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## PUBLISHER

O'Keefe Publishing, Inc.

## EDITOR

John O'Keefe

## ACCOUNTING MANAGER

Donna O'Keefe

## ADVERTISING

John O'Keefe

johno@jbprinting.com

269-547-0333

269-349-9601 (JB Printing)

## CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Zinta Aistars

Barbara Fisher

Linda Hoard

## PRODUCTION

O'Keefe Publishing, Inc.

## PRINTING & MAILING

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Terri Bennett, John Fahl,

Mike Fahl, Randy Fischer,

Brian Fulbright, Carl Gillespie,

Shannon Long, Mike Majors,

Bert Meinema, Randy Viers

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3111 Lake Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49048

Phone 269-547-0333 / 269-349-9601

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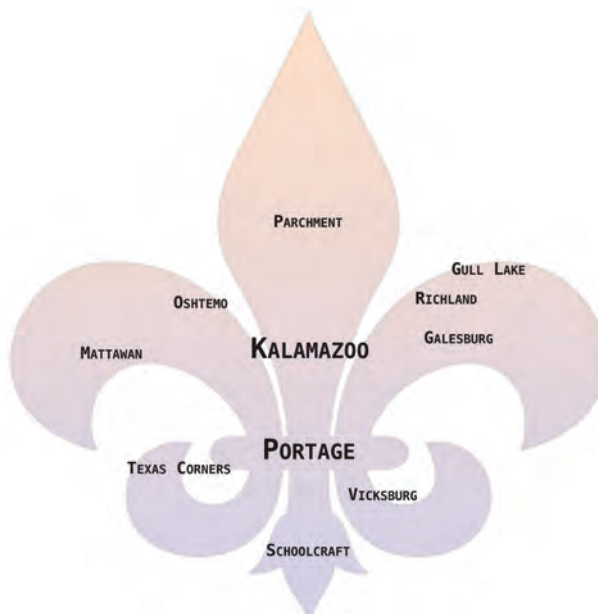
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# Mexican Casserole

Photography by Linda Hoard

Looking for a crowd-pleasing and flavorful dish to impress your guests? Look no further than this irresistible Mexican casserole recipe! Passed down from a dear friend many years ago, this dish has become a staple for company and special occasions. With a comforting polenta base, perfectly seasoned Tex-Mex ground beef, and layers of ooey-goey cheese and tangy sour cream, this casserole is a guaranteed hit.

The combination of the creamy polenta, the savory and slightly spicy beef, and the generous amount of melted cheese creates a harmonious blend of flavors that will leave everyone craving for more. Whether you're hosting a dinner party or simply want to treat your loved ones to a delicious homemade meal, this Mexican casserole is sure to impress. So gather your ingredients and get ready to indulge in a dish that will create lasting memories around the dinner table.

## Corn Meal/Polenta Layer:

- 2 cups boiling water
- 1 cup corn meal
- 1 cup nonfat dry milk
- 1 cup milk

## Beef Layer:

- 2 lb. lean ground beef
- 1 4.5 oz. can mild chopped green chilis
- 1 10.5 oz. can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 package taco seasoning
- 1 8 oz. can tomato sauce
- 1 6 oz. can tomato puree
- 1 onion, chopped

## Toppings:

- 3/4 lb. cheddar cheese, grated
- 12 oz. sour cream
- 3/4 lb. Monterey Jack cheese, grated
- 1/2 cup chopped cherry tomatoes
- 2-3 sliced green onions
- 1/2 cup sliced black olives

Preheat oven to 350.

To prepare the polenta layer, start by boiling water and adding dry milk and regular milk. Gradually add cornmeal to the mixture while stirring continuously to prevent the formation of lumps. Continue cooking and stirring for about 10 minutes until the mixture begins to thicken. Spread 1/2 of the polenta/cornmeal mixture into a 9x13 inch baking pan.

To prepare the beef layer, brown the ground beef with chopped onion. Add the remaining ingredients and simmer for 10 minutes. Spread the ground beef mixture over the cornmeal layer in the baking pan.

To create the next layer, evenly distribute tablespoons of the remaining polenta over the ground beef. Generously layer grated cheddar cheese on top. Place the dish in the preheated oven and let it bake for 20 minutes, until the cheese is melted and bubbly.

Once done, carefully take the dish out of the oven and evenly spread a layer of sour cream on top. Sprinkle grated Monterey Jack cheese over the sour cream layer, then add the combination of fresh tomatoes, green onions, and black olives as toppings. Return the dish to the oven and bake for an additional 15 minutes, allowing all the flavors to meld together beautifully.

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Jordan and Brandon DeHaan  
with their father, DRS founder,  
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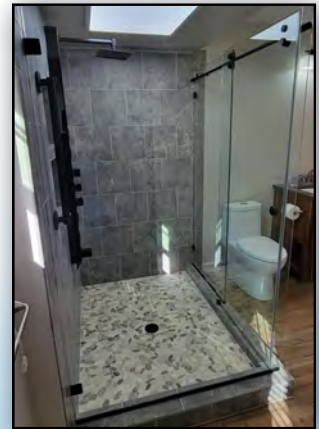
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# Bring in the Light

By Zinta Aistars

Have you ever noticed how light can dramatically change a scene? The most ordinary space suddenly appears inviting and warm. A slant of light through the window seems to touch the room with magic.

While it may be preferable to darken a bedroom for deeper sleep, the rest of the home beckons for the warming glow of light.

DESIGNERS HAVE MANY SUGGESTIONS FOR BRIGHTENING YOUR HOME:

- Clean the windows. As the dirt and grime of the days accumulates so very little by little, we may not realize that our windows have gotten a little foggy over time. From the outside, there may be souvenirs of passing birds splashed across the windowpane. Raindrops have streaked across that glass, and the occasional leaf has pasted itself to the surface. Fill a spray bottle with one part vinegar to two parts water and give that window a splash. You may be surprised at how much more light shines in freshly cleaned windows.

- Eliminate clutter. Stuff, lots of stuff, has a way of closing a room in on you and casting shadows. Decluttering is always a good idea, but in the process, you will find that a room with fewer things in it, whether a myriad of souvenirs collecting dust

on shelves or walls filled with a collage of frames or one too many pieces of furniture in dark shades can make a room feel stifling and claustrophobic. The less there is in your room, the airier and brighter it will feel.

- Rearrange and rethink your furniture. Arrange your furniture to open space around windows rather than block entry of natural light. Consider replacing darkly colored, older pieces with new pieces of lighter colors and natural materials such as rattan and in more streamlined shapes. When choosing wood pieces, opt for the blonder woods. Rather than obstruct the light with your furniture, arrange the room to focus on it.

- Freshen the walls with a new coat of paint. Wall color can make a big difference in how bright a room looks and feels. A fresh coat of paint will instantly brighten the room—even if you choose the same color. Choose a lighter color—and yes, white works best—and the effect of bringing in more light will be even more pronounced.

- Add reflective elements. If one slant of light adds brightness to the room, the effect can be multiplied with strategic placement of mirrors to reflect the light coming through windows back again. Especially in a small room or tight hallway, a mirror placed to reflect the space can give the illusion of making it airier and more spacious. Mirrors and metallic surfaces can help to bounce light into the darkest corners.



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- Go light on window treatments. Heavy, dark drapes will block light and darken a room even when open. Save those for a restful bedroom. Hanging sheers instead of drapes will offer a measure of privacy while allowing the light in. Extend curtain rods beyond the window at the sides so that open curtains do not obstruct any of the window.

- Add lighting fixtures throughout the room. Overhead lighting may not always be the best choice as it can sometimes create a harsher light rather than a warm glow. Place lamps in the darker corners that need them most. Tuck task lighting under shelving to add even more light on your favorite items. Bright white LED light bulbs with higher lumens will make the most of your lighting. String lights can be a fun addition. Dimmer switches allow you to adjust the light throughout the day.

- Choose lighter colors for flooring. Whether wood, luxury vinyl, or tile, choose lighter colors and patterns. If installing new flooring is not in your budget, add a rug in bright colors. In a room with white walls, a brightly colored rug adds a pop of color. Especially if your room has darker colors in it—walls or furniture or cabinetry—choosing a lightly colored floor will bring balance.

- Get green. Adding greenery to your room can brighten the space. If you don't have a green thumb, shop for faux

options—they are now available at a quality that can fool most anyone. Big, bold plants can make a statement while brightening your space.

- Lighten up on the accessories. You may have afghans and pillows on your couch—most of us do. A dark blanket or dark pillows can absorb light while replacing them with lighter and brighter colors can be just the touch to bring the room alive without darkening it.

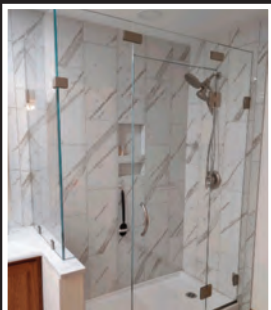
- Don't forget the more hidden spaces. While you may be the only one spending time there, adding lights to your utility spaces, laundry and mud rooms, and food pantries will be appreciated. Cabinetry and cupboards can be painted in light colors. Undercounter lighting will shine a light on areas where you are folding clothes. A well-lit closet makes choosing the right sweater and finding the shoes you wanted quicker and easier. You did mean to find the navy-blue socks rather than the black ones, right?

Bringing the light into your living space is not just about esthetics. Research shows that spending time in brighter spaces can enhance mood, creativity, and cognitive function. Stand in the light and feel your spirit soar!





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Photo courtesy of Andersen and Hannapel

# The In and Out of It

By Zinta Aistars

**T**he entry and exit from a home, from a room, can be your first and last impression of a space. The number of options for that all-important impression may surprise you—interior and exterior doors, screen and storm doors, barn doors and French doors, hinged, bifold, sliding, and multi-slide patio doors, steel and fiberglass doors, wood doors, wood-grained or smooth, and more.

It may be enough to send you running for the nearest door. Thankfully, experts are available to guide you to the right door.

Chad Szymczak, manager for the South Haven branch of Hannapel, specializes in doors. “Let’s begin with entry doors,” he said. “There are basically three types—steel, fiberglass, or wood. Fiberglass is the most common. Probably 90 percent of the doors we sell over the past 10 years are fiberglass. Steel and wood are on the lower side. Steel can be less expensive, but fiberglass has a more resilient surface. It doesn’t rust or dent. And steel tends to feel chillier to the touch than fiberglass in cold weather.”

Fiberglass can also be painted, Szymczak said, or even stained the same way wood can be.

“Wood doors can be beautiful, but they need more upkeep,” he said. “Those who buy wood doors—that may be about five percent of our door sales—simply prefer the feel of wood. And there are all kinds of wood, so the price range can vary widely.”

Along with the entry door comes another—the storm or screen door. While the terms are often used interchangeably, the two types are quite different. A screen door is the simplest type, steel or fiberglass with a screen to allow for air flow. A storm door offers the option of screen or glass. Some storm doors have retractable or interchangeable screens and glass, so that one can easily slide over the other.

“Then there are also retractable screens that roll into a canister at one side of the door, so that it is right there at hand,” said Szymczak. “It all comes down to personal preference.”

*Great Things Local®*







Photo courtesy of Pella Windows and Doors

## THE DOOR WITHIN

When it comes to interior doors, options seem to lean to more simple designs. Options include hollow or solid core, sliding or louvre, barn or pocket doors, usually wood. Finishes and designs can match whatever style the homeowner prefers, adding visual interest to indoor spaces.

"Barn doors have been popular, but people soon realize they don't give you complete privacy for, say, a bathroom or bedroom door," Szymczak said. "They still have those open edges. If space is a concern, with no room for swing doors, then pocket doors are another option, sliding into the wall rather than swinging out into the room."

Aside from entry doors and interior doors, Steve Stanley, a senior trade account sales executive at Pella Windows and Doors of West Michigan also adds a variety of patio doors—hinged French doors, swing or sliding, bifold, and multi-slide options.

"A swing patio door is a two-panel hinged door with one side swinging open," Stanley said. "One panel then lays against the other, and there can be a sliding screen. With a French door, both sides open with the door handle in the center. They can open up a six-foot wide space, so French doors are more convenient when you want to be able to move larger things from one area to the other."

Sliding glass doors don't swing in, but they can be very functional, with two panels opening a five- to 10- foot-wide space.

"The advantage of sliding doors is that you don't lose any floor space as you do with swing doors," he said. "Doors are also trending taller now than they used to be, up to 10 feet tall. Another newer trend are our multi-slide and bifold doors. They don't allow for screening, so bugs can be an issue, but these types of doors allow you to stack up panels, one over the other, so that you can open up an entire wall of a room to the outdoors."

## THE FINAL STEP OF INSTALLATION

Both Hannapel and Pella Windows and Doors offer some installation options, but many homeowners choose their own favorite contractor or handyman to install the doors they have chosen.

Curt Lanser of Lanser Remodeling is an independent contractor who has been installing doors for more than 12 years.

"Look for those good references whenever choosing an installer," Lanser said. "Doors can be a relatively simple installation, but it is always a good idea to have something in writing up front. That protects both parties."

The installer will come out to take measurements of the space for your door prior to your purchase. On older homes, he will check the door jambs or thresholds for any rotting wood that may need to be replaced. He will make sure the threshold is level so that the door will fit right.

"Most doors now are pre-hung," he said. "That means you have a package of door and jambs that can fit right into that space. Interior doors are easier to install, while exterior doors will need to be properly sealed. Installers use different kinds of insulation around doors—batt or foam. I prefer batt insulation, because I have found spraying foam around the edges can expand and push in the door jamb."

Installation for an interior door, Lanser said, can take approximately an hour. An exterior door may take as much as four hours, depending on if the home is older or new construction.

A quality door, properly installed, will add not only to the appearance and visual interest of your home, but will also bring energy efficiency benefits, keeping your home more comfortable in cold as well as in hot weather.





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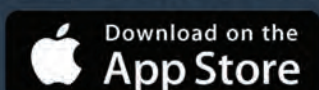
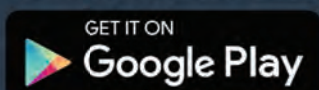
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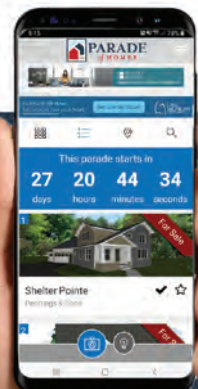
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# Fit and Finish

By Zinta Aistars

Feature Photography by Jim Schuon Photography

*T*hey hear it again and again as friends and family drive up to the house.

“WAIT. IS THIS THE RIGHT HOUSE?”

It is. It is not only the right house, but it is now the perfect house. It is the residence of Katie and John Stark, situated at the end of a wooded, private lane and overlooking Gull Lake in Richland, Michigan.

“We bought the house in February 2014,” said John Stark, CEO of a biotech company. “I’m originally from Detroit, but Katie and I met in Rhode Island, where she’s from, and we decided to merge our families. Growing up, I had always heard about Gull Lake, so on a bit of whim, we decided to look for a house in this area.”

Built in 1994, the 3,880-square-foot cedar home with five bedrooms and five bathrooms was surrounded by two acres. It was just what the family of a combined five children were seeking.

“Back then, it met our needs,” John said. “It was in three feet of snow when we first saw it, so as the snow melted, we found we needed a few fix-ups over the years.”

A few fix-ups would eventually turn into a recent major renovation, making the original house almost unrecognizable.

“From concept to completion, the renovation took about two years,” Katie said.

“To begin,” John said, “the house had settled about an inch, so windows would pop and doors wouldn’t close right. And there were water issues. We had the land contoured and the house raised to stabilize it.”

“But the house was dated,” Katie said. “It was all knotty pine before, and I’m not a fan. We waited until we could do it right and do the big overhaul—from the cedar lodge type of a house into a lake house.”

To do the job, the Starks brought in R. VanDyke Building and Remodeling, founded by Randy VanDyke in 1981.

“Fit and finish, that’s what we deliver,” said Josh VanDyke, son of Randy and now owner of R. VanDyke Building and Remodeling. “We blend good exterior and interior design. Advice that we give to people when they are in the beginning stages of designing their home is to simply trust the process. When you couple an expertise in home building with the knowledge of great design professionals, it really comes together. Our first question to the client at the beginning of a









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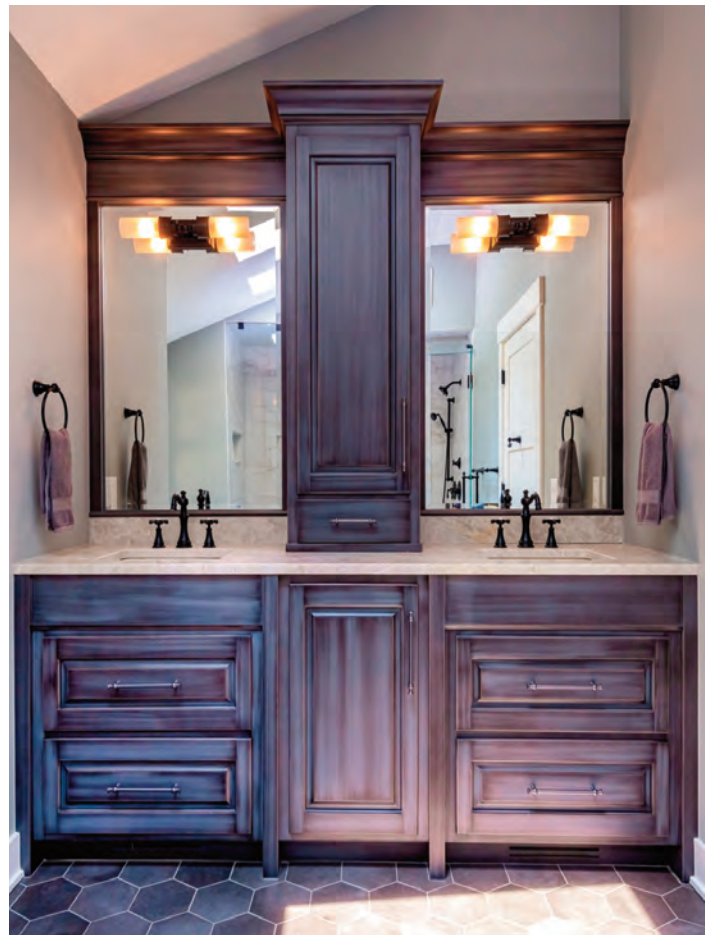


















project is to ask what a typical day in their home is, and we start from there."

VanDyke brought in a team to help in the complete renovation of the home—John Schultz, architect; Corrie Kirshman of Kirshman Kitchen Design Studio to assist in interior design; Ken Murray of Murray Landscaping to landscape the grounds.

"The kitchen was dated and needed a big overhaul," Katie said. "We learned that in 'Corrie we trust!' She got out of us what we wanted, harmonized the whole process, and made it happen."

The size of the kitchen was doubled. A tiny window became three large windows in the bright white kitchen. The new double stove had eight burners to feed the largest family gathering. An oversized island and counters were topped with what is called leathered granite—a type of granite that is textured rather than smooth, with dips, divots, and fissures. Appliances are stainless steel, and then there's the wine fridge for that evening moment of relaxation.

"Because the kitchen is the hub," said John, who is the usual family cook. "There were a thousand decisions to be made about the house that you may not even anticipate. It grew from there. The team opened our eyes to the opportunities."

Those other opportunities brought a lot more light into the home by replacing 16-foot windows with 38-foot windows. Light colored walls in most every room reflected the natural light streaming through the windows. The main floor was expanded by about 800 square feet, the living room opened to the dining room, and the master bedroom was reoriented for more privacy with a small hallway leading to it along with an additional second closet and an en suite with skylight and immense walk-in shower.

The home's two fireplaces received new mantels. The fireplace in the great room was moved to the opposite side and

constructed with rock harvested from Mackinac Island while the second fireplace received restored brick.

Flooring in all but bedrooms and tiled bathrooms is a white European knotty oak.

"We have three dogs and a cat, so the floors are easy to keep clean, too," said Katie.

The finished basement highlights a large theatre room with five theatre seats and nine speakers for surround sound, a sixth bedroom, and two large sliding glass doors leading to the outdoors. An unfinished recreation room holds ping pong and pool tables.

The Starks said one of their favorite features in the renovated home is the outdoor space with new screened-in porches and patios, front and back.

"There are few places in the house now where you don't have a view of the lake and the woods," John said. When all was said and done, he added, "the only parts of the house that didn't get renovated were the roof and one of the brick walls in the basement."

The Starks advice to homeowners considering a renovation is, John said, "you can't possibly know it all. Get the architect and the builder that you can trust."

"We value our customers having peace of mind, and we aim to gain their confidence very early on by taking their vision and expanding on it with them," Josh VanDyke said. "It is when we walk through a completed home for the first time with the homeowner that we look back and recount every detail we included or a feature we added along the way—all the countless conversations, the hours spent, and every decision made. We know that we've left the kind of impression we strive for when we hear that homeowners have shared with their friends just how much fun they've had building!"



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# How would your Pet rate your Home?

By Barbara Fisher

**P**et ownership, like parenthood, comes with responsibility. How might your pet rate your home if it could talk? Pets have all sorts of ways of making themselves heard (some ways more appreciated than others) but, let's face it, sometimes there are just gaps in communication. We've got the love, understanding and compassion for our pets down, so what are some tips to make our homes more pet friendly?

Tabitha Sukhai (This Old House) suggests doing an all-fours inspection of your home; no not to check for dust bunnies under the bed! "You'd be surprised at the dangers a periodic inspection of your home can reveal," she says. Staff at Dee-Tails in Plainwell, a cage-free doggy day care and boarding service, pooled their knowledge and echoed the safety angle of creating a secure and safe home for your pet. Says Robert Fisher, DVM, former Chief Medical Officer with the Michigan Humane Society, longevity of your pet is improved with keeping your pet safe.

## SAFETY FIRST.

- A fenced yard or collar system for outdoor safety. This is especially needed for dogs who tend to bolt without a thought to cars. And for dogs who tend to be aggressive with strangers.

- Baby gates or other barriers.

- Lids on trash cans; bonus points for locking lids. Apart from the mess of pets getting into the trash, bone fragments and other choking hazards lurk. This Old House cites that even natural contaminants in the trash can cause disability, or worse (think coffee grounds and chocolate).

- Keep toilet lids down. You know why! Plus, toilet bowls represent a drowning risk to smaller pets that manage to fall in. Many families use automatic bowl cleaners, says Sukhai; minimize poisoning risks by keeping the lid down.

- A crate for those times when confinement is a must.

- Make sure cupboards or pantries are secured; this includes the garage. Each year thousands of pets die from antifreeze poisoning. Dee-Tails points out that many sweets now contain Xylitol which can cause liver damage. Something as innocent as nutmeg can cause tremors, seizures and central nervous damage. The ASPCA website contains a list of people food that shouldn't be ingested by pets.

- Cats aren't known for turning on stove burners but dogs jumping up to check things out is another matter.

- Cats are known for turning up their nose at litter boxes if the box gets too dirty or if the location is undesirable.

- Some house plants are toxic to pets. Before bringing new plants home, check out pet friendliness. Inventory existing plants when introducing a new free-roaming pet to your home. The ASPCA offers a comprehensive list of toxic plants. If your pet spends time outdoors on its own, do an inventory on plants in the yard. Says the ASPCA, insecticides and fertilizers have been among the top 10 pet poisons.

- Make sure human food and medications aren't kept where pets can reach (we all have stories of dogs' resourcefulness in dragging dinner off the counter or cats jumping up on a counter to sample the chicken intended for guests.)

- Keep pets' living quarters inside stresses the Humane Society; this reduces lost or stolen animals, infectious disease, trauma (being hit by cars), socialization issues, etc.

- Feeding time ranks right up there with pets; make sure it's safe. Buying in bulk is great, but as Sukhai references in her article, proper storage is a must. Avoid contamination (don't dip food bowls in the bag or storage container), avoid a location where the food will suffer from temperature extremes that can leach dyes and additives into food over time. Store where insects and rodents can't make a feast of food intended for your pet.

## PET COMFORTS MATTER.

- Easy and constant access to clean, fresh water.

- Mental and physical enhancements. Toys and other enrichments to stimulate their minds and provide something to do (otherwise pets will find their own diversions.) Provide opportunities for socialization, training, play time, interaction with owners, walking, etc.

- A place to sleep.

- Don't forget pet treats!

- Because pets and humans share the same space, invest in a good vacuum cleaner to keep upholstery and carpets free of pet hair. Grooming frequently with a bath thrown in now and again goes a long way in keeping a house free of fur, dirt brought in, pet oils (and worse). Many experts recommend having an area where the pets exit and enter the house where muddy paws and other undesirables can be addressed before pets gallop through the rest of the house spreading their gifts. Grooming



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goes for cats, too. It'll help with those hair balls.

- Keep in mind carpet placement and furniture coverings when introducing pets. Some upholstery and carpeting is more forgiving than others.

Consider the SIMPLE strategy from the Michigan Humane Society (developed by Fisher and a colleague) to ensure pet stay healthy through wellness and preventative care. Don't forget a license for your dog.

- Sterilization
- Immunization
- Microchip
- Parasite control
- Life choices (diet, weight management, exercise)

- Examination

Reminds Sukhai and the Michigan Human Society, if pests and parasites are on your pet (think fleas and ticks) then they are in your house.

**SMALL ANIMALS.** Sukhai has tips for them, too!

- Hamsters. Did you know the average hamster lives to be three years old? Keep this in mind when purchasing one. Like pet mice, hamsters tend to be active at night. Confined to a cage, for obvious reasons, make sure their exercise wheel runs silently. Do your homework on grouping hamsters (or mice) in the same cage (breeding considerations, hostilities between adults, etc.)

- Birds. "Cage placement is very important," says Sukhai. Keep your bird away from drafts and direct heat. Many birds need to have a safe corner in their cage making middle of the room placement threatening. Placement near a window can stress your bird out every time it sees what it views as a predator outside. Kitchens are not a good location for cage placement; birds have sensitive respiratory systems. Some birds need socialization; do your research before making a bird a pet.

- Other pets. There are similar tips for rabbits, guinea pigs, fish, frogs, snakes and turtles, reptiles and amphibians (reptiles live a LONG time and salmonella is present in 90% of all exotic reptiles) in the article from This Old House.

To safer and more comfortable homes for our pets!

Resources:

[www.thisoldhouse.com/pets/21015549/how-to-make-your-home-pet-friendly](http://www.thisoldhouse.com/pets/21015549/how-to-make-your-home-pet-friendly)  
[www.aspc.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/dogs-plant-list](http://www.aspc.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/dogs-plant-list) (there is also a list for cats)

[www.aspc.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/people-foods-avoid-feeding-your-pets](http://www.aspc.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/people-foods-avoid-feeding-your-pets)



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# The Roof Overhead

By Zinta Aistars

Just as you lie back on the couch at the end of the workday, taking a moment to relax, you notice it. A rusty yellow spot is taking shape on the ceiling in the corner of your room. Looks a little like a baby octopus. You are not amused.

A water leak in the ceiling is often the first sign a homeowner notices indicating that it is time to check the roofing.

"When you see a leak in your home, or when you notice that the shingles on your roof are beginning to curl, that's when people usually first realize it is time for a new roof," said Kelsey Cohoon, office manager at Roach Home Improvement, LLC in Battle Creek.

Perhaps when cleaning out gutters, you also notice moss growing on the roof shingles or rusty patches and streaks. Here and there, a shingle may be missing, blown away in the last windstorm. Dark discoloration is evidence that your roof is showing its age.

Still other signs of an aging roof can be heating and cooling bills that are increasing, according to Lyster Exteriors in Kalamazoo. Even when leaks aren't apparent, fluctuations in heating and cooling may indicate weak spots in the roof that are allowing air leaks.

The roof of your home is not only a vital part of maintaining a solid and well-maintained property, but it also adds to curb appeal. While adding a quality roof to new construction is obvious, replacing a roof on an older home may require a little more homework.

According to the experts at Lyster Exteriors, "Many times a roof can be repaired rather than replaced. Leaks can result from flashings that have come loose or a section of the roof system being damaged. A complete roof system failure, however, generally is irreversible and a result of improper installation or the choice of materials or roof system installation that is

inappropriate for the home or building. Our experienced and trained estimators will assess your roof condition and offer an appropriate solution to your problems."

Different types of roofing have different life spans, Cohoon at Roach Home Improvement said. "The typical asphalt shingle roof can last 20 to 30 years. It can depend on the environment around your home. Trees around the house can cause damage, so it's a good idea to trim them back from your home. Keep those gutters cleaned out. Regularly cleaning off your roof is good practice, but the most important factor to prolonging the life of your roof is ventilation."

If you are still unsure about the age of your roof—or you are considering a home purchase—and what the house may need, a roof inspector will check not only the surface but also evaluate any damage not visible to the naked eye. Termites? Rotting below? An infrared scanner can help detect hidden problems.

Talking with previous homeowners can also indicate the last time the roof was replaced. A roofing or home inspection, if turning up any issues, can then help to make a decision about repairs or replacement.

## ONCE THE DECISION IS MADE

Options are many. The type of roofing can vary life spans. Along with asphalt shingles, others include architectural shingles (25 to 30 years), wood shingles (30 years when regularly maintained), clay tiles (50 years or more), slate tile (50 to 100+ years), or metal roofing (up to 70 years). Cost tends to go up with longevity of the roof, so budget constraints can be your decision-maker along with esthetics.

"We sell DECRA metal roofing, and that can be pricey, but it also lasts," Cohoon said. "Today, it doesn't only come in the



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sheets we used to see, but also metal shingles, so that the look is like any other roof."

The decision is made: your home needs a new roof. You have chosen the kind of shingles you want, you or your contractor have obtained a building permit, and it is time to begin. The next question may be—a tear-off and get back to the bones? Or shingle over the previous roof?

Michigan code states that no more than two layers of roofing materials plus total removal allow for the manufacturer's warranty to apply. That said, roofers at Roach state: "We do not recommend applying a new layer of shingles over the existing roof. At Roach, we want to remove all existing roofing material to ensure that the roof decking is adequate for the new roof application."

"If our customers demand it, we will do it, but we strongly recommend against it," Cohoon added. "If you just lay new over old, you really don't know what's under there. We want to replace the decking before we do the shingles. That's how we warranty our work; if we shingle over an old roof, we won't warranty the roof."

## ROOF MAINTENANCE STEPS

It's on. The house looks great. Heating and cooling bills normalize. No more interesting splotches are growing across your ceiling. Now to maintain and expand the lifetime of the new roof.

With the changing of Michigan seasons and climate, your roof can take a beating. A roof is a major investment and maintaining it can make a difference in longevity. Snowbanks, ice dams, animal damage and more—all can test the endurance of your roof.

"Again, ventilation is key," said Cohoon. "You want your roof to breathe. Good insulation in your attic can make a difference in preventing ice dams on your roof, caused by snow melt. Snow removal is part of maintenance, too. We don't have flat roofs in Michigan because we get so much snow."

A balanced attic ventilation system permits moisture-rich warm air to exit through exhaust vents. These are usually placed high along the roof ridge and allow cooler dry air to take its place. Intake vents along the soffits can also prevent ice dams. Clear soffits of debris when cleaning gutters.

Finally, if there are squirrels or raccoons or other animals causing damage to your roof, call your local animal control. Once they remove the animals, your roofing contractor can repair any damage.

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