag, your alma mater's flag, or even a personal-interest banner.

## 5. ELEGANT WROUGHT IRON

Mailboxes can be quirky and fun, but if you want to lend elegant dignity to your curb, install a mailbox made of intricate wrought iron. Weather-resistant and sure to impress, a wrought-iron mailbox atop a stone or brick base will make your house the most impressive address on the block.

*If a plain, forgettable mailbox is giving you the itch to get creative, try one of these five unique ideas. You can upgrade your mailbox from a curbside necessity to a feature that will turn heads.*

*Alyson Tiedeman*  
Mortgage Loan Officer  
NMLS# 2393414  
(954) 560-8142  
alyson@malhomeloans.com  
malhomeloans.com

  
2645 Executive Park Dr.  
Suite 123  
Weston, FL 33331





*"The Dynamic Duo"*

*Jackie Bacaris*  
Realtor®  
Canvas Real Estate  
(954) 347-3037  
www.justsoldwithjackie.com  
jbacaris@canvasre.com

  
2883 Executive  
Park Dr. Suite 201  
Weston, FL 33331

When it comes to finding your perfect home and financing it, we're the DYNAMIC DUO you can count on! Our partnership creates a winning combination and means you get the best of both worlds: Expert Real Estate Knowledge and Unbeatable Mortgage Options!

Jackie and Alyson create a seamless experience for homebuyers offering expert advice, guidance, support, and a smooth path to homebuying and financing. The collaboration results in streamlined communication, enhanced market knowledge, a seamless financing process, increased negotiating power, and effective problem-solving.

Together, they form a DYNAMIC DUO, dedicated to helping their clients achieve their homeownership dreams!

Alyson, originally from New Jersey, has called Florida home since 1997 and now resides in Weston with her husband of 23 years, their two amazing boys and Coco, their beloved Maltipoo. Alyson loves hanging out by the pool and always up for entertaining and cooking. Alyson loves to vacation anywhere in the tropics but her heart is on the baseball field watching her boys play. Alyson loves spending time with her family and making lasting memories is most important to her.

Leveraging her extensive 20+ years of finance experience, Alyson offers personalized expert advice and goes above and beyond for her clients as she guides them through the loan process with full transparency. With direct wholesale pricing and access to hundreds of products, Alyson is committed to finding the best financing options at the most competitive rates for each unique circumstance. With her First-Class, Concierge Service, she values each and every one of her clients and is available to them seven days a week, ensuring that they receive the attention and support they deserve. Whether you're purchasing a new home, refinancing your current one, or considering real estate investments, Alyson will be there every step of the way throughout the entire loan process, making sure it remains smooth, simple, and fast.

Jackie, a proud native of Florida was born and raised in Pembroke Pines, one of the fastest-growing cities in the state and now resides in Davie with her family. Having spent her entire life here, she possesses an authentic understanding of the local real estate landscape. Since growing up in the sunshine state, Jackie loves a vacation anywhere in a snowy destination. But, spending quality time and creating memories with her husband of 24 years, her 2 children and her 2 adored Labradors is where her heart is.


With an impressive 18 years of experience and a passion for the industry, Jackie has dedicated herself to delivering an exceptional real estate experience resulting in successful outcomes for her clients. With her extensive wealth of knowledge and expertise, she provides invaluable guidance to her buyers, sellers and investors. Jackie continues to stay at the forefront of the real estate industry trends as it evolves to become more innovative and efficient. She has a meticulous attention to detail and applies all of the latest in digital marketing, live media content and home staging. Jackie's remarkable negotiating skills, incredible marketing strategies and transparent communication provides peace of mind and confidence for a seamless process when buying or selling your home!

Alyson and Jackie are described as the hard working, "get it done" professionals who will guide you through your homeownership goals. Experience the exceptional service and personalized solutions that this DYNAMIC DUO offer and please refer them to your friends and family!

It's *Good to Be Home* with Alyson and Jackie by your side!




# Front of Tear Out Card 2




*Garden Herb*  
**CHEESE CURDS**

The perfect bite-sized rendition of mozzarella sticks. Squeaky cheese curds are battered and seasoned with fresh herbs and garlic before being fried to a crisp.




**Alyson Tiedeman | NMLS #2393414**  
Mortgage Lender



**Cell:** (954) 560-8142  
**Email:** alyson@malhomeloans.com  
**malhomeloans.com**

**Mortgage Advantage Lending**  
2645 Executive Park Dr.  
Suite 123  
Weston, FL 33331



# Back of Tear Out Card 2

**INGREDIENTS:**

- Oil, for frying
- 1 c. flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- ½ tsp. cayenne pepper
- 1 tbsp. fresh dill, chopped
- 1 tbsp. fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 tbsp. fresh basil, chopped
- 1 c. buttermilk
- 2 eggs
- 2 lb. cheese curds

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

**Serves 4**

1. Preheat oil in a deep fryer or large Dutch oven to 350°F.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, salt, garlic, cayenne, dill, parsley, and basil until blended. Whisk in buttermilk and eggs until smooth. Keep refrigerated until ready to fry.
3. To fry, dredge a handful of curds into the batter, and remove with a fork or slotted spoon. Carefully drop into the fryer, and fry for 4–5 minutes or until golden brown and crispy. Let drain on a rack or paper towel before serving.

*Tip:* These tasty curds can be served with marinara sauce, garlicky mayonnaise, spicy mustard, or ketchup.

**Calories: 675 | Fat: 60g | Carbs: 12g**  
**Protein: 24g | Sugar: 2g**





**Alyson Tiedeman | NMLS #2393414**

Mortgage Advantage Lending  
2645 Executive Park Drive Suite 123  
Weston, FL 33331

➤ IT'S MORE THAN JUST BEING A GOOD MORTGAGE PROFESSIONAL...

A GOOD  
MORTGAGE PROFESSIONAL IS  
*a great listener.*

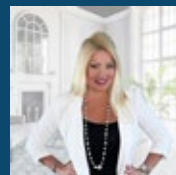


Every client presents me with a unique combination of needs, goals, and circumstances.

There is no "cookie-cutter" way to advise a mortgage transaction, so

STEP 1 IS ALWAYS "LET'S TALK."

LISTENING HELPS ME UNDERSTAND MY CLIENTS. **UNDERSTANDING LEADS THEM HOME.**



**Alyson Tiedeman | NMLS #2393414**

Mortgage Lender  
Mortgage Advantage Lending  
Weston, FL  
[alyson@malhomeloans.com](mailto:alyson@malhomeloans.com)

**(954) 560-8142**