

Recipe for a Healthy Home

AN INTERIOR DESIGNER TO THE RICH AND FAMOUS OFFERS PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR EVERY HOMEOWNER // BY BECCA HENSLEY

▶▶▶ **THE JOY OF** *Cooking*, first published in 1931, created a movement. Renowned for its conversational tone and its simple approach to cooking, this tome became a staple on the shelves of homes across America. Even the inimitable Julia Child learned to cook using its recipes and techniques.

Interior designer and entrepreneur Robin Wilson is attempting to achieve something similar, but her subject is the healthy home, as exemplified by her 2015 release, *Clean Design: Wellness for Your Lifestyle*. “Everyone can have a healthy home,” Wilson says. And she insists that that desire has found its moment. As we strive to live healthier lives—watching the food we eat and our fitness levels—it’s only natural that the home becomes part of that movement.

Home health follows a logic similar to cooking: There are certain ingredients and instructions that, when followed, result in a safe abode. The guideposts: sustainability, hypoallergenic materials, and avoiding VOCs, arsenic, and hydrofluorocarbons.

Wilson’s vocation arose from a very personal journey. She grew up in Austin, Texas, a city, which, for all its advantages—scenic, musical, and otherwise—is, according to Wilson, a veritable cache of allergens. The city’s medley of mold, pollen, and dust—all made more noxious by the city’s hot, humid climate—nearly incapacitated the future designer. “Do you know

that 60 million people in the United States suffer from allergies or asthma?” she asks, and recounts tales of having to stay indoors with her inhaler close at hand and watch other children play outdoors.

Things changed when the family visited a holistic doctor who offered some sage advice: “You can raise a strong child or raise a child on strong medicine.” That impressed Wilson’s parents,

who stripped their home of such allergy laboratories as heavy curtains and shag carpets. Fortified, Wilson exercised to strengthen her lungs. Slowly, as the family adopted a number of healthier options and streamlined their home, Wilson went from an afflicted person who used an inhaler daily to today’s fit specimen—a tireless entrepreneur, the mother of a toddler, and an ambassador for the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America who very rarely needs a puff.

Once a building contractor, the CEO and founder of Robin Wilson Home turned to design when clients wanted her to take the helm for every aspect of her construction projects—furniture, linens, and all. They were impressed by her passion for allergy-free interiors, and soon Wilson found herself creating entire interiors—projects that transformed her into a star of interior design and home product design. She worked on President Bill Clinton’s Harlem office, and environmentalist Robert F. Kennedy Jr. signed her up to renovate his home, complete with floors of reclaimed wood; the project resulted in the book *Kennedy Green House*. Yet Wilson remains adamant that clean interiors should rightfully belong to everyone: She says the method outlined in her book “is a lifestyle change, and it’s something you can do piecemeal, in steps. It does not have to overwhelm. I want people to know that they can change.”

