

Compliments of Connie Wood Miller

Good to Be HOME

issue 27

Summer Gatherings



Connie Wood Miller
REALTOR®

WHAT'S YOUR HOME
REALLY WORTH?

PIONEER
REALTY

SCAN TO SEE
YOUR CURRENT
HOME ESTIMATE!





What makes a place a home? Some would say the individual touches one adds to the space, while others would counter that it's the people who live there. This issue of Good to Be Home shines a spotlight on these different ways we define home by featuring a decor-focused cat furniture company, offering home-centric advice on cleaning, gardening, and more, and delving into the advantages of multigenerational living.

If you are a cat person, then you must read about The Refined Feline. Its founder, Josh Feinkind, delves into his company's mission and products, which add both functionality and fashion to a home.

With vacation season upon us, maintenance tends to get overlooked. You can improve your property inside and out by using the tips in the enclosed home-improvement articles. From crafting a cleaning plan to sprucing up your lawn and garden to making your abode more stylish, inspiration abounds in this issue.

These days, more and more people are choosing to make their households multigenerational. Through the guide inside, you'll discover the practical and mental benefits this type of arrangement can provide and get advice to help make it a win-win for everyone involved.

How will you put your personal stamp on your place? As always, it's a pleasure to send you this magazine because . . .

Your Happiness Is My Success!

Connie Wood Miller



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AND ASPARAGUS
SKILLET**



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PIONEER
REALTY



SERVES 6

- 3 tbsp. olive oil
- 1½ lb. boneless, skinless chicken tenderloins, sliced into strips
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- ½ c. drained and chopped sun-dried tomatoes
- 1 lb. asparagus, ends trimmed and cut in half
- 1 c. broccoli florets
- ½ c. basil pesto
- 1½ c. halved cherry tomatoes

GF *Gluten Free*

1. Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Season chicken tenders with salt and pepper then add to skillet along with sun-dried tomatoes. Sauté 7 to 10 minutes, until chicken is cooked through. Remove chicken and tomatoes from skillet and set aside.
2. Add asparagus and broccoli to hot skillet and sauté 6 to 10 minutes, until crisp tender. Remove vegetables from skillet.
3. Return chicken and tomatoes to skillet and stir in pesto. Cook over medium heat until chicken is heated through. Stir in cherry tomatoes and cooked vegetables.
4. Remove from heat and serve warm.

Per serving: Calories: 309 | Fat: 17.5g | Carbs: 11g | Fiber: 4.5g | Sugars: 4g | Protein: 27g

Recipe from *Healthy Eats with Six Sisters' Stuff: 101+ Delicious Recipes and Tips for a Healthy Family*. All photographs courtesy SixSistersStuff.com. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the publisher, Shadow Mountain. © 2020 Six Sisters' Stuff, LLC



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Craft a *Simple* Cleaning Plan

written by: DAKOTA DAMSCHRODER

When it comes to cleaning, it can be easy for essential tasks to slip through the cracks amid the busyness of life. However, there's a simple solution that may help—breaking down your typical chores into daily, weekly, and monthly categories. Use these timelines to create a tailored schedule that works for you, and you can better maintain your home without feeling overwhelmed.

Daily

Part of what can make a bigger cleaning session feel so intimidating is the buildup of clutter and residue that requires more time and effort to put back in order. Instead, identify tasks that could be worth doing for just a minute or two every day. For instance, you could wipe the kitchen counters and take care of any dishes each night. By tackling these chores piecemeal, you can prevent them from piling up and being a hassle to tackle later.

Weekly

At least once a week, you'll want to hit the areas where dust, dirt, and grime tend to accumulate the most. Generally speaking, this category will include tasks like dusting, vacuuming, and wiping down your toilets and

bathroom counters. You should also make sure to wash your bed linens weekly to ensure a continuously fresh and comfortable sleeping environment.

Monthly

This group is reserved for infrequent chores such as scrubbing the microwave, oven, refrigerator, cabinets, and ceiling fans. Do a walkthrough of your house to identify the areas you often overlook, then make a game plan of when to take care of them and how often. Not everything may need to be done every month, but having a list will help you stay on top of it all to keep your home clean and organized, contributing to a greater sense of well-being and peace of mind.



interview with: JOSH FEINKIND
written by: MATTHEW BRADY
photography courtesy of: THE REFINED FELINE

A Different Kind of Pet Furniture



Josh Feinkind, founder of The Refined Feline, discusses his company's luxury line of cat products and the impact stylish pet decor can have on a home.

Tell us how your company began:

Twenty years ago, I was living in a small apartment in northern New Jersey, and one of my roommates had an Abyssinian. The only cat furniture on the market back then was beige, shag-carpeted cat trees, but we wanted nice-looking things in our home. So I decided to create something that's not only functional but also stylish.

I put out a request to designers and got responses from all around the world. I then shared the designs on Yahoo! groups—that's how long ago this was—asking people to vote for their favorites

and took the two most popular ones to factories in China to develop prototypes. Unfortunately, that didn't work out so well. When we got the product from the first supplier, it was broken; they didn't package it for domestic shipping, so it was basically a bunch of wood parts thrown into a box with no packing materials. They also messed up the supports, drilling additional holes so the product looked like Swiss cheese. And the prototype from the second supplier was all green wood, which is inferior for furniture.

Luckily, someone in the pet industry recommended that I go to a trade show being held in nearby Atlantic City, where a Vietnam-based dog furniture manufacturer there told me they could make the items for us. That company has produced them ever since.



Why do customers love The Refined Feline?

Our motto is “Love your cat. Love your home,” which encapsulates what our customers want: great-looking products that are also great for their cats. Our stuff is well built and durable—it’s real furniture made of real wood with beautiful, authentic grain. In fact, some customers still use the same tower they bought twenty years ago. We even make upkeep easy with replacement parts for when features like carpeting get soiled, scratched, or worn.

People also tell us all the time that their product was a breeze to assemble or looks great in their home or that they’ve had one for years and are now buying a second to complement it. It’s a great feeling to make something that customers want to spend their hard-earned money on.

That said, every cat owner knows their pet will use a product, have zero interest in it, or merely play in the box

it came in. That’s just how it is, which is why we have a very liberal return policy: after sixty days, if you don’t love it or your cat doesn’t love using it, simply send it back to us. We don’t want our customers to be stuck with our product, and they appreciate that option.

What does such high-quality cat furniture bring to a home? The furniture is definitely a talking piece. For instance, our Lotus Cat Tower is almost six feet tall and made of bent wood, so guests immediately notice it because it doesn’t look like anything else out there. But at the same time, it’s not an eyesore—it blends with your home decor and brings something unique to the room. We want to provide the feeling of *This is a cat’s house, but we’ve got cool cat furniture.*





What are your most popular products?

Our first, the Lotus Cat Tower, is still our most popular one. Customers love our cat shelves as well, which complement the tower's look and color options, along with our litter box furniture, which comes in different sizes and keeps the box concealed but still accessible for the cat.

Also a hit: our newer customizable litter box cabinets. We make the base of the furniture out of wood, but you can take out the front panels and pop in a different style, such as cane-weave farmhouse, Shaker, or cottage. You can also choose the furniture's feet to be round, square, midcentury modern, etc. or opt for none at all.

Do you have any new items coming out?

We're really excited to bring Symba, our automated, refrigerated wet-food feeder, to market—it's going to be the Cadillac of its kind. Among other features, Symba keeps the food temperature at around 40 degrees, warms it before serving it, and allows you to set a schedule for it to be dispensed via the app whether you're home or away. We put a lot of thinking into this product and conducted over a year of customer feedback to make it the ideal pet food dispenser.

For more info, visit therefinedfeline.com





creating a captivating Container Garden

written by: LAUREN KIM

Are you looking to do some gardening this summer but lack the space or want to avoid the hassle of preparing a large garden plot in the sweltering heat? A lovely container garden or two might be your answer. These tips can help you grow luscious flowers, succulents, or vegetables and herbs that will look fantastic on your balcony or patio.



Select your plants

The most important element of a container garden is what goes in it, so you'll want to choose your plants with care. For an instant effect, purchase grown annuals from a local nursery; this will also help guarantee that they'll thrive in your region. Or you can consider starting from seed, though it will likely take at least a few weeks for your garden to look its best.

To achieve a dramatic and beautiful arrangement, opt for at least one plant in each of these categories: thrillers to attract attention, low-growing fillers for bulk, and spillers that flow over the edge. The first should be something that can steal the show, such as tall flowering zinnias or spiky aloe vera. The best fillers offer both color and texture—think bright petunias, leafy parsley, or delicate thyme. And as a final touch, add in spillers like ivy geraniums or sweet potato vines, which lend an opulent and dramatic look.

In addition, take note of the care requirements when making your selections, such as each plant's ideal amount of water and sunlight and how much room it needs to grow. You want to ensure that they're not only suitable for where you intend to put them but also able to live harmoniously together in one pot.

For instance, a container filled with drought-friendly succulents might be perfect for a sunny deck, while one featuring shade-loving options like tall ferns, begonias, and trailing coleus would work best on a covered patio. Likewise, a dwarf hydrangea, which requires a planter of at least sixteen inches wide and deep and prefers moist soil, wouldn't be a good companion for succulents, which may grow best when placed in a shallow container and watered sparingly.



Choose your vessel

While your plants' care needs are a major factor in determining the type of pot you decide on, you shouldn't overlook its appearance. The aesthetic it offers can make all the difference in the overall look of your container garden—a black urn can lend a stately vibe, a wooden window box a cottagey essence, and a well-used wheelbarrow something rustic, for example. The possibilities are virtually endless, so don't be afraid to get creative!

Tend to your plants

Give your garden a secure foundation by filling it with a nutrient-rich and well-draining potting mix. Watering needs will vary, but most summer plants will be frequently thirsty. Check them at least daily, and water them whenever the top inch of soil feels dry to the touch. You can further nourish them by adding a water-soluble fertilizer to your watering can; its packaging will note how frequently it should be applied.

Just like in any garden, weeds may appear among your plants, so be sure to pull them as soon as they pop up. Similarly, inspect often for pests like aphids and spider mites, dislodging any you find by spraying the leaves with a garden hose or an insecticidal soap. And to help your plants look their best, be sure to frequently pinch off spent blooms and remove dead branches and leaves.

It may only take minutes to plant a container garden, but its beauty can provide you with enjoyment for months to come—so start growing one of your own today!

Say GOODBYE to *OUTDATED* DECOR

written by:
ANDRE RIOS

Your home is a reflection of your sense of style, a collection of furniture, artwork, and more carefully curated to create your ideal ambience. But trends evolve, and what once felt like a must-have fad may now appear outdated, resulting in interiors that feel

stale and uninspired. If you're ready for a fresher, more modern design, check out this guide to some of the most common decorative elements that could be aging your home along with more stylish alternatives for breathing new life into your spaces.



MATCHING BEDROOM SETS

For those who prefer a clean and perfectly matched appearance for their primary bedrooms, a comprehensive furniture bundle—featuring an identical bed frame, side tables, vanities, and/or dressers—may certainly have seemed like the ideal solution in the past. But while such a set is convenient and cohesive, it can also make arguably the most personal space in your home feel like it’s right out of a furniture showroom: pretty and neat on the surface, yet ultimately dull and generic.

Instead, opt for distinct yet compatible pieces that lend a stylish look representative of your unique personality. A simple trick for achieving this is to vary the materials as you shop for new bedroom furniture. For example, you could select an upholstered bed frame, stone end tables, a wooden dresser, and a metallic vanity mirror, depending on your specific tastes. As for color, diversifying shades from very light to completely dark will create eye-catching variety. Curate your bedroom with variable selections, and you’ll imbue the space with a visually stunning range of hues and textures you won’t soon grow tired of.



WORD ART

“Live, Laugh, Love” was once the battle cry of American suburbia, but this and other word-based decor may have drawn their final breath. “No one needs to be told to ‘EAT’ while they’re in a kitchen,” designer Taylor Johnson tells Apartment Therapy. It’s time to swap these canned sayings for some more unique and striking wall decor.

Take a risk by embracing creative features such as framed original pieces from local artists (or prints if you’d like to save money) or antique paintings from secondhand shops. If you aren’t sure where to start, search for art that communicates the feeling those cliché statements are meant to illustrate; for example, replace the words “Don’t Worry, Be Happy” with an uplifting and bright-colored sketch for greater impact.

GLOSSY ACCENT DECOR

It’s hard to miss highly reflective and light-catching decorations, whether they’re made of glass, glazed ceramic, or shiny plastic. Such goods were once sought-after for their supposed elegance—before they became representative of mass-produced pieces that appear cheap and bland. So while they may have had their place in the sun, it’s now the era of matte pieces, which lend a much more tasteful touch to their surroundings.

To give any room a style update, upgrade items like lamps, vases, and candleholders to ones made from materials that are naturally nonreflective, such as stone, porcelain, or terra-cotta, in muted colors to guarantee that you get that sophisticated matte finish. Of course, if you still want to retain some glossy elements in a space, this is by no means forbidden; just opt for metal pieces instead. Such decor is timeless and appears naturally shiny, making it a stylish exception.



SHAGGY RUGS

Once synonymous with comfort due to their relaxed feel and long pile, shaggy rugs were common elements for crafting a welcoming living room or bedroom. However, they aren't without their drawbacks. Their dangling fibers can create a tripping hazard and tend to cling to messes and never let go, potentially spawning some unfortunate odors over time.

For these reasons, you'll want to replace any longer rugs in your home with more chic alternatives: short-pile ones that display a subtle pattern in various neutral colors and are made with low-maintenance wool or cotton fibers. Their simplified style and reduced care needs will make a tremendous difference in any room.



CORPORATE DINING ROOMS

Nothing says “good eating” like a glass table and black leather chairs, right? The businesslike look of minimalist dining rooms may seem clean and forward-thinking, but it ultimately lacks the warm, welcoming vibe that such a valuable hosting space needs. (You may end up requiring that “EAT” sign after all to indicate this room is for holding meals and not meetings.)

If your dining area feels too coldly contemporary, try warming up the color scheme by swapping stark-white

wall paint or furniture for more comforting neutrals with hints of green or peach. Then incorporate a few elements like a vintage sideboard, classical oil painting, or antique table centerpiece. However, avoid going *too* traditional. Good design is all about balance, after all, and a space that marries contemporary with classic features will welcome guests and residents alike to enjoy a shared meal and forge stronger bonds.



a jamaican-soul FOOD FUSION

recipes by: SCOT LOUIE
photography by: WELDON OWEN



Summer is a time for enjoying great weather, great friends, and great food—and when it comes to the latter, these delectable recipes from the *Tastemaker* cookbook have got you covered. Whether you make the dips, pizza, or fritters (or all of them), you'll be sure to satisfy everyone's taste buds.

Makes 8–10 servings

S'mores DIP

I'm always looking for something good and easy when it comes to desserts. Hand to God—I'm not the *best* baker, but I'm working on it. However, this S'mores Dip is an easy and delicious dessert for anyone to make. Minimal prep time, minimal ingredients, and maximum flavor.

ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1 bag (12 oz.) milk or semisweet chocolate chips
- 7 oz. regular marshmallows (about 30 marshmallows)
- Graham crackers for dipping

instructions:

1. Position a rack in the upper third of the oven and preheat it to 375°F. Place an 8-inch round cake pan in the oven to warm.
2. Remove the warm pan from the oven. Put the butter in the pan and swirl to coat the bottom. When the butter is melted, add the chocolate chips in an even layer. Top the chocolate chips with the marshmallows in an even layer.
3. Bake until the chocolate is melted, and the marshmallows are lightly golden brown, about 12 minutes.
4. Serve right away with the graham crackers for dipping.



SCAN QR CODE
for the full cookbook.

Recipes from *Tastemaker: Cooking with Spice, Style & Soul* by Scot Louie. Weldon Owen, 2024. Photography by Biz Jones.
Text © 2024 Scot Louie and Photography © Weldon Owen.

Makes 3 servings

zucchini & green onion FRITTERS

The trick to making these fritters good and guilt-free is using more eggs and less flour to bind them together. They are light and crispy on the outside and soft on the inside. They're just incredible and taste delicious with a sprinkle of flaky salt and dill, or [the cookbook's] Sun Dried Tomato Aioli.

ingredients:

- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh dill
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 2 zucchini, trimmed (about ¾ lb. total)
- 2 green onions, white and green parts, thinly sliced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup avocado or canola oil
- Freshly ground black pepper

instructions:

1. In a small bowl, stir together the yogurt, lemon juice, and dill. Season with salt and pepper. Refrigerate until ready to use.
2. Using the large holes on a box grater, shred the zucchini into a fine-mesh sieve. Sprinkle the zucchini with ½ teaspoon of salt and toss to coat evenly. Set aside for 20 minutes.
3. Pour the zucchini onto cheesecloth, gather up the edges of the cheesecloth, and wring out as much liquid as you can, until the zucchini is dry and flaky. Transfer the zucchini to a medium bowl. Add the green onions and garlic and toss to combine. Add the eggs, ½ teaspoon salt, and a few grinds of pepper and stir gently to combine. Sprinkle the cornstarch and flour over the mixture and stir to combine.
4. Heat the avocado oil in a large nonstick or well-seasoned skillet over medium heat. Using a ¼-cup measure, scoop up mounds of the zucchini mixture and add them to the skillet; you should have 6–8 mounds. Cook, turning a few times, until golden brown on both sides and cooked through, about 6 minutes total.
5. Transfer to paper towels to drain and immediately season with salt and pepper.
6. Serve warm with the yogurt sauce.





Makes 4–6 servings

crab rangoon **DIP**

With Chinese takeout being a New York staple, I adore a classic, crispy Crab Rangoon. As someone who loves to entertain and loves to save time even more, making this dip was the perfect balance of both. This dip is the ideal shareable appetizer and much more convenient than preparing twenty-five individual Crab Rangoons.

ingredients:

- 3 cups chopped imitation crabmeat
- 1 package (8 oz.) cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1½ cups Kewpie mayo
- 2 green onions, sliced into thin rounds
- 1 teaspoon ground white pepper
- ½ cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- Pita or wonton chips for serving

instructions:

- 1.** Preheat the oven to 400°F.
- 2.** In a medium bowl, mix the crabmeat, cream cheese, Kewpie mayo, green onions, and white pepper. Transfer the crab mixture to an ungreased 8 x 12-inch baking dish or to two 4-inch-square ramekins on top of a baking sheet. Top with the cheese.
- 3.** Bake for 12–15 minutes, until bubbly. Preheat the broiler and broil for 3–4 minutes, until the cheese is bubbly and golden brown.
- 4.** Serve hot with pita chips and enjoy.

Makes 2–4 servings; 2 naan pizzas

THREE SAUCE NAAN PIZZA

with crispy prosciutto

Between the light and fluffy naan, the crispy prosciutto, and the tangy marinara, it's hard to decide what makes these naan pizzas so delicious. Each ingredient here is really working together to achieve the cheesy, flavorful greatness. My favorite part, aside from eating it, is topping it off with that final sprinkle of salt and pepper and a smooth drizzle of olive oil.

ingredients:

- 4 thin slices prosciutto (about 2 oz.)
- 2 naan (about ½ lb. total)
- Olive oil for brushing and drizzling
- 2 heaping tablespoons basil pesto
- 2 heaping tablespoons vodka sauce
- 2 heaping tablespoons marinara sauce
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 cup baby arugula
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone mat.
2. Lay the prosciutto slices flat on the prepared baking sheet. Bake until crisp, 7–8 minutes. Remove from the baking sheet and set aside on a plate.
3. Brush the naan very lightly with olive oil on both sides. Arrange the naan on the baking sheet. Spread half of the pesto over the top of each naan. Spread half of the vodka sauce on half of each naan, then spread the marinara on the other half. Sprinkle on the mozzarella, dividing evenly between the naan.
4. Bake until the cheese has melted and the naan is golden, 8–10 minutes.
5. Transfer the naan pizzas to individual plates. Top each with half the arugula, then drizzle with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Crumble the crispy prosciutto over the top, dividing evenly, and serve at once.



how fine fabrics EVOLVE

interview with: ANTHONY MONACO written by: ANDRE RIOS photography courtesy of: EVOLVE TEXTILES



Anthony Monaco

When you think of the comforts of home, soft and sumptuous fabrics may be one of the many elements that comes to mind. The decor company Evolve Textiles takes this value and turns it up a notch, as founder and CEO Anthony Monaco discusses.

Tell us about your design background: I don't have a traditional background in my field. As a child, I was very much into coloring, drawing, and other forms of creativity, but my parents didn't support my passions; they wanted me to be a stockbroker. So I went to business school, then sought a career in fashion selling high-end men's suits. One day, I read a job posting for a showroom position at a suiting company, but when I arrived at the staffing agency for the interview, I found out the position had been filled. The staffer suggested that I pursue an opening for carpet sales with the D&D Building, a famous, high-end home materials store in New York that he described as "fashion for the home."





I was blown away when I first walked into that building; people were dressed to the nines in brands like Chanel. On the job there, I got to work with all kinds of beautiful products and be around the best interior designers in the world. It was the result of poor luck but ultimately a good fit for me. Ten years later, in 1998, I grew to a point where I could start my own company, Evolve Textiles, bringing in other creatives like Anthony Baratta and Gary Chapman to design alongside me.

Together we create artisanal fabrics and other wallcoverings that can be used for wallpaper, upholstered furniture, drapes, or even a dress, if a client wants—as long as people are mindful of their design choices. For example, one of my linens would need a backing for greater stability before using it on a custom club chair. We also make lighting and other decor like wall art and artifacts. I’m very fortunate to now be considered one of the top names in the industry and work for very high-end clients.

How did you decide which artists to work with?

All my collaborations came out of friendship, a shared vision, and some outside-the-box thinking. These are people I was having lunch and enjoying creative conversations with. Chapman, for one, was a painter and sculptor. He made some clay black scarabs as home decor for a client of his—but they ended up not being a fan of the pieces. So I said, “Why don’t we recast them in nickel and bronze?” One thing led to another, and we were soon designing lamps together. Once I viewed more of his art, I realized that some visuals translated into goods like wallpaper and suggested that we print his fun designs on grass cloth. Inspiration comes in many ways.

What makes your company and what is has to offer so unique? It’s certainly subjective, but for me, it’s about having a fresh vision. Big fabric firms and major furniture companies face a level of pressure to follow

Together we create artisanal fabrics and other wallcoverings that can be used for wallpaper, upholstered furniture, drapes, or even a dress, if a client wants—as long as people are mindful of their design choices.





the mold that we don't. Our products are made to order, meaning my designers and I customize goods rather than trying to sell inventory. That way, we can collaborate to craft the right elements that will work in a client's space: something that adds scale and incorporates unique design features. This freedom allows us to be more visionary than reactionary. Nothing that my team or I do is pedestrian; I like our work to be fun and exciting. The products we put out there help a room feel more curated, moving guests to say, "Where did they find that? That's something I've never seen before!"

Do you feel that your interest in fashion continues to inspire your work? Absolutely. For example, there's a big, trendy show in Paris called *Première Vision* that reveals the latest in fashion colors, designs, etc. It's huge for people in the fabric industry. I knew when I started my business that this show was invaluable because the colors seen in current fashion typically influence interior design three to five years down the line. One case was the use of purple, which became a trend in fashion well before it became popular for furniture and decor designs.

Part of the reason I'm able to stay ahead of the curve is that I can anticipate what's going to be the next big thing. But a good aspect of our industry is that the trends don't

change every season like in fashion. One of my contributing artists, Tia Cibani, was formerly the head creative for the runway brand Ports 1961, and she has said that she felt constantly under the gun there. But in home design, there's less consistent pressure to change and replace goods, so you get more time to sit within certain styles and push them further.

What do you anticipate will be trending in home design this year? I think we're moving out of the modernism we've seen since the early 2000s and leaning more transitional or even a tad traditional. Elements such as intricate, more old-fashioned sofa and chair legs are reflecting these changes. This traditionalism isn't your grandmother's decor, though; it imbues a sense of gravitas in a room that makes it less cold.

That said, never be afraid of the choices you wish to make. You know what you like, and at the end of the day, home design is individual. Be yourself—don't allow your home to look like everyone else's.

For more info,
visit evolvtextiles.com

The Great Benefits OF PETS

written by: ALLISON GOMES

From cats to dogs to fish to hamsters, these wonderful creatures are often more than just pets—they're vital members of the household. We create bonds with them, showing them affection just as they do for us. And this attachment isn't superficial: it actually provides many physical and mental upsides. Gain a better appreciation for your connection with your pet by taking a closer look at this beneficial relationship.

Pets provide companionship

There's nothing quite like coming home after a long day of work and being able to cuddle or play with your pet. Phil Tedeschi, cofounder of the Institute for Human-Animal Connection (IHAC), says this type of companionship can go a long way toward fighting loneliness and isolation, especially for those who live alone. That's because interactions with your pet increase the oxytocin levels in your body while decreasing the levels of cortisol and lowering your blood pressure, both of which can



improve your physical and psychological health. The drop in cortisol, for example, may help lower stress levels and promote better heart health, thus boosting your long-term well-being.

As for oxytocin, Tedeschi explains that while this hormone is generally understood to strengthen the bond between humans, “in the presence of a safe animal, these same neurobiological circumstances are also occurring.” When you interact with your pet, your brain releases oxytocin, which further helps you connect with them and feel comfortable and relaxed when you're around them. And once that connection is built, you've got a friend for life. After all, animals don't see humans through the same lenses we do—they simply treat us as we treat them.

Pets support mental health

Pets often accept people in ways that other humans don't or simply can't, showing a level of love that can ultimately have a positive influence on our mental health. According to Steve Feldman, president of the Human Animal Bond Research Institute (HABRI), “pets can be considered main sources of support for the long-term management of mental health conditions,” including mood disorders, depression, and anxiety. In fact, a 2024 American Psychiatric Association survey found that 84 percent of pet owners noted that their pets have a largely positive impact on their mental health, providing a calming presence and helping to lower their stress. So when you're



looking to unwind at home and ease the pressures of the day, do so with your pet—they may be just what you need to truly relax.

Pets keep you young at heart

While the human-animal connection provides health benefits at every stage of life, the bond may be particularly valuable for those in later ones. “As we get older, we are socialized to stop playing like children, yet with our animals, we still play in similar carefree ways,” Tedeschi says. Your pet’s natural liveliness demands that you break away from those social norms, enticing you to play like you would when you were a kid, whether you compete in games of tug of war, throw toys for them, or run around the backyard. This not only keeps you active but also provides humor, joy, and laughter that you might not have in other areas of your life, which can lead to a whole host of benefits. For instance, such play can lower a pet owner’s overall stress levels to promote better heart health and even help in the treatment of those with diseases such as Alzheimer’s and dementia.

Nothing can liven up a home like a pet, filling it with a joy that instantly brings a smile to your face. Embrace all yours has to offer, and you may just experience a healthful boost in your life as well.





The Basics of *multigenerational* Living

written by: LAUREN KIM

As housing and other living costs remain high in the United States, more families are choosing to live in multigenerational homes, often sharing chores and expenses. In fact, according to the Pew Research Center, the number of individuals living in such households in the United States has quadrupled to almost 60 million people between 1971 and 2021. This setup can offer a number of different benefits for everyone involved, but navigating it isn't always smooth. Check out what advantages you can expect with this option along with some tactics for making it work.

Practical pluses

Naturally, a major perk of sharing a multigenerational home is that it may help ease the financial burden of living expenses, primarily the mortgage, property taxes, and utility bills. This may, of course, depend on the individual situations of those you’re living with; elderly relatives, for instance, will likely be on a fixed income and may be unable to contribute much. But even then, you could discuss sharing other costs, such as groceries, home maintenance, transportation, or even streaming services. These savings can add up, allowing you to gather funds for other financial goals, whether they’re big like saving for your child’s college education or small like enjoying a family vacation together.

Moreover, multigenerational living can offer a network of support that each person in the house can rely on. Perhaps your relative would be willing to help watch your kids while you’re at work or take care of your pet while you’re away, both providing you peace of mind that they’re in good hands and cutting your costs. Likewise, more people in the home can better ensure that someone is there in case an elderly individual has a health emergency or dangerous fall.

Other benefits include potentially increased protection for your home from break-ins—since being occupied more often may dissuade intruders—and the ability to split chores. If someone isn’t a fan of doing the dishes or scrubbing the toilets, there are plenty of other people in the household perhaps willing to trade it for something *they’d* rather avoid.

Healthy upsides

Living in the same home is a great way to strengthen family ties with other generations or extended family members you may have grown apart from due to various moves or the busyness of life. Even if your time is still limited, you can gain opportunities to bond during day-to-day



activities, from making dinner to cleaning the house. And in being surrounded by those you love, you might grow to experience a comforting feeling of belonging and support.

Furthermore, sharing a household can provide physical and mental gains for everyone involved. For instance, studies show that interactions between older adults and younger individuals can reduce anxiety, aid cognitive function, and increase physical activity for the former and assist the latter in developing useful life skills and their emotional intelligence. Staying with family may also help elderly family members avoid the depression and loneliness that is prevalent among this demographic while possibly even aiding in extending their lifespans.





Best practices

When navigating the dynamics of a multigenerational home, it's important to prioritize the needs of each person to better ensure that everyone can live well together. Here are four keys to keep in mind.

Accessibility

Evaluate how comfortable and safe your house is for residents of all age levels. For example, if you're moving your adult child and their family in, you may want to add babyproofing features like secure gates and locks. Conversely, if you're merging homes with your elderly parents, items like grab bars, nonslip flooring, and a chairlift may be crucial.

Communication

Make expectations and responsibilities clear from the get-go, and strive to keep lines of communication open, such as through regular family meetings. If relationships start to become strained, consider seeking help from a family counselor or therapist, who can offer advice to help overcome these obstacles and improve discussion.

Privacy

In a more crowded home, respecting each other's personal space is essential. Explore solutions like instituting a knock-first policy or adding a sliding barn door between connected rooms in an open floor plan. Additionally, establish agreed-upon quiet times and ask everyone to be mindful of their

noise levels—though in a pinch, a pair of noise-canceling headphones could come in handy.

Storage

Sharing a home with more people means there'll be more stuff, so find ways to provide ample storage space for your loved one's belongings and keep your spaces tidy. This could include bringing in additional dressers or designating an area in the garage, attic, or basement for each person.

Multigenerational living isn't for everyone, but it can present a viable solution for many. Approach it with consideration, respect, and open communication, and you can make it a rewarding and enriching experience for all.





Landscaping LIKE A PRO

written by:
MATTHEW BRADY

Every homeowner has the same curb-appeal wishes for their property, with a core element being a lush yard. However, hiring a landscaper isn't always financially feasible, especially if extensive work is needed to spruce up, well, your spruces and other plant life. However, with just a few simple steps, you can improve your outdoor area all on your own.

DO AN ASSESSMENT

Start as any landscaper would: by analyzing the conditions on your property and in your region. Regarding the former,

purchase a soil test kit to get a better idea of how much water and nutrients your greenery needs to thrive. For example, if your soil is rich in clay, you might need to place compost over top or mix it in for grass and plants to grow. Likewise, you'll want to determine where your locale falls on the USDA's Plant Hardiness Zone map, which will indicate its typical coldest temperatures. Look for this number on a plant's tag to ensure that it can withstand your climate.

In addition, establish your goals before doing any work. Are you aiming to do a complete makeover or just specific changes

here and there? Do you want your yard to display your tastes, or are you improving it for the sake of selling? The answers to such questions are key to deciding what direction you take.

KEEP IT NEAT

There are many ways you can go about your landscaping, but a good general rule of thumb is to strike a balance between doing too much and not doing enough. Flooding your garden beds with plants or adding ones that are too large, for instance, can create an eyesore. Conversely, installing a simple water feature or a walkway with strategic lighting might be an ideal way to accentuate your home and its lush exterior.





Also, giving your yard clean edges can make a world of difference—nothing says neatness like crisp lines, as modern interior design can attest to. Simply take a flat-end shovel to the edge of your garden bed, digging a four-inch-deep and few-inch-wide trough that’s straight up on the grass side and slightly graded (around 45 degrees) on the bed side. Clean out the dug-up dirt, trim any overhanging grass with a string trimmer or dedicated edger, and add some mulch, and you’ll be amazed at just how professional your edging looks.

(Use the same technique—with a much narrower trough and no mulch—with your walkways.)

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Speaking of garden beds, here’s another landscaping point to mull over: even though you may frequently see them abutting houses, there’s no rule that says yours must do so. Instead, consider creating a dedicated planting area away from your home, which would serve as an eye-catching standalone feature in your yard.

Finally, don’t neglect to mix in year-round plants with the often more exciting seasonal ones in your yard or garden.

If it were a recipe, perennials like mums and ferns would be your base ingredients and annuals such as begonias and petunias the add-ins that provide extra flavor. This combination will help make your yard look robust and striking no matter the time of year. Just remember to read each plant’s care tags to ensure that your soil and hardiness zone match its needs and that you know how to nurture it for maximum growth.

These starter tips can help put you on the path toward a more stylish lawn and garden. That said, if you run into any hiccups along the way or simply decide that your thumb isn’t very green, hiring a local landscaping pro is always a sound option.



Stain-*tastic* Solutions for Pet Owners

written by:
DAKOTA DAMSCHRODER

Pet stains can be a frustrating and unsightly problem for any pet owner. Whether they're from a puppy accident or feline mishap, knowing how to effectively remove these blemishes is essential for maintaining a clean, fresh home. Here are some helpful tips and tricks for tackling them in common areas.

Act quickly

The more you let a mess sit, the more the stain will set. This is true even for hardwood floors; though less absorbent than carpets, they can still be susceptible to marring. Address the issue immediately, and it will be easier to remediate.

Blot, don't rub

Rubbing can push a stain deeper into the fabric. Instead, carefully scoop up any solid pieces, then gently press paper towels or a clean, absorbent cloth over the area to soak up as much excess liquid as possible. Then take a fresh paper towel or cloth and blot gently to ensure that it is as dry as you can get it.

Get the right remover

There are many commercial pet stain removers available, including ones for specific situations. For example, you'll want an enzymatic option to tackle urine. Follow the instructions on the product label for best results.

Try a DIY solution

If you prefer a natural solution, you can easily make your own. White vinegar, baking soda, and hydrogen peroxide can all be effective ingredients; there are plenty of online resources available to help you determine the appropriate mixes and ratios. Make sure to test a small area first, though, to check that it won't damage the surface you're cleaning.

Seek help

For deep-seated stains or large areas, consider hiring a professional cleaning service that specializes in pet stain removal. With its expert touch, you can get your home back to spick-and-span in no time.

Key Lime Pie

2 c. graham cracker crumbs

½ c. granulated sugar

4 tbsp. unsalted butter,
melted and cooled

2 cans sweetened
condensed milk

2 large egg yolks

1 c. Key lime or regular
lime juice

1 c. crème fraîche

2 tbsp. preserved lemon,
finely diced

1 c. heavy cream

1 lemon, for zesting

2 tbsp. confectioners' sugar



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Key Lime Pie

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F.
2. In a bowl, stir together the cracker crumbs, granulated sugar, and butter. Press the mixture firmly onto the bottom and up the sides of a 9-inch pie pan. Bake until browned, about 20 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack, and let cool to room temperature.
3. Reduce the temperature to 325°F.
4. In a large bowl, whisk together the condensed milk and egg yolks until well blended. Add the lime juice, and mix well. Then fold in the crème fraîche and preserved lemon. Pour the filling into the cooled pie shell. Bake until the filling is set like a custard, about 15 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack to cool, and then refrigerate, uncovered, for at least 4 hours or up to overnight.
5. When ready to serve, place a metal bowl in the freezer for 10 minutes. Remove the bowl, pour in the cream, and whisk until soft peaks form.
6. To serve, cut the pie into slices, transfer to individual plates, and top each slice with a dollop of the whipped cream. Grate a little lemon zest on each slice, and finish with a sprinkle of confectioners' sugar.



MAKES 6-8 SERVINGS

Recipe excerpted from *Classic Recipes for Modern People* by Max and Eli Sussman (Weldon Owen, 2014).

No More MOSQUITOES!

Time outdoors may be relaxing, but mosquitoes can come around to ruin the fun. If you're looking for natural solutions to keep these biting bugs at bay, try these plants and herbs.



Basil

Mosquitoes find the oils of this herb unappealing. You can also crush a few leaves and rub them gently on bites to relieve itchiness.



Rosemary

Mosquitoes hate the smell of fresh rosemary, so be sure to plant plenty of it this summer to repel them (and use in your cooking).



Lavender

Plant these beautiful and fragrant flowers near where you entertain to keep those spaces mosquito-free. These pests hate the floral scent that we love!



Petunias

Known as nature's pesticide, petunias help repel a variety of bugs, including mosquitoes.

Instead of reaching for harmful and unpleasant-smelling bug spray, choose these natural solutions for your home and garden. Armed with such allies, you can enjoy your time outdoors to the fullest.



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Countdown to **VACATION**

Travel is a relaxing escape from the pressures of everyday life, but the preparation leading up to a trip? Not so much. Take some of the stress out of planning your getaway by following this simple guide!

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A few months before:

- ☐ Come up with a solid budget for vacation expenses (e.g., food, activities, transportation), and start saving.
- ☐ Put your planned vacation dates in your work calendar, and request the time off.
- ☐ Plan out an itinerary of potential activities and events to attend.
- ☐ Make any advance purchases needed, like hotel reservations, airline tickets, and attraction passes.
- ☐ If you have any pets, make arrangements with a temporary sitter or boarding service.

One week before:

- ☐ Put all mail and deliveries on hold, or ask a neighbor, trusted friend, or family member to collect it for you. Consider asking this person to keep an eye on your home as well.
- ☐ Head to the store to purchase any nonperishable items you plan on bringing.
- ☐ Make a checklist of everything you will need to pack, and set aside what items you can in advance.
- ☐ Be sure all medications and emergency items are up-to-date and refilled.
- ☐ Plan family-friendly activities to keep little ones occupied on the trip.

The day before:

- ☐ Throw away any food items that may expire while you are away, and take out any trash.
- ☐ Pack anything that you won't need to use the morning of ahead of time.
- ☐ Set your alarm, and plan to give yourself a few hours for final preparation on the morning of your trip.



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