

# REALSIMPLE

**SPECIAL  
DOUBLE  
ISSUE!**

LIFE MADE EASIER

**OUR ANNUAL  
SMART MONEY  
AWARDS**

## Get set for fall

Refresh your mind,  
mornings,  
meals & more!

**READERS SHARE THEIR BEST VACATION EVER**  
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**8  
BIG-BATCH  
BREAKFASTS**

SEPTEMBER 2024




**SHERWIN-WILLIAMS.**

# YOUR DREAM COLOR MADE SIMPLE

A color palette that feels perfect for your family can turn a house into your dream home. With all the paint color choices available, it can be hard to know where to begin. **Sherwin-Williams** is here to make it easier, with tips and tools to help you find the ideal hues to personalize your home.

 **Cascade Green**  
SW 0066

## 1 START WITH A SPARK

Find inspiration at home. Your favorite piece of art, furniture, rug, or even throw pillow will often feature shades you love. Choose three or four colors from these items. Then, consider how they might look in your space and how they might work with existing permanent features like cabinets, flooring, brick, or tile.

## 2 CONSIDER THE SPACE

When deciding on color, take a room's size into account. Light tones can make small spaces feel more open while dark hues can make large rooms more intimate. Additionally, colors can evoke emotion and set the mood for a room. Consider warm colors for gathering spaces and cooler or neutral tones for private spaces. To help narrow down your choices, order up to ten **FREE color chips** from Sherwin-Williams.

## 3 REFLECT ON THE LIGHT

Both artificial light and the movement of natural light through your space during the day can have a great effect on paint color, and may influence the tone of the color you select. To understand how light effects different colors, it's best to preview them in your space. Sherwin-Williams makes it easy with **Peel & Stick** samples that let you try on color in seconds, with no mess or dry time, so you can get a true feel for color in your space.

## 4 GET EXPERT HELP

Need more help? Sherwin-Williams offers **FREE 30-minute Virtual Color Consultations** to help you choose your dream color with confidence. Book now at [swcolorconsult.com](https://www.swcolorconsult.com).

**TIP:**  
Connect spaces  
throughout your home  
by using one neutral color  
on all trim and doors.

**NOW THAT YOU'RE CONFIDENT** in your color choices, turn your house into a home! Find your dream color at [swsamples.com](https://www.swsamples.com).





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GET SET FOR FALL

# september





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**Cover Photograph  
by Ted Cavanaugh**

**Prop Styling  
by Sophia Pappas**

*Moon Blue 2x8  
Matte Cement Tile,  
\$75 per box  
(about 4 sq. ft.);  
[tilebar.com](http://tilebar.com)*



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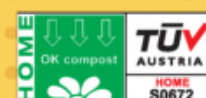


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## EDITOR'S NOTE

# Time for a Check-In



**D**URING OUR REAL SIMPLE half-marathon last spring, I asked a panel of running enthusiasts for their race-day advice, whether the goal is to medal or just finish. The wonderful Kim Yee (@kimberly.yee\_), a Nike Running community coach, said, “Don’t forget to check in with yourself.” When we’re surrounded by the pack, we may push hard even when it’s not serving us, she explained. Clear your mind for a sec and ask yourself how you’re doing. Then listen to the answer and adjust so you don’t burn out before the race is done.

You see the metaphor coming from a mile away, right? Are you running too hard? Setting your pace by someone else’s clock? Will you wear yourself out before the figurative finish? To find out, you don’t need guided meditation or hours of journaling. You just

have to quiet your mind and listen to your breath and your gut and your heart. I’ve started doing this—on a run, before a high-stakes meeting, in the kitchen as dinner hour looms. Pause. Breathe. Steady on with the right priority in mind.

Fall is a good time to give it a try. Wonderful things happen: The temps cool and the days shorten. Sweaters come out and the leaves change. Football arrives; baseball gets exciting. But also, the workload builds back up after the summer slowdown (if you even got one), bringing the long, magical, hard run to the holidays.

This issue is your check-in, offering little ways to reset and relax, improve your energy, and say no to more things (page 112). You’ll find make-ahead big-batch breakfasts so weekday mornings go better (page 140), easy weeknight dinners (page 160), and haircuts that update your lewk *and* solve problems (page 62). But my favorite story, on page 87, is a reminder to listen to your intuition, that wise voice in your head offering its own kind of check-in.

Take it all in. Then take a moment to ask yourself what you do and don’t need to feel fulfilled today. Ask again. Ask all the time. Listen and listen and listen. Run when it’s right. And I’ll be cheering you on.

Lauren Iannotti  
EDITOR IN CHIEF

### LET’S CONNECT!

Follow me on Instagram  
at @laurenianotti.

### We Want to Hear from You!

Did something  
you read in  
REAL SIMPLE help  
you? A go-to  
recipe? A never-  
looked-back  
cleaning hack?  
A piece of life  
advice you share  
on repeat?  
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What's the  
least organized  
part of your  
home?



"I have six bins to hold shoes in our entryway, but everyone still leaves theirs on the floor—right *in front* of the containers. With three members of our family wearing sizes 12 and up, the doorway gets crowded quickly!"



"My laundry room (it's a closet). It's the only junk place in my house, so I have a bunch of stuff stacked up, like 3D Jenga, old pillows, extra blankets, Christmas wrapping, empty tote bags, and coats I'll probably never wear again. The cats like to sneak in and use it as their fortress!"



"My kitchen! I cook a lot and love trying new gadgets, even though they usually wind up living in one of my many junk drawers."

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# REAL SIMPLE Everywhere Find Exclusive Ideas, Tips & Ways to Make Every Day Easier



## ON THE WEB

### Don't Do It Yourself

If you have a home improvement project on the horizon and need a pro, visit [realsimple.com/bipocbusinesses](https://realsimple.com/bipocbusinesses) to learn how you can support women- and BIPOC-owned companies in your area.



## IN YOUR WALLET

### Good Deal!

REAL SIMPLE readers can get 20% off select items from Kule, including the trench coat, baby tee, and cardigan in our story on page 122! Use the code **REALKULE20** at [kule.com](https://kule.com). Terms apply. Offer valid through 9/30/24.



## IN YOUR KITCHEN

### 15 Easy Breakfasts for Weekday Mornings

It's back to busy season! Check out [realsimple.com/easybreakfasts](https://realsimple.com/easybreakfasts) for a bunch of fast-cooking (or no-cooking!), make-ahead, and freezer meals. Then flip to page 140 for even more smart breakfast ideas.





## IN YOUR HOME

### Mini Moves That'll Keep You Organized

They'll also help you save time. Enough said? File on over to [realsimple.com/minimoves](https://realsimple.com/minimoves) to read about little things you can do to stay on top of household tasks.



## IN YOUR CLOSET

### Sweet Jeans

Finding a new pair of just-right jeans can be harder than looking for a needle in a haystack—but it's easy if you hunt around at [realsimple.com/bestjeans](https://realsimple.com/bestjeans). We did some serious testing (on 86 people with different body types!) to land on the best wide-leg pair, the comfiest option, and more. Pick the winner that speaks to you and call it a day.

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## YOUR WORDS

# What's your favorite workout that doesn't feel like a workout?

Just put me in the garden! I'll work outside for close to six hours, yet I'm tired after an hour of yoga class. And I get such satisfaction from what I accomplish.

MARY VERDUN  
PLYMOUTH, MASSACHUSETTS

**Dance parties** with my 4-year-old son! His favorite songs are by Bruno Mars, Katy Perry, and Taylor Swift.

SHANNON FALCO  
KENNER, LOUISIANA

**Going to the zoo** is a great way to get those steps in without even realizing it.

 1DRWMN31

**Competitive ballroom dancing.** My husband bought us introductory lessons, thinking we'd just give it a try. Five years later, we have more fun together, enjoy the workout and competition, and have made many new friends!

JUDY MURRAH  
ST. JAMES, NEW YORK

**Walking!** My best friend and I walk in the mornings for an hour three times a week. By the time I get home, at 7 a.m., I've had my workout, social time, and a free therapy session.

JEN HAGEDORN  
DAVIS, CALIFORNIA

**Tap dancing.** I belong to a senior tap group, and we rehearse twice a week for two hours. It's a workout but so much fun! We perform for assisted living facilities, community centers, and more. Last year we even performed at the Los Angeles County Fair!

NATALIE IGE MULDAUR  
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

**Playing games in the pool** with the kids. The Silent Marco Polo is a particular winner.

 SIGNATURE  
COLORSTYLE

For me, nothing compares to the serenity of **standup paddleboarding**. Being surrounded by wildlife, totally unplugged, reduces my stress levels. I'm also engaging all the muscles in my body. It's no wonder I lose track of time when I'm out there "walking on water."

COLLEEN ORBEGOSO  
BOCA RATON, FLORIDA

**Horseback riding.** But first, clean the stall, brush the horse, and tack up the horse. Ride, then untack the horse, clean the tack, brush the horse, and do all the other random barn chores.

 TAXIMOMCOLLINS





**Virtual reality boxing.** I've never loved workout classes or sweating in general, but I get a great workout and have actual fun doing it!

 KIM\_BROWN\_L

**Blending in foundation.**

 CANDICENICOLE80

**Hiking with my dog** is my favorite workout. I'm not always in the mood to be active, but I know my golden retriever, Butters, needs exercise every day or he goes bonkers. Taking him on trails near my house gets me outside in the fresh air, and I always feel better.

ALLISON GRANGE  
ALAMO, CALIFORNIA

There's nothing more relaxing to me than **kayaking**. Even when you're paddling hard, you're still absorbing all the beauty around you. I try to kayak in every new place I visit because it's such a unique way to see the area. From a fjord in New Zealand to the coast of Maine, I've gotten to see some incredible things!

MELISSA HALL  
LIZTON, INDIANA

**Karate.** Learning how to defend yourself and those around you is a total rush and exhausting—yet it never feels like work.

 JULESJMILLER

**Pushing my two girls** in the double stroller. The hills are tough, but when they yell "Go, Mom, go!" it gives me all the strength in the world.

 STEPHDBERG

**Pickleball!** Plus, I'm meeting all kinds of new people.

KAREN SMITH  
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

**Roller skating.** It's a great workout, and I've stuck with it for years because it just brings me so much joy.

 AUTOMATIC  
BIZOOTY

**Trying to keep up with my toddler** at the trampoline park.

 SAMANTHAJEANMC

**Overthinking.**

 KATEROHSE



## READER OF THE MONTH

**Amber Shannon, 35**

MARKETING MANAGER  
CHICAGO SUBURBS

**The simplest part of your life:**  
My newly shifted sense of style. I've been very into wearing whites and neutrals. This has minimized decision-making when it comes to getting dressed on the day-to-day. I do like to wear color still, but my basics and simple pieces coordinate well with anything.

**What you need to declutter:**  
I definitely have a hard time letting go of clothes and accessories. This questionnaire makes me feel inspired to just let go and purge!

**The cleanest part of your home:**  
The entire thing. Spaces are constantly getting cleaned and sanitized. As I write this, though, my husband says it's the baby's nursery. I guess that's probably true.

**The coziest thing in your home:**  
My bed, especially each week after the sheets have been freshly washed. The best!

**Where is your happy place?**  
It can range from being with loved ones at home with good food to being out at a new restaurant, also with good food—and hopefully good drinks!

## CALLING ALL REAL SIMPLE SUPERFANS!

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# stuff we love

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& ALL YOUR OTHER CARES

ADD TO CART

## RIPE FOR THE PICKING

Summer's bounty of  
fruits and veggies may  
be fleeting, but  
produce-centric decor  
is now in season.

BY HANNAH BAKER

Heirloom Tomato and Bell Pepper  
Beeswax Candles, from \$20 each;  
[artifaqtdesign.etsy.com](https://artifaqtdesign.etsy.com) Klatso  
Handwoven Fruit Napkin Rings, \$38  
for 4; [anthropologie.com](https://anthropologie.com) Glass Pear  
Bud Vase, \$20; [store.moma.org](https://store.moma.org)

Photograph by Chelsea Kyle





## More Fresh Finds

- 1** &Klevering Lemon Plate, \$36; [pieceworkpuzzles.com](https://pieceworkpuzzles.com)  
**2** Wicker Pineapple, from \$58; [serenaandlily.com](https://serenaandlily.com)  
**3** Fruit Candle Holder, from \$58; [anthropologie.com](https://anthropologie.com) **4** Fête Embroidered Linen Napkins, \$160 for 4; [misettetable.com](https://misettetable.com)  
**5** Bordallo Pinheiro Cabbage Serving Bowl, \$70; [williams-sonoma.com](https://williams-sonoma.com) **6** Fruit Coaster Set, \$43; [klatso.com](https://klatso.com)  
**7** Lettuce Ware Pitcher, \$148; [toryburch.com](https://toryburch.com) **8** Bordallo Pinheiro Tropical Fruit Bowl in Papaya, \$62; [lucysmarket.com](https://lucysmarket.com)



## MISTAKES YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE MAKING

# Dining Furniture

Sara Malek Barney, founder of Bandd Design in Los Angeles and Austin, Texas, pulls up a seat to talk about tables and chairs.

### You're Going Way Too Big

Many people think they need to be able to host 12 guests (or more!) on the regular. "So they gravitate toward pieces that don't fit," Barney says. Ideally, you want at least three feet of walking space around the table. You can always get an extendable piece that'll fit more guests when the holidays roll around.

### You're Afraid of Upholstery

If you want your dining room to be cozy, consider upholstered chairs, Barney says. Choose ones with indoor-outdoor fabric that can withstand wear and tear (check out [serenaandlily.com](https://serenaandlily.com) and [sunbrella.com](https://sunbrella.com) for good-looking options). All you'll have to do is hit it with a damp cloth if someone spills!

### You're Being a Square

Skip the traditional rectangle. "An oval or round table with a pedestal base can accommodate more people if you need to squeeze them in," Barney says, explaining that it leaves more leg room. Bonus: A base (instead of, say, turned legs) will help make the room feel bigger too. —Erica Finamore



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## COLOR OF THE MONTH

# Brave Blue World

Whether you call it cobalt, lapis, or ultramarine, there's no denying that the super-saturated shade is electrifying. It shocks on its own—as evidenced by this dining space from Crystal Sinclair Designs—or with another primary friend, like mustard yellow or bright red-orange. If you're after something a little calmer, pair it with cream, white, or black. It'll still stun. —E.F.



## Shop the Shade

Pluma Short Stool, \$165; [areaware.com](http://areaware.com)  
 Color Block Outdoor Throw Pillow,  
 \$20; [athome.com](http://athome.com) Marimekko Papajo  
 Indoor/Outdoor Rug, from \$349;  
[westelm.com](http://westelm.com) Heller Vignelli Bench,  
 from \$775; [dwr.com](http://dwr.com) Verso Table Vase,  
 \$135; [fermliving.com](http://fermliving.com) Stripe Short  
 Tumbler, \$59 for 4; [potterybarn.com](http://potterybarn.com)  
 Genesön Chair, \$35; [ikea.com](http://ikea.com)



ORGANIZE THIS

# Under Your Kitchen Sink

Turn that notoriously messy cabinet into a hardworking, fully stocked cleaning supercenter.

BY HANNAH BAKER



GET A LITTLE CADDY

What's better than a tidy under-the-sink cabinet? A tidy under-the-sink cabinet that travels with you from room to room as you clean! Stash your most-used brushes, bottles, and microfiber cloths in a container and change your middle name to Efficiency. We love this one because it's pretty and will even fit those awkward oblong spray bottles. *Storage Caddy*, \$37; [theyamazakihome.com](#)



WASH UP

Save precious cabinet space with an over-the-door container that holds more than 50 dishwasher pods and has a shelf for sponges and such. *DoorStash Dishwasher Pod Holder*, \$35; [youcopia.com](#)



SPIN THE BOTTLES

This 18-inch not-so-lazy Susan has a grippy base and high walls, keeping everything stable as it rotates. *Copco Under Sink Lazy Susan*, \$30; [containerstore.com](#)



SLIDE & SEEK

Slip this sturdy pullout drawer into a cabinet to maximize vertical space! It can hold up to 70 pounds. *Cuisinart 14" Two-Tier Sliding Cabinet Organizer*, \$80; [crateandbarrel.com](#)





# Time to Break out the Good Stuff

SPECIALLY DESIGNED TO CLEAN  
WOOD, GLASS, & BATHROOMS







1

**BRANCH MANAGER**

This lifelike polyester tree can be tall or short. Rearrange branches to take it from five feet to three feet to a tabletop shrub. Also available as a ficus, olive tree, and more. *Eco Convert Triangle Fig Tree*, \$149; [grandinroad.com](http://grandinroad.com)



2

**HOT STUFF**

When your stove is out of commission (or overflowing!), this burner gets the job done—up to 50% faster than a traditional gas or electric appliance. *Zavor Induction Pro Cooktop*, \$130; [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)



Essential oils hydrate, moisturize, and cleanse!

3

**CLEAN FUN**

They look like little mints, but they're actually dehydrated bamboo face wipes! Great for travel, they expand with just a splash of water. *Rooted Beauty Moisturizing Bamboo Facial Wipes*, \$18 for 35; [grove.co](http://grove.co)

# Clever Items Little Helpers to Make Your Life a Lot Easier

BY HANNAH BAKER



4

**WET & WILD**

Rainy days are about to be way more entertaining. When wet, these kids jackets reveal a “secret” animal or floral pattern. No thanks, umbrella! *Magic Splash & Reveal Eco Raincoats*, \$43 each; [uncommongoods.com](http://uncommongoods.com)



5

**POTTY ANIMAL**

Put your cat’s litter box on this monitor and it’ll track her weight and activity, plus alert you to changes that might indicate a UTI, diabetes, or other issues. *Smart Litter Box Monitor*, \$150; [petivity.com](http://petivity.com)



6

**STANDOUT STAND**

Use this as a table or stool. Either way, it’s got built-in hooklike handles that can cradle cups and glasses. It comes in five colors and is super lightweight, so it’s easy to move around a room. *SOS Stool*, \$350; [hellerfurniture.com](http://hellerfurniture.com)

FACIAL WIPES: BRIAN HENNI; PRODUCT IMAGES COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS





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2024 REAL SIMPLE HOME PREVIEW

DESIGN SOLUTIONS

The REAL SIMPLE Home is almost finished (we'll reveal the revamped 1890s Brooklyn, New York, brownstone in next month's issue!), but the hits just keep coming. Here, some of our designers share their current challenges—and brilliant solutions.

BY ERICA FINAMORE



Skinny wall tiles play well with larger floor slabs in this client's bathroom.



Hema Persad  
@hemaapersad

Hema's journey to interior design maven is a pretty cool one. The Toronto native began her career as an attorney, then moved on to fashion styling for seven years before starting her interior design firm, Sagrada Studio, in 2022. She's bringing her timeless, luxe style to the Home's third-floor bedroom and bathroom—pulling loads of inspiration from none other than Hollywood icon and funny girl Barbra Streisand. Her eye for pattern will come in handy throughout the project, and especially while choosing tiles for her showstopping bath.

HER CHALLENGE

She wants to find floor and wall tiles that feel fresh and impactful and look good together.

HER SOLUTION

Just as she would when mixing patterns, she'll balance the scale: "If I use a large tile on the floor, I'll often use a small one on the walls, and vice versa." On the floor, she'll vary the tile colors but stick to the same material to avoid awkward differences in thickness.

STUFF SHE LOVES



Moe Black and White Ceramic Vase, \$129; [cb2.com](#)



Cosette Swivel Chair, from \$898; [anthropologie.com](#)



Valspar Adobe Glow 1007-10A Paint, \$43 per gallon; [lowes.com](#)

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We're on Instagram at [@real\\_simple](#) with lots of Home renovation updates!



Kate created  
this speakeasy  
in her own  
basement!



## Kate Pearce

@katepearcevintage

Back in 2017, Kate was in New York City studying to become a doctor, but she realized she wanted a more flexible job. She started creating online content about decor and DIY projects, and now she's a successful Chicago-based designer known for combining vintage items with modern color palettes. She and her husband, Billy, have renovated two old houses of their own, so her REAL SIMPLE Home assignment should be a breeze. She'll turn the worse-for-the-wear basement into a cool speakeasy we can all raise a glass to.

### HER CHALLENGE

The basement has very little natural light and needs to be brightened up.

### HER SOLUTION

She'll start by painting the walls a nice, warm color—then she'll bring in lots of lights. "I always go heavy on table and floor lights while keeping overhead lighting to a minimum," she says.

### STUFF SHE LOVES



Alair Round Ottoman, \$598; [luluandgeorgia.com](http://luluandgeorgia.com)



Faye Handpainted Taper Candles, \$22 for 2; [anthropologie.com](http://anthropologie.com)



Valspar Spanish Tile 1010-5 Paint, \$43 per gallon; [lowes.com](http://lowes.com)





This lush backyard is nice and tame thanks to the garden beds.



## Brooklyn Grange

@brooklyngrange

If you glance up at a rooftop in New York City and see green, there's a chance it's the work of Brooklyn Grange. The urban-landscape design company launched in 2010, and their experts (including, from left, Travers Martin, Michelle Cashen, and Ben Flanner) have been transforming the skyline ever since, partly specializing in sustainably sourced hardscaping and native plants. For the Home, they'll take on the backyard and deck. Before they can rip out a single weed, they'll need to finalize the design.

### THEIR CHALLENGE

The backyard calls for copious amounts of greenery that looks natural but not unruly.

### THEIR SOLUTION

They'll use built-in elements, like pathways and garden beds, to frame the space. "This way, the plants can be a bit more wild within their designated areas without overwhelming the yard," says Travers, design lead.

### STUFF THEY LOVE



Angled Obelisk Chiminea, from \$398; [shopterrain.com](http://shopterrain.com)



Egoé Tina Chair, from \$363; [stillfried.com](http://stillfried.com)



Corten Cuber Planter, \$120; [veradek.com](http://veradek.com)





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Featured color in all photos: Renew Blue 8003-37D



# The Books List Top Picks for Book Club & Beyond

BY KRISTYN KUSEK LEWIS





## Thrilling Lit Fiction

National Book Award finalist **Rumaan Alam** captivated readers with 2020's startling *Leave the World Behind*. In his new novel, Brooke is a young woman living in New York City, working at an aging billionaire's family foundation, yearning to find her purpose. After her employer enlists her help in deciding how to give away his fortune, she becomes entranced by the power of wealth. Suspenseful and deliciously unsettling, ***Entitlement*** examines the seductive pull of money and its ability to warp our perspectives.

## Show Biz Story

When Jane agrees to house-sit for a friend for a year and moves her family into his gorgeous Los Angeles home, she's sure it'll inspire her to finally finish her second novel. Then she gets the chance to develop a "biracial comedy" with a big TV producer, so she goes for it. Will this be the thing that leads to the success that's eluded her...or is she selling out? The biting, incisive, and hilarious ***Colored Television*** by **Danzy Senna** skewers Hollywood culture while offering a thoughtful take on how creatives balance making art with making a living.

## Tribute to Sisterhood

It's been a year since Nicky, the sunniest of the Blue sisters, unexpectedly passed away. From the outside, the remaining three seem just fine: Avery is a wealthy lawyer in London, Bonnie is a former boxer in Los Angeles, and Lucky models from her home base in Paris. But when their mother announces she's selling their childhood home in Manhattan, their secret struggles come to the fore. ***Blue Sisters*** by **Coco Mellors** paints a beautiful portrait of grief and the world-shaping bond sisters share.

## Inspiring Adventure

***The Life Impossible*** by **Matt Haig** (*The Midnight Library*) features Grace Winters, a widowed, retired math teacher in England whose life has fallen into a slump. She's bored, bereft, and plagued by a sense of aimlessness, until she gets a letter stating that a former coworker—a woman she hardly knew—has died and left her a rundown property in Ibiza. Even though she's inclined to just stay home, she goes to check it out. What unfolds is an insightful read about how it's never too late to start over.

## Family Saga

**Jami Attenberg's *A Reason to See You Again*** opens in 1971 in the Cohens' living room, during their Saturday night Scrabble game, a ritual for the close-knit family of four. When Rudy, the father, dies a year later, their foundation crumbles. The elder sister ends up marrying a not-so-great guy, the younger one takes off for the West Coast, and their mother turns to alcohol. Their journey to overcome the past, told over the course of 40 years, makes for a moving epic about the endurance of family love.

## A Fun What-If

Imagine this: You're on a plane when a woman walks up the aisle and points to each passenger, declaring exactly how and when everyone will die. Would you call it nonsense, or reconsider how you live? That's the question posed in ***Here One Moment***, the new novel by superstar **Liane Moriarty** (*Big Little Lies*). By the time the plane lands, most passengers have laughed off the experience, but a few months later, one dies exactly as predicted, and that changes everything. This expertly told story will entertain you as it leaves you wondering, *What would I do?!*

## Moving Memoir

From the time she was a kid, essayist **Marian Schembari** felt different from her classmates, but she couldn't put her finger on why. Decades later, when she was 34 and on a beach vacation with her husband and young daughter, a phone call from her doctor revealed the answer: She's autistic. ***A Little Less Broken***, her first book, is a warm, funny, and deeply informative recounting of her years-long search to find her true self—and an encouraging reminder to accept ourselves as we are.

## Deep Connections

In ***Tell Me Everything***, Pulitzer Prize winner **Elizabeth Strout** returns to Crosby, Maine, bringing together her most popular characters. Bob Burgess is investigating a murder but spends much of his time confiding in writer Lucy Barton. Lucy has befriended the irascible Olive Kitteridge, and their chats in Olive's retirement home lead to big questions about how we're remembered. No need to have read Strout's other work to fall in love with this stand-alone story that explores the quiet impact we have on each other every day.







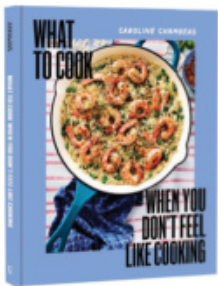
This dish (from Chambers's new book) gets made in one skillet.

SMART TIP

# HOW TO SAVE TIME

A reigning queen of Substack can help you reclaim some precious minutes during a busy week.

BY GRACE ELKUS



Ever find yourself needing to cook dinner when, well, you'd rather not? Caroline Chambers, author of the new cookbook *What to Cook When You Don't Feel Like Cooking* (\$35; [unionsquareandco.com](https://unionsquareandco.com)), has been there. The creator of the beloved Substack newsletter of the same name and mom of three young boys has some hard-earned advice, and it's all about efficiency. "Meal planning will save you big-time," she says, adding that, as you map out meals for the week, you can think about how to streamline the prep. "Plan roast chicken with veggies and a sauce on Monday, and slot in chicken enchiladas for Wednesday night. On Monday, cook Wednesday's chicken while you've already got your hands and pans dirty with chicken. Don't do twice what you can do once!"

GOOD GEAR

## A Cooler Cooler

The future of tailgating (and soccer game snack time) is here. Meet Igloo's iceless electric compressor coolers, which plug right into your car's auxiliary outlet or a wall outlet at home. They don't need ice, so there's plenty of space inside and they're lighter to carry. Also, soggy sandwiches will be a thing of the past! They're available in five sizes, from the compact 18-quart model (which fits 29 cans) to the 83-quart "dual-zone" model, with two sections that can be set to different temperatures. *From \$400; [igloocoolers.com](https://igloocoolers.com) —G.E.*



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WHEN  
THE CLOCK  
STRIKES  
DINNER,  
THINK  
STOUFFER'S.





LEARN A NEW TRICK

# Cook Tofu in the Air Fryer

Because there's no tofu like air fryer tofu (crispy on the outside, creamy on the inside, and delicious all over!), we asked Lindsay Ostrom, creator of the mega-popular food blog *Pinch of Yum*, to share her how-to tips.

SHOP

Start with vacuum-packed extra-firm tofu, Ostrom suggests. "It's naturally drier and firmer, two ideal qualities when air-frying." If you only have water-packed tofu, gently squeeze out as much liquid as you can and dry it with towels.

PREP

Tear the tofu into chunks, giving each piece a craggy edge for max crispness. Toss them with a couple of tablespoons each of cornstarch, soy sauce, oil, and, for an umami boost, nutritional yeast. "The cornstarch is essential," Ostrom says. "It helps dry out the surface and create the crispy crust." For even more flavor, add a few dashes of your favorite spice blend, such as shawarma.

COOK

Air-fry at 400°F for 8 to 10 minutes, then give the basket a shake and cook for about five minutes more, or until it's crisped to your liking.

ENJOY

Ostrom recommends serving the pieces with a dipping sauce, chicken-nugget-style. "Or toss them in a homemade or store-bought sauce—a chutney or peanut sauce—while they're still warm and make the tofu the star of a stir-fry or rice bowl." —G.E.







# Cool Tools

## Erasable Pens That Help Make Back to School Simple and Smooth

September can be a stressful time for families with school-aged children. Schedules are changing, extracurriculars are starting, and homework assignments are piling up. Luckily, there's a simple-yet-powerful tool to bring ease to the season: FriXion erasable pens. The best-selling\* erasable pen is available in a variety of styles for fearless creation. Here's where you can use FriXion to simplify your fall routines.



### 1. FAMILY SCHEDULING

You and your kids' schedules are filling up. You'll want to be prepared for changes—and be able to make them without messy cross outs in that new calendar or planner. FriXion erasable pens use thermo-sensitive ink to allow smooth writing and clean erasing, so you can keep plans up to date with less stress, and no mess.

### 2. CLASSROOM CREATIVITY

Your kids can tackle any project without fear of mistakes with FriXion pens, markers, and highlighters, all available in a vibrant variety of colors. The erasable technology puts the power in their hands to write, draw, create, and recreate with ease.

### 3. MINDFUL RITUALS

Gratitude journaling is a great way to start or end the day. For kids, try introducing a daily practice at bedtime. This can include a “win” of the day, something new they learned in school, or a doodle of a fun activity they enjoyed. Using FriXion erasable pens to write by hand can relieve stress, help process emotions, and improve focus and memory. And, it gets them off their devices, so they're ready to rest, wake up refreshed, and be ready to take on the day.

#### FUN FACT:

FriXion is the first and only STEM.org Authenticated™ pen. That means it gets the stamp of approval from education researchers in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields, so you can be confident it fosters learning and creativity.



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\*FriXion is the #1 Selling Erasable Pen Brand/Circana/Dollar Sales



# How Laundry Can Impact Skin

Skin care is self care, and for sensitive skin, it can start in the laundry room with all® free clear.



## 1. WASH AWAY BUILDUP

Clean bed sheets and towels feel great, and washing them regularly prevents buildup that can irritate sensitive skin. Experts recommend washing sheets weekly, and towels every three to four uses.

## 2. WASH AWAY ALLERGENS

Ditto, dust mite matter: Washing fabrics with all® free clear removes 99 percent of top seasonal and everyday allergens\*, as well as impurities like dirt and body oil, without leaving behind irritating residues. It's 100 percent free of dyes and perfumes.

## 3. WASH BEFORE YOU WEAR

Sensitive skin types are more prone to irritation. Toss new clothes, towels, and bed sheets in the wash with all® free clear before use for a gentle, effective clean.



FOR MORE SENSITIVE SKIN LAUNDRY TIPS,  
VISIT [ALL-LAUNDRY.COM/SENSITIVE-SKIN.HTML](http://ALL-LAUNDRY.COM/SENSITIVE-SKIN.HTML)

\*Dog and cat dander, dust mite matter, ragweed pollen, grass/tree pollen. all® free clear is not intended to treat or prevent allergies.





# Skin care can start in the laundry room

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BEAUTY ROAD TEST

# All About That Base

We get it: You want a foundation that hides spots, redness, and zits, but you don't want to feel like you're covered in plaster. Here, six winners that'll give you natural-looking skin, no matter your type or tone.

BY HEATHER MUIR MAFFEI



BEST FOR ACNE COVERAGE

**Milani Conceal + Perfect 2-in-1 Foundation + Concealer**

The wizards at Milani found a way to formulate a weightless, waterproof foundation that covers imperfections without caking or creasing. This medium-to-full-coverage long-wear liquid has a matte finish that gives even those with finicky skin and/or undereye circles a no-filter-needed effect. Available in 45 shades and stocked in almost every drugstore out there, this bottle is a no-brainer. \$12; [milanicosmetics.com](http://milanicosmetics.com)



BEST MULTITASKER  
**Saie Glow Super Skin Tint Foundation**

If a fancy serum and light-weight foundation had a baby, this would be her. In 36 shades, the peptide-packed tint offers a stunning natural look. \$40; [saiehello.com](http://saiehello.com)



BEST POWDER  
**Laura Mercier Ultra-Blur Translucent Pressed Talc-Free Waterproof Setting Powder**

Dab this on to set concealer, or buff it wherever to control shine. The hyaluronic acid controls pesky oils without drying out your skin. \$52; [lauramercier.com](http://lauramercier.com)



BEST FOR SENSITIVE SKIN

**Monika Blunder Beauty Blunder Cover**  
Made by a celeb makeup artist, this pot o' gold has arnica to reduce redness. Use it as a concealer or all over. \$52; [monikablunderbeauty.com](http://monikablunderbeauty.com)



BEST FOR ON-THE-GO

**Anastasia Beverly Hills Beauty Balm Serum Boosted Skin Tint**  
Easy, cute, and portable, this can live in your bag without making a mess. It has marula oil to soften lines. Swipe right! \$42; [anastasiabeverlyhills.com](http://anastasiabeverlyhills.com)



BEST TOOL

**Anisa Beauty Pinnacle Foundation Brush**  
This guy can make less-than-great foundations blend in like the best of 'em. The triangular dome delivers product into nooks quickly and evenly. \$38; [anisabeauty.com](http://anisabeauty.com)



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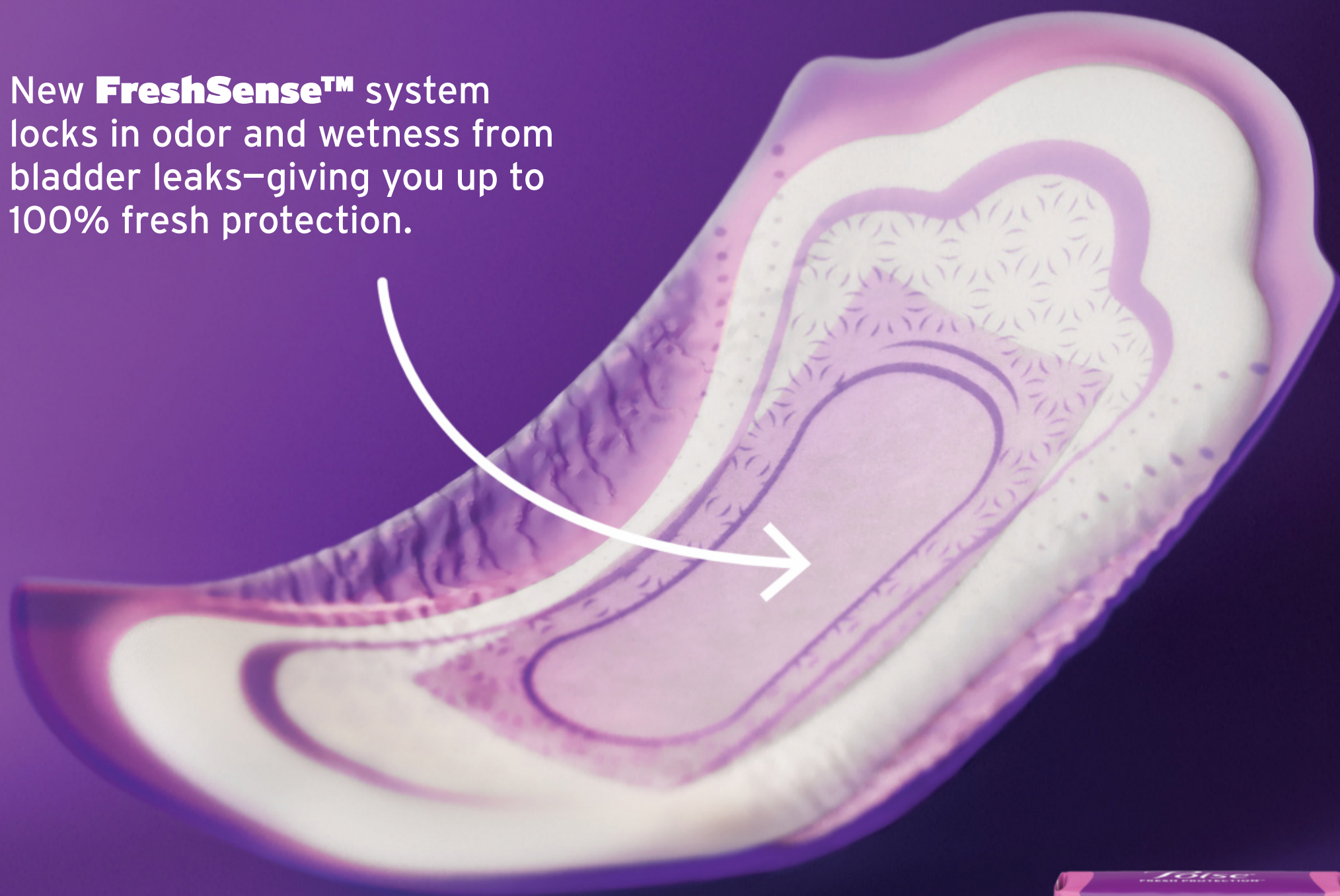
\*Based on the range of maximum active cooling and heating in independent microclimates on the Climate360®.

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100% fresh protection.



IT TAKES *Poise*





# Genius Beauty Our beauty director tries *alllll* the products. These are her current faves.

BY HEATHER MUIR MAFFEI

## 1

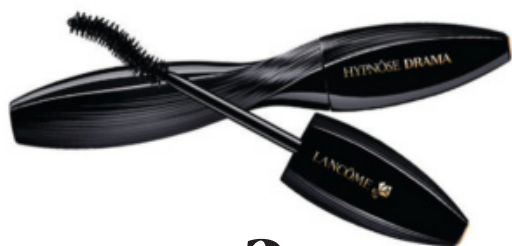
### LATHER UP

Massage these bars directly into your hair in the shower (it's weird but wonderful!). The shampoo cleanses without stripping, the conditioner softens, and the jars are compostable. Cosmic Rose Shampoo and Conditioner Bars, \$26 each; [hellobluedunes.com](https://hellobluedunes.com)



PROP STYLING BY KALEN KAMINSKI





2

EYE OPENER

Finally, a va-va-voom mascara that doesn't smear or (thanks to a keratin complex and rose extract) suck my lashes dry. The S-shaped brush coats each one. *Hypnôse Drama Mascara*, \$33; [lancome-usa.com](http://lancome-usa.com)



3

FRESH & BRIGHT

Mix a pinch of powder with a squirt of liquid to create serum on demand. A tad fussy? Sure, but vitamin C loses its brightening powers faster in the premixed stuff. This method gets you the goods. *Brightening Boost Vitamin C Power Serum*, \$98; [exponentbeauty.com](http://exponentbeauty.com)

4

SWEET CHEEKS

In six fun hues, this talc-free powder not only delivers amazing color in one swipe, it also contains fermented arnica to help reduce unwanted redness. *Haus Labs Color Fuse Blush*, \$32 each; [sephora.com](http://sephora.com)



5

SLOUGH GUY

Even the best balm is useless if your lips are covered in dead skin. The silicone nubs on this tube gently remove flakes so the healing aloe and amino acids can actually work. Mwah! *Lip Buff*, \$20; [us.refybeauty.com](http://us.refybeauty.com)

6

GOOD AS GOLD

I'm kind to many things; my hair is not one of them. Heat styling and highlights? Guilty. A few spritzes of this bond-repair treatment and my tired tresses look and feel revived. *Pantene Pro-Vitamin Essence*, \$25; [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)



About Heather

With more than 17 years in the beauty biz, the busy mom of two (hi, Bean and Georgie!) has tried almost every serum, balm, and potion out there. She's always down to chat about facial hair.





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BEAUTY NEWS

# Get the Red Carpet Treatment

Three of our favorite celebrities just launched their own hair care lines to help you shine like the star you are.

BY HEATHER MUIR MAFFEI



## Beyoncé

Cécred

Having grown up in her mother's salon, where she helped out by sweeping the floor, Beyoncé holds high standards for hair care products. To pass the Beyoncé test, everything in Cécred (pronounced "sacred") had to keep her strands healthy—despite constant coloring, high-tension styles, sweat, and buildup. Whether your hair is straight or coily, virgin or chemically treated, Queen Bey says her stuff will nurture it. The magic ingredients include wool-derived protein for strengthening, plus honey and prebiotic ferment to repair, smooth, and boost shine. Each product smells warm and woody. We especially loved the gritty, pepperminty Clarifying Shampoo & Scalp Scrub, which has a pointed tip for targeted application. The brand has committed to donate \$500,000 a year to fund cosmetology scholarships and business grants to salon owners. *From \$30; cecred.com*



## Brooke Shields

Commence

Her brows get a lot of attention, but Brooke Shields's gorgeous hair can't be overlooked. The actor wanted to formulate multitasking products that solved the new hair problems she and her friends were facing in middle age, like thinning strands and scalp irritation. Because the world doesn't need another ho-hum dry shampoo, Brooke was hell-bent on making the best one. Enter: Commence 2-in-1 Instant Shampoo, a nonaerosol, benzene-free invisible spray that can extend time between washes while plumping up roots for fuller-looking hair. When we tried it, we found that it absorbed grease without leaving buildup. The line's other products are the 3-in-1 Leave-In Conditioner, which tames frizz, protects against heat, and adds shine, and the Root Serum, with alfalfa extract, quinoa peptides, and acai stem cells to help increase hair density. *From \$21; shopcommence.com*



## Rihanna

Fenty Hair

Rihanna has already built makeup and skin care empires with Fenty Beauty and Fenty Skin, and now she's adding hair to the list. With eight smart products and a cool tool (an edge comb to detail shorter strands along the hairline), Fenty Hair features bottles created from 100% postconsumer recycled (PCR) aluminum and 50% PCR plastic. The catchy names, like The Homecurl and The Comeback Kid, are a nice touch too. To honor her roots (ha), all the products include ingredients sourced from the Caribbean, including Barbados gooseberry. The conditioner has green coconut water, the deep conditioner has wild mango butter, and the heat protectant has moringa oil. Each formula is designed to help restore fried strands. We loved how healthy the shampoo and conditioner made our hair feel, and the heat protectant gave blowouts with lasting volume. *From \$18; fentyhair.com*



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# how to do things

IDEAS, DIYS &  
REALLY GOOD TIPS



SWEET THING

## DOUBLE-CHOCOLATE ZUCCHINI CAKE

Tender and fudgy, this dessert takes the...well, you know.

BY MICHELE SONG

FOOD STYLING BY EMILY NABORS HALL; PROP STYLING BY JULIA BAYLESS



# Double-Chocolate Zucchini Cake

ACTIVE TIME **30 MINUTES**  
TOTAL TIME **2 HOURS, 15 MINUTES**  
SERVES **8**

## Chocolate Zucchini Cake

- Cooking spray
- 2 cups loosely packed grated zucchini (from about 1 medium zucchini)
- ½ cup (100 g) packed light brown sugar
- ½ cup (100 g) granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature
- ⅓ cup (5⅓ Tbsp.) unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- ¼ cup neutral oil (such as canola)
- ¼ cup sour cream, at room temperature
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1¼ cups (156 g) all-purpose flour
- ½ cup (45 g) Dutch-process cocoa powder
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ¾ tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- ½ cup semisweet chocolate chips

## Chocolate Cream Cheese Frosting

- ¼ cup (4 Tbsp.) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 4 oz. cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1½ cups (180 g) confectioners' sugar, sifted
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- 1½ oz. dark chocolate, melted and cooled
- Sprinkles, for decorating

**MAKE THE CHOCOLATE ZUCCHINI CAKE:** Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat an 8-inch square baking pan with cooking spray and line with parchment paper.

**PAT** zucchini with a towel to remove excess moisture; set aside. Whisk sugars and eggs in a large bowl until frothy, about 1 minute. Add butter, oil, sour cream, and vanilla; mix well. Place a large sieve over bowl and sift in flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, salt, and baking soda. Whisk until well combined. Using a rubber spatula, fold in zucchini and chocolate chips.



**TRANSFER** batter to prepared baking pan and smooth top. Bake until a toothpick comes out clean, 30 to 35 minutes. Transfer baking pan to a wire rack and let cool completely, about 1 hour.

**MAKE THE CHOCOLATE CREAM CHEESE FROSTING:** Beat butter with an electric mixer on medium speed in a large bowl until smooth. Add cream cheese; mix until well combined. Add confectioners' sugar and salt; mix on low speed until incorporated. Increase speed to medium and mix until smooth, about 1 minute. Add melted chocolate; mix until well combined, about 30 seconds, taking care not to overbeat.

**REMOVE** cake from pan. Spread frosting over top and scatter with sprinkles. Refrigerate, covered, for up to 3 days.



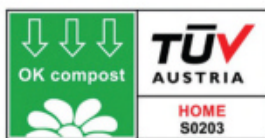
**MORE CHOCOLATE!**  
In her new book, *Chocolate Lover* (\$28; [chronicle books.com](https://chroniclebooks.com)), pastry pro Michele Song celebrates her unabashed love for the dark and sweet with 60 must-make recipes, including this simple snacking cake and the more elaborate (but worth it!) Chocolate Crèmeux Éclairs. Yes, please.



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PROP STYLING BY KALEN KAMINSKI. ILLUSTRATION BY BABETH LAFON



## DRINKING WITH JENNA

## Pop Quiz: Wine Edition

It's time to test your vino knowledge! Don't stress: No matter how you score, your homework will involve opening a bottle.

BY JENNA HELWIG

**1. Where was wine first made?**

- A. France
- B. Italy
- C. Georgia (the country)
- D. Greece

**2. When describing wine, the word "dry" is the opposite of:**

- A. Low-alcohol
- B. Sweet
- C. Bitter
- D. Fruity

**3. True or false: Wines with a screw cap are generally not as good as wines with a cork.****4. Which country makes Old World wines?**

- A. Argentina
- B. Australia
- C. Portugal
- D. United States

**5. True or false: White wine should be served super cold, and red wine should be served at room temperature.****6. What is orange wine?**

- A. A blend of rosé and white wines
- B. Wine made from white grapes in the style of red wine
- C. Wine made out of oranges or other citrus fruits
- D. A sweet wine traditional in Greece

**7. Which of these French whites is not usually made from the chardonnay grape?**

- A. Chablis
- B. Champagne
- C. Sancerre
- D. White Burgundy

**8. True or false: Cooler regions tend to produce wines with more alcohol.****9. Which of these sparkling wines is not made in the style of Champagne?**

- A. Prosecco
- B. Cava
- C. Crémant
- D. Franciacorta

**10. True or false: Pinot grigio is a red grape.****11. Which of these wines is usually the most tannic?**

- A. Merlot
- B. Pinot noir
- C. Gamay
- D. Cabernet sauvignon

**12. Which of these wines is typically lowest in alcohol?**

- A. Vinho verde
- B. Chianti
- C. Chenin blanc
- D. Malbec

**About Jenna**

REAL SIMPLE's food director and the author of five cookbooks, Jenna is an enthusiastic eater, drinker, and home cook. Her go-to cocktail is a Negroni, and her wine of choice is anything bubbly. Cheers!





## The Answers

**Give yourself 1 point for each correct answer.**

### 1. C

The earliest known evidence of humans making wine dates from about 8,000 years ago, in the Caucasus Mountains in modern-day Georgia, says Tyler Balliet, author of *Rebel School of Wine*. “It was likely also being made around the same time in other parts of the world, including Armenia and Iran.”

### 2. B

During fermentation, the sugars in wine are converted into alcohol and carbon dioxide, explains Sharon Fenchak, executive winemaker at Biltmore Winery at the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina. “A wine would usually be declared dry after most of the sugars have been depleted and the desired alcohol percentage is achieved.”

### 3. False

Quality does not correlate with cap type, says Maureen Petrosky, author of *Wine Club: A Monthly Guide to Swirling, Sipping and Pairing with Friends*. “Some low-quality wines have a cork, and some very high-quality wines have a screw cap.” These twisty tops are not only more convenient, they can also do more to keep alcohol from going bad than porous cork. For many wineries, though, tradition rules!

### 4. C

The term “Old World” refers to wines made in European regions with a long history of wine making. “In these places, there may be regulations in place to protect a certain style or varietal,” Fenchak notes. In general, “New World” wines are made everywhere else, including the Americas and Australia.

### 5. False

That *used* to be the consensus, but the wisdom has shifted. “When red wines are too warm, the taste of alcohol can overpower all those delicate flavors you spent your hard-earned money on,” Balliet says. “When whites



are too cold, they taste like nothing.” The ideal temp for reds is actually between 55°F and 65°F; for whites, it’s between 45°F and 55°F. To get close, refrigerate red wine for 10 to 20 minutes before serving, and pull a well-chilled white from the fridge 10 minutes in advance.

### 6. B

Also known as a skin-contact wine, orange vino is made by fermenting and aging white grapes with their skins for at least a week and up to a year. “The longer the skins have contact with the juice, the more color and tannin end up in the wine,” Balliet says. Many rosés and all reds are also skin-contact wines.

### 7. C

Chardonnay grapes are used in many wines and blends, but you won’t always see the name on the bottle. In fact, Petrosky says, all these wines except Sancerre are made with it. “Sancerre is made from sauvignon blanc.”

### 8. False

It’s usually the opposite, says Fenchak, who points out that grapes in cooler wine regions typically have less sugar and more acid at harvest time. “Fruit from warmer climates—like Sicily and Argentina—ripens faster. The riper the fruit, the sweeter it usually is.” In wine, higher sugar levels usually mean higher alcohol levels. So while a warm-climate wine may not taste sweet per se, it likely has more sugar and thus more alcohol.

### 9. A

Champagne, cava (a Spanish sparkling wine), crémant (a French bubbly), and Franciacorta (an Italian sparkler) are all made using the labor-intensive traditional method, with the sparkling process happening once the wine

is inside the bottle. Prosecco is made using the tank, or Charmat, method, Balliet says. “It’s faster and generally results in a more straightforward and budget-friendly wine.”

### 10. True

Even though pinot grigio is a white wine, it’s made from a red grape. “All grape juice is white,” Fenchak says. “The color comes when winemakers ferment the skins with the juice.”

### 11. D

Tannins are astringent, slightly bitter compounds that occur naturally in grape skins and seeds, Fenchak says. “Different grapes have different levels, and cabernet sauvignon is the highest among this group.” If you don’t love the flavor of tannins, go for a pinot noir or gamay. Think of merlot as a happy medium.

### 12. A

Like your wine on the lower-alcohol side? Get to know Portuguese vinho verde, Petrosky says. “This white is mildly effervescent and light in body, color, and alcohol, typically around 11% ABV. It’s also often a bargain.”

## If You Scored...

### 1 to 4 points: Amateur with lots of potential

It’s early in your wine journey, and more research is required! Try a pinot grigio or vinho verde with one of the dips on page 170. Name all the flavors you taste as you sip.

### 5 to 9 points: Close to a connoisseur

You know the basics and more. Yay! Uncork a bottle of chardonnay from California and one from France. Then do a side-by-side tasting.

### 10 to 12 points: Practically a sommelier

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THINGS COOKS KNOW

# BOOST YOUR SUPERMARKET SMARTS

Whether you love grocery shopping or hate it, you can probably stand to be better at it. So we asked insiders to chime in with their top tips.

BY MARA WEINRAUB







### Avoid the Crowds

If you were hoping for a specific time that's best for shopping, Maria Brous, director of communications at the supermarket chain Publix, is going to disappoint you. "There's no universal best time to shop," she says. (Bummer, right?) A spokesperson for Target notes that traffic patterns even vary by store. That said, weekends tend to be supermarkets' busiest days, and Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays are usually the slowest, says Mario Torres, store team leader at a Whole Foods Market in St. Petersburg, Florida. "That's why many retailers change their sales mid-week." He adds that midmorning—around 10 a.m.—is often when stores are the least crowded.

You can also google your store for a data-backed view of the slowest times. Additionally, it can be helpful to think about the store's neighborhood and who's shopping there. "First thing in the morning can be super busy for stores located near retirees or families with grade-school students," Brous says. At other locations, you may see a rush during lunch, before dinner, or even an hour before closing time. Once you've put yourself in your neighbors' shoes, you can try to avoid those busy periods. Or bypass the aisles completely by ordering for curbside pickup.

### Spot New Products

Discovering fun seasonal and recently released foods is one of the joys of grocery shopping, and luckily for us, these items seem to be popping up at unprecedented rates. Certain grocers—like Trader Joe's, Sprouts Farmers Market, and Whole Foods Market—make them easy to find, drawing attention to new products with clearly marked sections, colorful shelf tags, and in-store samples. The discount chain Aldi has dedicated launch days: New items, known as Aldi Finds, arrive on Wednesdays, while seasonal treats arrive on Fridays.

For up-to-the-minute insights, follow popular shopper-run Instagram accounts, like @costcodeals, @traderjoeslist, and @ohheyaldi. The folks behind them are constantly sharing launches, reviews, and sales. You can also chat with your cashier at check-out, says Will Coleman, a food writer whose "6 to 1" grocery shopping method recently went viral. (If you missed it: He suggests shopping weekly for six vegetables, five fruits, four proteins, three starches, two sauces or spreads, and one fun item.) "They often know about new things before they hit the shelves." Also, sign up for your store's loyalty program to get emails or in-app notifications about new products.



### Find More Deals

Speaking of loyalty programs, definitely sign up! Grocers are now making it easier to accumulate and use points, says Jeff Wells, lead editor at Grocery Dive, a website that reports on the grocery industry. Earlier this year, Albertsons extended its points' expiration date from one month to two, and Target began applying deals automatically. While you're at it, download your favorite store's app—it's the best way to learn about discounts before you shop, says Anita Bilaver, store team leader at a Whole Foods Market in Rochester, New York. "It's like checking out the menu before you eat at a new restaurant." Many apps learn your patterns, remembering what you've bought in the past and alerting you when it's on sale again.

To save money while perusing the shelves, scan from bottom to top to figure out where the cheaper stuff is. At many retailers, products shelved at eye level are often the most popular but not necessarily the most affordable. If you're at Costco, the price tags reportedly clue you in to discounts: Prices ending in 9 (like .49 or .79) can mean Costco got a special deal from the manufacturer (lowering the price for you), and clearance items typically have prices ending in .00 or .97.





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Let's make

# CHEESY CHICKEN-BACON RANCH CRESCENT ROLLS FOR TWO

Prep	Total	Ingredients	Servings
10 MIN	30 MIN	5	2

## Ingredients

1/2 cup shredded deli rotisserie chicken

6 tablespoons ranch dressing

**1 can (4 oz) refrigerated Pillsbury™ Original Crescent Rolls (4 Count)**

4 slices precooked bacon

2 slices cheddar cheese, each cut into 4 strips

## Directions

- 1 Heat oven to 375°F. Line cookie sheet with cooking parchment paper. In small bowl, mix chicken and 2 tablespoons of the ranch dressing.
- 2 Unroll dough; separate into 4 triangles. Spoon 2 tablespoons of the chicken mixture on wide end of each triangle; fold 1 slice of bacon in half, placing on top of chicken mixture. Add 2 strips of cheese on top of bacon.
- 3 Roll up each crescent, ending at tip of triangle. Place cheese side up on cookie sheet.
- 4 Bake 13 to 16 minutes or until golden brown and chicken is heated through. Serve warm with remaining 1/4 cup ranch dressing.



## HOW TO DO THINGS



### Ace the Checkout

There's a lot to consider when choosing a checkout lane. Richard Larson, PhD, a post-tenure professor at MIT's Institute for Data, Systems, and Society and an expert on queues, starts by reviewing the line length and the number of items in each person's cart. "You might have a line with just two people, but each one has \$150 worth of groceries, and a line of four people, with each having fewer than 10 items." In that case, Larson suggests opting for the longer line. "The service time per customer is much less." He also notes that a basket full of items to be weighed will take longer than one with items that only require scanning.

Watch the cashiers and pick one who's not too chatty, says Jill Filson, a cashier at a Trader Joe's in Greensboro, North Carolina. "Also, many shoppers zero in on the middle areas, which means the outside lines aren't so busy."

Self-checkout is rarely faster, says Julie Niederhoff, PhD, professor of supply chain management at Syracuse University's Whitman School of Management. "Shoppers typically scan items up to 10 times slower than pros." But if you only have a few things and you can step right up to a register, do it. To cut your time a bit, try memorizing the PLU codes for your go-to produce. Fun fact: They're universal! ■

### CAN'T-MISS STORE BRANDS

They were once considered a lower-quality alternative to name-brand products. Now grocers are raising the bar with their elevated, not-so-generic offerings. A few that don't feel like scrimps:

#### ALDI

##### Specialty Selected

Make a beeline for the bakery, where brioche buns, baguettes, and sliced sourdough rounds are a few of the bestsellers.

#### WHOLE FOODS MARKET

##### 365 by Whole Foods Market

Stock your pantry with items from this line (featuring more than 3,000 products).

It's celebrated for its basics, including rice, stock, and baking essentials.

#### TARGET

##### Good & Gather

Hit the freezer aisle for standouts like the spinach-and-goat-cheese wood-fired pizza. And do not sleep on the everything cashews.

#### KROGER

##### Private Selection

This line shines when it comes to semihomemade or heat-and-serve dinner shortcuts. Employee favorites include the mac and cheese and the petite gold potatoes with herbes de Provence seasoning.

#### TRADER JOE'S

##### Trader Joe's

The majority of items at TJ's are private-label—and no one's mad about it! The store is beloved for its frozen stuff (appetizers, meals, and chocolate croissants), cheese, and seasonal snacks, like all things pumpkin.





# DINNER FOR TWO? *Hoo hoo!*

CHEESY CHICKEN-BACON RANCH CRESCENT ROLLS FOR TWO



THE BEST MEMORIES ARE  
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SIMPLE TWISTS

# 5 TRICKS FOR A HOUSE THAT SMELLS AHHH-MAZING

They’ve been right under your nose this whole time.

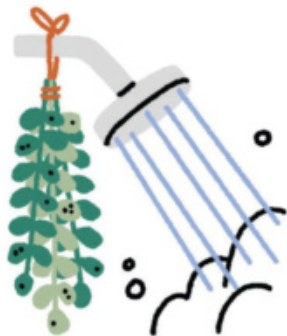
BY TEDDY WILLSON



USE

## Coffee Grounds TO Deodorize the Fridge

If you’re anything like your parents (or grandparents, or great-grandparents), you likely have a box of baking soda perched inside your refrigerator to absorb funky smells. We have another idea: Swap that box with a bowl of used, dried-out coffee grounds. The pantry staple works as a natural air freshener thanks to its odor-eliminating nitrogen. And you were just gonna throw those grounds out anyway, right?



USE

## Eucalyptus TO Scent Your Shower

Transform your ho-hum shower into an indulgent, spalike experience: Pick up some fresh eucalyptus from Trader Joe’s or your local florist, secure the stems with a rubber band, and use twine to hang the bundle from your showerhead. When you take a hot shower, the steam will carry the plant’s soothing scent. The stems should last two to three weeks, but if you want a stronger smell and don’t mind replacing the eucalyptus sooner, crush the leaves to release more perfumy oil.



USE

## Dryer Sheets TO Freshen Up Throw Pillows

You can toss most throw pillows and their covers into the washing machine. Between spins, though, it’s used dryer sheets to the rescue! Stuff one into each pillow, between the cover and cushion. The fresh, clean scent will permeate the fabric and help prevent musty odors so you can rest easy.



USE

## Essential Oils TO Destink the Trash

To put it bluntly, trash smells like garbage! Combat the stench by adding a few drops of your favorite essential oil to a cotton ball and tossing it into the can before the trash bag. This will help mask offensive smells and replace them with a nice one. As a bonus, some essential oils can help with other trash-related problems: Tea tree and citrus oils have antibacterial properties, mint oils can help deter rodents, and lavender oil may repel bugs.



USE

## Vanilla Extract TO Sweeten Up Your Whole Place

While the magic of this trick happens in the kitchen, it will make surrounding rooms smell ridiculously good too. Preheat the oven to 300°F. Then grab the vanilla extract from your pantry and pour a couple of tablespoons into an oven-safe dish. When the oven is ready, place the dish inside. A mere 20 minutes later, you’ll start to feel like you’re living in a bakery.



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CLEAN THIS

## YOUR CLEANING TOOLS

Spread suds, not grime! The stuff in your utility closet needs to be washed too. Here's how to get each job done.

BY ERICA FINAMORE





## Brooms

Sometimes we get so swept up in things, we forget that our brooms need TLC! After every few uses, run the bristles through the teeth on your dust pan, if it has them, or remove the dust bunnies and hair with an old wide-tooth comb. Every few weeks, dunk the broom's business end into a bucket of warm water and a few drops of dish soap and swish it around. Rinse it with water and let it dry for 24 hours before using it again. As bristles become dull, bent, or frayed, grab your scissors and trim the ends.

## Mopheads

If your mophead is machine washable, huzzah! Throw it into the wash (by itself or with cleaning rags, and without fabric softener, which can leave residue) on a gentle cycle and air-dry it. No such luck? You'll have to clean it by hand. Start by pulling off any large debris with your fingers or running the mophead under the faucet. Then fill a bucket with warm water and some mild detergent or a few drops of dish soap. Submerge the mop, letting it soak for 10 to 15 minutes. Rinse it under running water to wash away excess soap and dirt, then hang it up to dry completely before storing it.

## Dish Brushes

These guys step up to the plate night after night, so they need a good, soapy bath before you go to bed. Fill a bowl with warm water and a few drops of dish soap and give your brush a 10-to-15-minute soak. This will loosen up gunk and grease. Then you can use your hands (with dish gloves, if you prefer) to comb through the bristles before rinsing them off. If the brush is plastic, it can go on the top rack of your dishwasher instead.

## Sponges

Let this soak in: Sponges need to be tossed and replaced *at least* every two weeks. They can harbor tons of bacteria—up to 54 billion per cubic centimeter, a 2022 study says—and no amount of cleaning will make them safe to use long-term. (Microwaving or boiling them may reduce some of the bacteria, but the USDA says those methods are not enough to make dirty sponges safe.) During their brief lifespan, make sure to rinse sponges thoroughly after each use and stand them up in a holder so they can dry completely. Sadly, there's nothing you can safely do with a used sponge. If it's plant-based, like those iconic cellulose ones, you can at least compost it!

## Microfiber Cloths

Collect your dirty, dusty, juice-soaked, and otherwise gross cloths and throw them all into the wash (they can mix with your mophead, but keep them separate from everything else so they don't get, say, your white bath towels dirty). Use cool or warm water and mild detergent. Avoid fabric softener, as it can cause the fibers to become less absorbent over time. Air-dry or dry on the coolest setting to keep fibers from *melllllting*.

## Toilet Brushes

It kind of stinks, but your toilet brush needs to be cleaned after every use, and the holder should be disinfected monthly. After you've cleaned the bowl and flushed, swish the brush around in the new, fresh water. Then secure the handle under the toilet seat so the brush is suspended over the bowl. Spray the bristles with hydrogen peroxide, turning the brush as you work to ensure you hit the whole thing. Let it hang out there for 30 minutes before flushing again and rinsing the brush in the fresh toilet water. Wipe the handle with a disinfecting wipe and you're good to go. For the holder: Spritz it with plenty of disinfecting spray and let it sit for 10 minutes. When the time is up, rinse it under hot water. Let both the brush and holder dry completely before reuniting them. ■

### OUR EXPERTS

**CARYLANNE BROWN**, CUSTOMER HAPPINESS TEAM LEAD AT GROVE COLLABORATIVE, A HOME CARE MARKETPLACE

**KATHY CALDERINI**, VICE PRESIDENT OF PRODUCT MARKETING AT CASABELLA, A CLEANING TOOLS BRAND

**KATHY COHOON**, OPERATIONS MANAGER AT TWO MAIDS, A NATIONAL CLEANING SERVICE

**KRISTIN DINICOLANTONIO**, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS AT THE AMERICAN CLEANING INSTITUTE

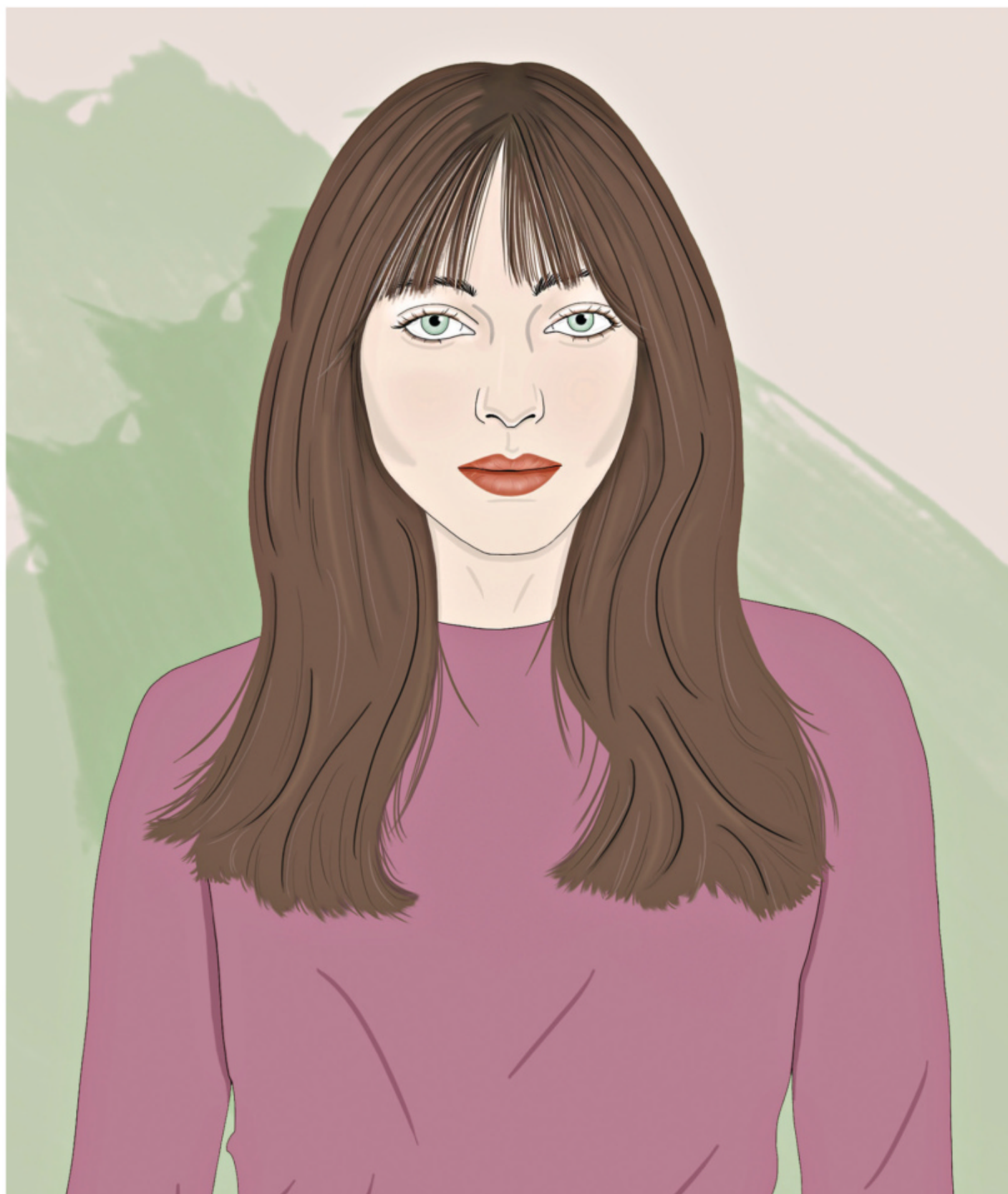


BEAUTY

## HAIR GOALS

A fresh cut can breathe new life into your lewk—even a little tweak can make a big difference. No matter what you're hoping to accomplish, these styles will help you fall in love with your locks.

EDITED BY HEATHER MUIR MAFFEI



If you want to...  
soften your face

**TRY: Birkin bangs**

Named after the iconic actor and singer Jane Birkin, today's version is a little wispier, says stylist Peter Gray, who's worked with celebs like Sigourney Weaver, Kate Hudson, and Kat Graham. "They're popular because of their low-maintenance aesthetic." The fringe softens square-shaped faces and sharp jawlines, and it makes eyes more dramatic. These bangs are best for fine, straight hair, but with a good blow-dryer anyone can pull them off. Ask your stylist for them by name, or request wispy bangs with the center skimming your brows, Gray says. To style, blow-dry them forward with a round brush. Then use your fingers to work a dab of oil (like Tresemmé Keratin Smooth Weightless Silk Serum, \$7; [target.com](https://www.target.com)) through the tips of the bangs to separate them. —*Melanie Rud*





## If you want to... embrace your natural texture

### **TRY: The halo cut**

Bobs are trending! Especially this version. “Ask for a rounded shape with soft, face-framing layers that will create height and volume to get the halo effect,” says Nunzio Saviano, owner of the eponymous salon in New York City. Find someone who specializes in curly hair so they can account for shrinkage. —*Lauren Thomann*



## If you want to... pump up limp, thinning strands

### **TRY: A shoulder-grazing bob with a deep side part**

A shorter cut removes weight that drags your hair down. Plus: “Hair cut right at the shoulders can give the illusion of density,” says stylist Rena Calhoun, whose clients include Joey King, Demi Lovato, and other celebs. Mist a volumizer (like Volumizing Primer, \$40; [virtuelabs.com](http://virtuelabs.com)) onto damp hair, then blow-dry while it’s upside down before parting a few inches from center. —*Casey Clark*



## If you want to... add some fun to long hair

### **TRY: The butterfly cut**

This heavily layered cut is best for people who want to add movement without losing length, says stylist Glenn Ellis, who’s worked with Sarah Paulson, Sia, and more. “The longer the hair, the better,” he adds, noting that the shortest layer should be no higher than your chin. He calls the cut a flipped version of the Rachel because the ends curl out instead of under. “To style, blow-dry your hair away from your face with a large round brush.” —*Dahvi Shira*



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## PETS

## Paws-itively Essential

**Food, water, walks, belly rubs! While you know the basic doggo needs, read on for five less obvious but no less important things every pup should get on the regular.**

BY JUNO DEMELO

### Brain Play

That feeling that rushes in when you crush the day's Wordle? Dogs can get that same satisfaction from conquering a challenge—and it's good for them, says veterinary behaviorist Christopher Pachel, DVM, owner of Animal Behavior Clinic in Portland, Oregon. "Mental stimulation provides an outlet for dogs' natural busyness and problem-solving abilities," he says, adding that, without it, behavioral issues could arise. Researchers in Austria have found that it may even help slow age-related cognitive decline in dogs. To challenge Fuzzy McFluff's brain, try teaching him a new trick, giving him puzzle toys, or hiding treats or kibble around your home for him to find.

### Time to Sniff

"Dogs 'see' the world through their nose," says Victoria Stilwell, a dog trainer and the star of *It's Me or the Dog* on Animal Planet. When you let them stop to sniff the roses, you give them the chance to gather information, engage in naturally enriching behavior (read: do something they'd normally do in the wild), and lower their stress levels. Stilwell suggests devoting the first 10 to 15 minutes of your walks to sniffing, letting Groucho Barks linger at the fire hydrant or azalea bush or, yes, that same patch





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### HOW TO DO THINGS

of grass from 20 seconds ago. Afterward, you can pick up the pace to get some cardio in (which of course dogs need—amount depends on breed, age, and other factors, so talk to your vet). To make sniffing even more stimulating, take new routes as often as possible.

#### Social Time

Just like us, dogs are highly social creatures. In fact, they’ve evolved to be particularly bonded to humans. That’s not to say they need constant companionship (though some Velcro pups might beg to differ). “The good news is that dogs are a naturally pretty sleepy species, spending an average of 60% of their day resting or sleeping,” says veterinary behaviorist Kelly C. Ballantyne, DVM, medical director of Insight Animal Behavior Services in Chicago. “So hanging out by themselves while their humans are at work can be well tolerated, but they’ll need interaction before you leave and when you get home.” Most breeds need at least two hours of social time—with humans or other pups—each day, according to the American Kennel Club. That can include long walks, romps at the dog park, or just snuggles with you.

#### Their Own Little Space

Virginia Woof doesn’t need a *room* of her own, but she does need a spot or three. “Dogs should have beds in a few different locations to choose

Most breeds need at least two hours of social time—with humans or other pups—each day.

from,” Pachel says. Sometimes they might want to be close to the action (that is, keep an eye out for any crumbs that might fall on the floor). Other times they may be more inclined to curl up in a quiet corner or under a coffee table (dogs often seek the comfort and security of tight, denlike spaces) to catch some undisturbed shut-eye. Or they may want to head upstairs to get a break from guests. If your dog uses a crate, keep the door open so she can hunker down whenever she wants.

#### A Routine

“Consistency is helpful for dogs because they have so little control over their lives,” Ballantyne says. They rely on us for everything, she explains, and the more predictable their days are, the less anxious they should be, because they’ll know when to expect certain activities. (Yes, they do have a general idea of what time it is, owing to their internal clocks!) This doesn’t mean every day has to be Groundhog Day, just that dogs should be able to count on a regular schedule for meals, potty breaks, and walks. Oh, and consistency applies to rules too: “If one human lets them on the couch and the other yells at them for being on the couch, this makes life very unpredictable and can create stress,” Ballantyne says. For the record, we’re very pro dogs on the couch! ■





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HEALTH

## #Cured

We know we shouldn't get medical info from the internet, but social media claims can be hard to ignore. Instead of double-tapping ourselves into panic mode, let's see what the experts say about some viral health and wellness myths.

BY JESSICA MIGALA



**AT SOME POINT**, most of us have typed our symptoms into Dr. Google against our better judgment. Now Dr. TikTok, Dr. Instagram, and Dr. YouTube have entered the chat, with creators making claims about nutrition, hormones, immunity, and more. Some are licensed medical professionals, and some are “wellness experts” who want you to leach out your toxins by putting raw potatoes in your socks. “There’s been a rise in health and science influencers. Many have good intentions—and others do not,” says Jessica Steier, a doctor of public health and the founder of *The Unbiased Science Podcast* (@unbiasedscipod), which critically examines the evidence for various health claims. These “experts” may proffer misinformation that’s at best a waste of time (and potatoes) and at worst truly harmful. Other health creators—even some MDs—are only interested in selling you products. To help suss out suspect info, we asked legit members of medical social media to debunk five of the most viral myths.

### **THE MYTH: Certain health foods aren’t actually healthy.**

**THE DEBUNKER: Nicole Rodriguez, registered dietitian nutritionist and certified personal trainer**  
@notoriously.nicole.rd

What’s not to love about good old oatmeal? Nutritious and filling, it’s a go-to for many health-conscious eaters. But on social media, the beloved breakfast has its share of haters—mainly the type of low-carb-living evangelists who label plant-based foods as poisonous. They insist oatmeal raises your blood sugar so high, you might as well eat a candy bar.

“Oatmeal increases blood sugar, but that’s our body’s normal response to any carb-containing food,” Rodriguez says. “The real story is that most Americans need more whole grains and fiber.” Almost all U.S. adults (95%) skimp on fiber, and we need it because it’s linked to improved heart health and digestion. A one-cup serving of cooked oats packs four grams—about 15% of your daily requirement. If blood sugar is a concern, combine oats with protein (like a poached egg or egg whites) and a plant-based fat (like avocado) to help your body digest the meal more slowly.

And have you heard the hubbub about seed oils—canola, corn, sunflower, and peanut, to name a few? They’ve been maligned online for supposedly causing heart attacks, diabetes, and other issues. But the data was misinterpreted, according to Rodriguez. Yes, health problems have risen in conjunction with our higher intake of seed oils. The culprit, though, is the products that often contain the oils—fast food, packaged snacks, and baked goods, which tend to be highly processed and have loads of saturated fat, sodium, and calories. The oils themselves aren’t harmful. In fact, they’re rich in omega-6s, unsaturated fatty acids our bodies need to function properly. If you love to cook with canola oil, go right ahead, though Rodriguez also recommends olive oil, which benefits heart and brain health.

Finally, smoothies. They’re criticized for their high sugar content—but when they’re made right, they can be a nutritious, fiber-filled package. So drink up because, again, the more pressing problem is that you probably need more produce in your diet. “We’re in a real fruit and vegetable consumption crisis,” Rodriguez says. Just 10% of adults get enough produce per day, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And guess what’s an amazing vehicle for fruits and vegetables: smoothies! Add a source of protein (milk, yogurt, protein powder) and healthy fats (avocado, nut butter), Rodriguez advises, and you have a great, portable meal.

### **THE MYTH: You can “boost” your immune system to better fight off illness.**

**THE DEBUNKER: Andrea Love, PhD, microbiologist, immunologist, and founder of the science and health communication organization ImmunoLogic**  
@dr.andrealove

If you want to help your immune system, stay current on all your vaccines and don’t worry about the turmeric cocktails, frozen carrot-and-ginger “immunity cubes,” and salt baths for your feet. The immune system is an incredibly complex, tightly regulated network. White blood cells constantly

Some social media influencers are medical professionals, and some want you to detox by putting raw potatoes in your socks.



patrol your body, looking for invaders to fight off. These cells work with certain organs (like your spleen, which produces antibodies), tissues (like bone marrow, which produces blood cells), and the lymphatic system, which carries away destroyed bacteria and other waste products, Love says. Strengthening such an intricate system of interdependent parts isn't just a matter of ratcheting it up. "You can't flex the immune system like a muscle, which is what some unsubstantiated claims suggest," Love says. And even if you could, pumping up your immune system wouldn't necessarily be a good thing. Too much "strength" in your immune system is a hallmark of inflammatory disorders, like allergies and autoimmune diseases, in which your body attacks substances it shouldn't. What you can do is *support* your immune system with (surprise) healthy habits—getting enough sleep, exercising regularly, eating a well-balanced diet, limiting alcohol, avoiding tobacco, and practicing good hygiene. Hopefully, you're trying to do all that stuff anyway.

**THE MYTH: Your digestive/skin/mood woes are definitely a food sensitivity issue.**

**THE DEBUNKER: David Stukus, MD, pediatric allergist and director of the Food Allergy Center at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio**  
@allergykidsdoc

Maybe you've seen an influencer claim they discovered a sensitivity to a certain food—lima beans, kiwi, brewer's yeast—and once they eliminated it, their troubling symptoms disappeared. No matter how alluring you find the idea of a quick fix, hold off on ordering that pricey DIY testing kit. The term "food sensitivity" is so vague, it's



almost meaningless. Having a food *allergy* means your body mounts an immune reaction when you encounter a specific protein (in cow's milk, eggs, fish, etc.). Having a food sensitivity just means you don't digest that food well. "It's a made-up term with no clear diagnostic criteria or consensus definition by experts," Stukus says. Allergies can be detected by skin-prick testing, in which very small amounts of allergens are placed under the skin's surface to see if a reaction takes place, but there are no validated ways to detect sensitivities. If you order one of the at-home tests heavily promoted on social media, it will probably just measure IgG, an antibody that's part of a normal immune response to eating. The results can show only that you've eaten the food recently, not whether it's problematic

for you. Avoiding foods based on the results of these tests can lead to an unnecessarily restrictive diet, nutritional deficiencies, and disordered eating, Stukus says. Plus, influencers peddling the tests may use them as bait to enroll followers in long-term programs that call for more testing—and a lot more money. If you have serious concerns about your gastrointestinal tract, see your primary care provider, who can help diagnose you or refer you to a specialist.

**THE MYTH: Everyone has ADHD.**

**THE DEBUNKER: Sanam Hafeez, PsyD, neuropsychologist and founder of Comprehensive Consultation Psychological Services in New York City**  
@drsanamhafeez

Social media has encouraged open conversations about many mental health issues, which is definitely a positive thing, and connecting with



others who share your struggle can be validating. The flip side is that quick video clips can oversimplify complicated issues—as is often the case with ADHD, or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Once seen as a condition primarily affecting fidgeting boys, it’s now recognized in more adult women. An estimate from the health data firm Epic Research says the percentage of young and middle-aged women newly diagnosed with the disorder nearly doubled from 2020 to 2022. Countless posts highlight the “hidden” symptoms that might indicate ADHD: constantly bumping into things, chronically running late, leaving cabinet doors open, daydreaming, being messy. It’s tempting to self-diagnose based on a cluster of symptoms seen in a TikTok video, Hafeez says, because we have a natural urge to understand ourselves, and finding an explanation for our challenges can be a relief. Furthermore, once we’re convinced we’ve discovered the explanation, we may fall prey to confirmation bias, the tendency to pay attention to evidence that supports our theory and disregard anything that doesn’t.

If you’re concerned, seek a full assessment by a trained clinician, such as a neuropsychologist, psychiatrist, neurologist, or psychologist. “Standardized neuropsychological testing is used to diagnose mental health conditions, and the process can take several months,” Hafeez says. “Often clinicians discover that even if you do have ADHD, there may be other things going on—a learning or reading disability, depression, anxiety, or another mental health condition.” So it’s really in your best interest to see an expert.

### **THE MYTH: Your hormones need to be “balanced” (especially if you’re in perimenopause).**

**THE DEBUNKER: Asima Ahmad, MD, MPH, ob-gyn, reproductive endocrinology and infertility specialist, and chief medical officer of the fertility platform Carrot**

@doctor\_asima

The videos tend to follow a pattern: If you’re experiencing [insert long list of symptoms here: insomnia, mood swings, fatigue...], your hormones are “imbalanced.” Hormones may indeed be involved in what’s ailing you, Ahmad says. “In some way, shape, or form, hormones affect every part of the body, including energy and mood, so it’s not uncommon to have them evaluated as part of your workup if you’re having unexplained symptoms.” But since hormones can fluctuate throughout a person’s life, “hormone imbalance” is a very broad term. Still, some so-called women’s health experts will try to sell you an at-home hormone test or get you to take a hormone panel, then encourage you to buy supplements or begin therapy with compounded bioidentical (i.e., artificial) hormones, which aren’t FDA-approved or recommended by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. “If someone is telling you to check your hormones and then selling you a quick-fix product that’s profitable for them, be very wary, especially if they’re not a board-certified physician,” Ahmad warns. Discuss your symptoms with your primary care doctor or ob-gyn, who may refer you to a general or reproductive endocrinologist. If your concern specifically involves perimenopause or menopause, visit the North American Menopause Society site to search for a certified practitioner. ■

## **HOW TO SPOT SOCIAL MEDIA QUACKS**

Influencers have gotten good—really good. They cite studies and quote doctors, which makes it challenging to decide who to trust. Here are a few telltale signs you may be getting misinformation.

### **THEY USE ABSOLUTE STATEMENTS**

Researchers can’t 100% guarantee that x, y, or z is causing or preventing anything, Steier says. “Science is an ongoing process, and as new evidence emerges, our understanding can evolve. Thoughtful posters should allow for uncertainty and nuances in scientific research.”

### **THE RESEARCH CONTRADICTS SCIENTIFIC CONSENSUS**

Watch out for people who present themselves as brave mavericks going against the grain. “You can always find a study to support a particular claim,” Steier says, “but what does the overall research show?”

### **THEY AREN’T EXPERTS IN THE SUBJECT MATTER**

Beware of health coaches pontificating about hormones, or “nutrition experts” who aren’t registered dietitians. “If they’re stepping outside their expertise, take what they say with a grain of salt,” Steier says.

### **THEY’RE SELLING SOMETHING**

If their entire post is meant to push a product, they may be biased, Steier warns. This doesn’t necessarily mean they’re sketchy—it just means you should look deeper into their claims and subject matter expertise before you hit “buy.”



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AWAY

## THE BEST TRIP I EVER TOOK

To celebrate the transformative power of travel, we asked some  
REAL SIMPLE readers to share the vacations that rocked their worlds.

AS TOLD TO KATIE JAMES WATKINSON



“I realized I wanted to marry my girlfriend while we were watching a sunset in Croatia.”

**JILLIAN DEMME, 34**  
**ORLANDO, FLORIDA**

It was our first big trip. I had been with my girlfriend, Marissa, for four years (I was 28; she was 34), and we were headed to a wedding in Poland. I’d never been to Europe, so we decided to extend the trip and add Croatia to the itinerary.

We rented a car and drove to the city of Dubrovnik. When we arrived in Old Town, I was awestruck by this beautiful neighborhood, tucked inside a fort, the streets paved in smooth, shimmering limestone. We watched the sun go down over the expansive coastline, and it was one of the most gorgeous sunsets I’d ever seen. I looked at Marissa and thought, *I can’t believe that this is the life we have, and that we have it together.*

That evening, as glimmers of orange and red danced on the water, I realized how perfectly we worked together—whether we were traveling or not. In that moment, I knew I wanted to marry her. We got engaged two months later and have now been married for almost five years with two kids. I still get butterflies thinking about that trip.



“I visited my family’s homeland and met my relatives for the first time.”

**KAREN GERMAN ARMIJO, 38**  
**RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA**

When the plane dipped its wing, a breathtaking panorama of Acapulco, Mexico, came into view. Lush palm trees swayed in the gentle breeze—exactly as my abuelita had described in her stories. Finally, I’d be setting foot on the land my family hailed from. This trip wasn’t just a vacation; it was a chance to connect with my heritage and meet the relatives who still called this vibrant place home.

There’s a saying in Spanish: “La sangre llama,” which essentially means “Your bloodline calls.” I had never met my maternal aunt, Tía Meche, but when I saw her at the airport, waiting to pick me up, the connection was instantaneous. I was satiating my life-long curiosity about El Ocotito, the small town in Mexico’s southwestern state of Guerrero where my maternal grandmother had raised her children

before moving to the States to help care for my siblings, my cousins, and me. My mother had left home at 16 to go to the U.S. with my grandfather—not to attend school, but to work. Every month, they sent money home so my grandma could build a house for herself and my mom’s younger siblings, which she eventually did. As a senior in college, anxiously wondering where my own life was headed, I wanted to see this symbolic sacrifice, the tangible outcome of my family’s hard work.

We arrived at the house—two stories, made of brick and cement—and I spent two weeks getting to know my aunt and cousins and embracing pueblo life. We made tamales with banana leaves from the trees in the yard and sat on the roof of the house, where my abuelita used to hang laundry to dry. I remember a sensation of deep gratitude washing over me and this incredible feeling of self-acceptance, now that I had a better sense of the love and strength it took to make my life possible.

For me, living authentically is a journey. This trip helped me commit to embracing all of who I am, where I come from, and where I’m going.



“I found a new mantra on a canoe trip through the wilderness with my family.”

**KISSA RECKAMP, 40  
PHILADELPHIA**

It all started with a picture book I read decades ago, when I was just a kid. This little paperback, which I think was from the 1970s, featured a cast of young folks—decked out in short shorts, tube socks, and big hair—who canoe dozens of miles from the north woods of Maine to the Canadian border along the Allagash Wilderness Waterway. My family had vacationed in Maine for generations, so it made an impression on me.

Fast-forward to 2022. I suggested to my husband, Todd, and our then

7-year-old son, Zeke, “Instead of sitting around by the side of the lake this summer, let’s find an outfitter and canoe the Allagash.” My husband is always all in on my harebrained ideas, whereas, in this case, Zeke was basically voluntold. We enlisted the seasoned guides at Allagash Canoe Trips in Greenville, Maine, to manage the logistics. All we had to do was show up with our dry bags.

We paddled every day for at least six hours, whether it was pouring rain or 85°F and sunny (sometimes both in the same day!). My inability to delegate proved troublesome early in the journey; paddling and steering in tandem with Todd became a therapy-grade exercise in communication. There were no screens or cell service. The menu was whatever the guides had cooked over a campfire—a big deal for my somewhat picky child—though dinner was always served with cake. Idle chatter about the bald eagles, osprey, and kingfishers we spied along the river transformed into elaborate fairy tales about animals to amuse Zeke. When we curled up in our sleeping bags each night, often sore and always tired, we all fell asleep happy.

Toward the end of the trip, we arrived at a gorgeous campsite. After we fished and splashed around in the water, a rainstorm came through. We huddled up in our tent, laughing and playing cards as the rain fell around us. At one point, Todd turned to me and said that this was the best day of his life. I had to agree.

Whenever things feel overwhelming or crappy, I think back to those amazing days on the river—when all we had to do was paddle and talk with one another—and how much we enjoyed being a family. That’s the simple mantra I took away from the trip: “Enjoy each other, and keep paddling.”





“I got over a bad breakup during a solo adventure.”

**LEIGH PARKER, 45**  
**LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN**

My boyfriend of five years had just broken up with me. We lived in the same apartment complex, and there were reminders of him everywhere. As much as I tried to stay busy, I decided I needed a change of scenery to clear my head. I wanted to go somewhere, alone, that was completely out of my comfort zone. I had never traveled to the Pacific Northwest, so when I found an inexpensive round-trip flight to Seattle, I booked it on the spot.

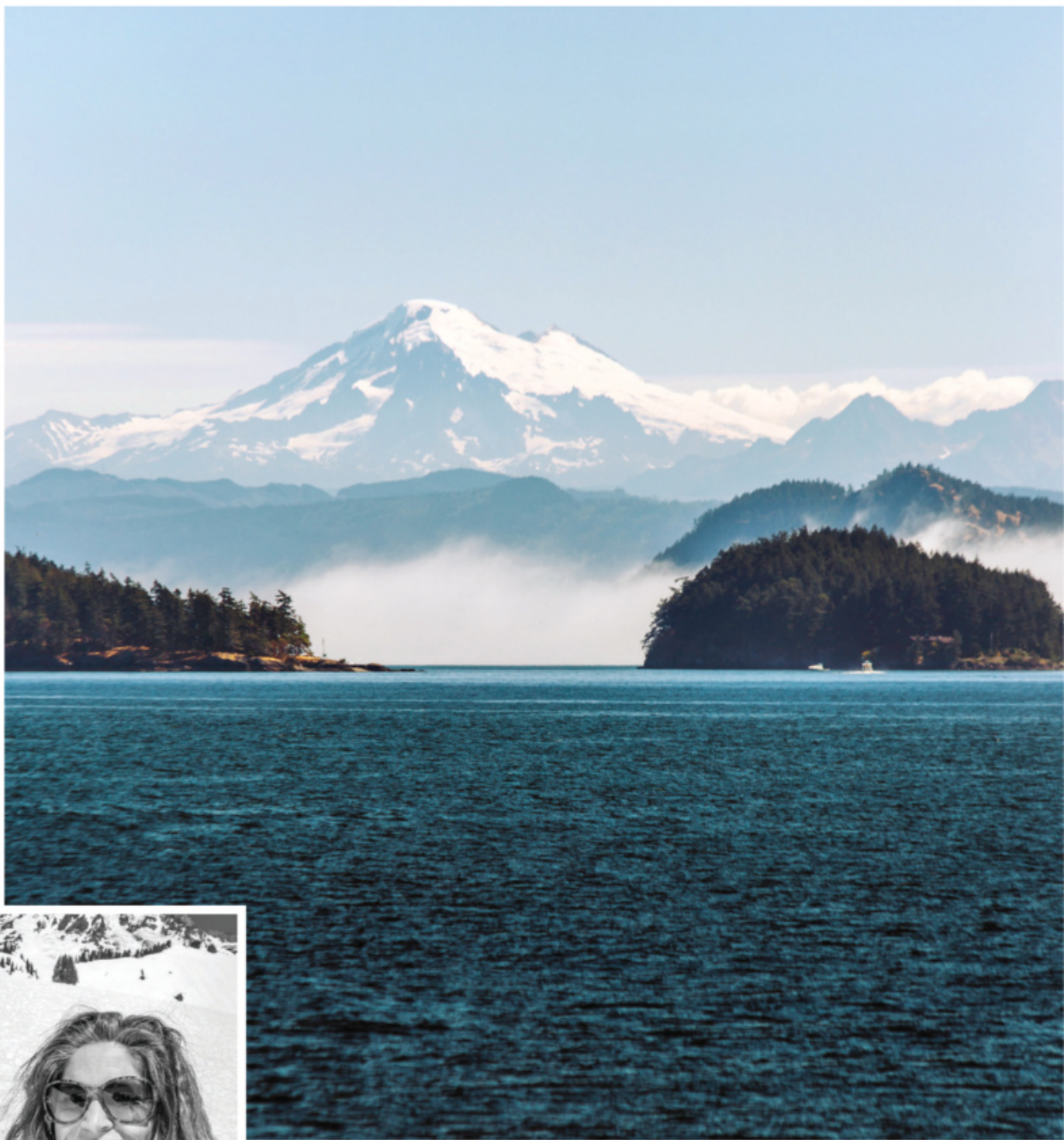
Because I only had a few days there, I packed in every sight and bite I possibly could. I visited Pike Place Market, where I watched the fish being thrown and ate beef curry buns from Mee Sum Pastry. I toured the Space Needle and the nearby *Chihuly Garden and Glass* exhibit. I rented a scooter and drove to Washington Park Arboretum, which has a brilliant Japanese garden and towering redwoods. It was amazingly cathartic to be in a place where nothing was familiar. It was like shak-

“It was amazingly cathartic to be in a place where nothing was familiar.”



ing an Etch A Sketch and restoring a blank slate—one I could fill with new, feel-good memories.

I caught a ferry to the San Juan Islands. Along the way, I saw pods of orcas, dolphins, and seals. When the boat docked at Friday Harbor, I rented an e-bike and circled the island, passing farms and lighthouses, stopping to collect sea glass on the beach. The next day, back in Seattle, I hopped on OpenTable and snagged the one available seat at Sushi Kashiba, a world-renowned restaurant I was told can take months to get a table at. I chose



the omakase—basically the chef’s special—which included tofu in dashi and charred local salmon. The meal was heaven. At the end, the waiter approached me and said, “I just want you to know that you look so happy.” He made me feel seen in a way I didn’t even know I needed. He was right, of course. There I was, just having been dumped, all dressed up and enjoying myself. It was soul healing. On that trip, I learned that I can treat myself to a wonderful experience out of self-love. And that I can have fun on my own. Every year, I now make a point to travel somewhere that’s just for me. Next on my wish list: Seville, Spain!



## “I bonded with my daughter on a trip to Japan.”

**NATALIE McDONALD, 48**  
**NEW YORK CITY**

For some people, once you catch the travel bug, there's no going back. My decade-long career in sales and marketing for a pharmaceutical company had given me a taste for adventure. So when I switched to a job that didn't involve travel after my daughters were born, I felt a void. I longed for that sensation of being immersed in a new world.

Eventually I came up with the idea of individual mother-daughter trips. I'd alternate years with my kids, Sierra and Hudson, as a way of fulfilling my wanderlust while sparking theirs. The intention was to experience someplace new. To get lost, to be curious.

When it was time to plan the first trip—this one would be with Hudson, then 7—our travel advisers at Black Tomato suggested Japan. It was a great fit for her love of food, animals, and adventure. In Tokyo, stops included the Ueno Zoo and Tsukiji fish market, where Hudson ran from stall to stall, holding a live eel without even flinching. Her enthusiasm was incredible. We caught the bullet train to Kyoto, passing Mt. Fuji on the way. We visited the Iwatayama Monkey Park, walked through the Arashiyama Bamboo Grove (an immersive maze!), learned to make origami (easy when someone guides you through it!), and slurped bowls of udon, as is customary in Japan and which Hudson, of course, found hilarious.

This trip was a chance to break out of the chaos of everyday life—an opportunity to be silly and to linger. It was the first time I got to be with Hudson as a mom only. I wasn't also a busy working mom or her chauffeur or personal chef.

When we returned to Tokyo's Shibuya Station, our guide took us to a little-known restaurant in the basement of the train station, which served the best ramen ever. At Shibuya we also encountered the bronze statue of Hachiko, the beloved pup in *Hachiko Waits*, a children's book Hudson and I had read countless times before our trip. It's about a dog who goes to the train station to wait for his owner to return home from work each day, even after his owner passes. Seeing the statue in real life reinforced the lesson in the book—the value of unwavering loyalty, of love and

connection. It felt like one of those moments you have growing up that become part of who you are.

Halfway around the world in Japan, Hudson and I both experienced our first Zen gardens, bamboo forests, and temples, but maybe even more importantly, we bonded over ice cream, card games, and special nights. I knew then that these trips would be our thing. That with any luck, we'd continue this tradition as long as I could physically go on them.

That first trip was 10 years ago now, and I've learned that these annual adventures with my daughters might be the most valuable thing we'll do all year. The list of where we want to go is long and spurs conversations at home that are even longer. We're just getting started. ■





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## CULTURAL GEMS

Visit vibrant Chinatown for its bustling markets, heritage buildings, and the majestic Buddha Tooth Relic Temple. Explore unique street art along Haji Lane in the artsy Kampong Glam, home to the grand Sultan Mosque. And wander the colorful streets of Little India where you can visit the ornate Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple.

## GARDEN CITY WONDERS

Head just 30 minutes outside the city to explore the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve's mangrove forest, where volunteer-led tours introduce you to some of the reserve's 200-plus bird species. Explore six miles of jungle trails and treetop walkways at the Southern Ridges. And head to Sentosa island for bungee jumping and ziplining, or just relax on one of its golden beaches.



Global Tastemakers spotlight  
the best of the Singapore food scene.

## ELEVATED EATS

At Odette, a three-Michelin-starred restaurant in Singapore's National Gallery, indulge in modern French cuisine within an elegant, minimalist setting. Savor dishes like the Heirloom Beetroot Variation with Stracciatella, a symphony of sweet, earthy flavors. Or try the Mushroom Tea, an aromatic broth served with *cep sabayon* and toasted buckwheat.

## MARKET BITES

Discover Lau Pa Sat, Singapore's iconic hawker center in the heart of the Central Business District. Famed for its stunning Victorian architecture and bustling satay street, it's the perfect spot to enjoy local delights like Hainanese chicken rice, *char kway teow*, and spicy *laksa*.

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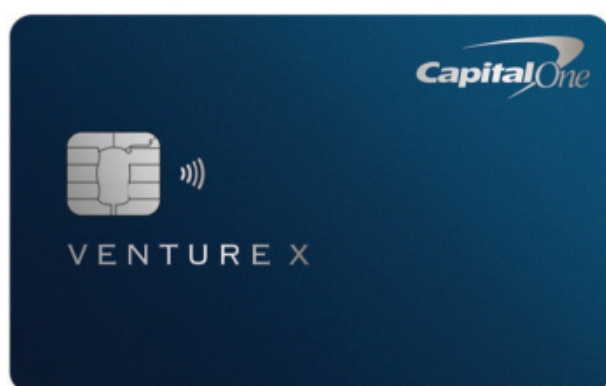


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# Modern Manners Advice for Your Social Quandaries

BY HODA KOTB & JENNA BUSH HAGER



## BETH ASKS...

My husband and I just celebrated our 15th anniversary. He splurged on a gold necklace, and it's lovely, but I have an identical one I don't wear. I thanked him earnestly before I gently told him about the other necklace. He was surprised but gracious and loving, and he said I could pick something else. Turns out, our children were upset that I didn't accept his necklace with pleasure. They said it's the thought that counts. Did I look a gift horse in the mouth?

**JENNA BUSH HAGER:** I think honesty and transparency are what matter in relationships. It sounds like you and your husband are on the same page and doing it right.

**HODA KOTB:** You probably taught your children that when someone gives you a gift, you say thank you because they went to all that time and trouble. But I do think there are nuances with gift giving, and that's also a good lesson to teach. Your kids are watching that play out in this case. And it's wonderful that they can watch the two of you have a grown-up conversation about it. He doesn't sound upset. He sounds understanding! Take him at his word.

**JBH:** You're teaching the kids that in open, loving relationships, it's OK to just be honest. Good job!



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COURTESY OF PETER KRAMER



**CECILE ASKS...**

My mother-in-law is introverted, deeply religious, and very passive aggressive. She is not a fan of meeting new people and prefers to stay within her family circle and volunteer with her church. She believes that her four children—my husband and his three sisters—should take care of her and dedicate their lives to her as she did for them in the past. However, I find it difficult to be around her. She's not a happy or open-minded person. Do you have any advice?

**JBH:** When you get married, you also marry that person's family. And in my opinion, there's a level of respect and kindness that goes to their family too. It can be tricky, so maybe consider seeing a therapist, alone or with your husband. Also, have a conversation with him about boundaries. You don't have to move in with her. There's a middle ground of support and contact but not 24/7 commitment.

**HK:** I would talk to your husband and say, "I know your mom loves you and your siblings, and I think it's really wonderful how close you are, but we have our family too." Make sure there's designated time for your mother-in-law so she feels seen and loved and included. You could set a day once a week where you meet for dinner. But if there are boundary issues, talk to your husband. I do think that children should help take care of their mothers, so I understand that.

**JBH:** Remember, everything he's doing for his mother is indicative of how he's going to treat you. Maybe focus on that aspect and feel good about the line he's trying to walk.

"Everything he's doing for his mother is indicative of how he's going to treat you. Maybe focus on that aspect and feel good about the line he's trying to walk."

**FRANCES ASKS...**

A good friend of mine will text and suggest we get together for lunch, and we'll plan a date and time. I put it on my calendar. I look forward to catching up. Like clockwork, she'll text a couple of days beforehand to cancel—she's not feeling well, or something came up. She doesn't suggest an alternative date. Should I ask if there's another time that would work, or just let it drop and wait for her to pop up again?

**JBH:** You gotta let it drop. I think in deep, great friendships, you have to allow for some flexibility. It isn't a reflection of you or your friendship. I honestly think it's a reflection of somebody who's overscheduled.

**HK:** Yes, she probably doesn't get a break. She also might feel guilty that she's canceled on you so many times. I think you should text her and say, "When you come up for air, give me a call. I'm always here." Show her some grace. She'll probably appreciate it more than you'll ever know.

**STEPHANIE ASKS...**

I'm a mom of two, and I have a somewhat flexible schedule. I'm happy to help when I can, but how do you manage other parents who are always asking for favors and never giving—who only reach out when they need something? Might I suggest a nanny?

**HK:** Don't suggest the nanny. That's their business. How you spend your time, and whether you help them out, is yours. You can say something like "I have a pretty full schedule. I'm happy to help when I'm available, but I'm just not available for [fill in the blank]." You need to communicate because nobody knows your boundaries.

**JBH:** Maybe ask for help from that same person so it becomes more of a reciprocal thing. Ask them to handle school pickup one day so you can do something else. If they say no, there you have it.

**HK:** Yes, good idea. The next time they ask, you ask for a favor back.

**JBH:** Try to level up the relationship yourself. Failing that, it's OK to say no. You don't want to feel taken for granted, and people need to understand that you get what you give. Even if you're busy, there are always ways to reciprocate if you *really* want to.

**ABOUT HODA & JENNA**

The hosts of *Today with Hoda & Jenna*, these two have been dishing out honest, heartfelt advice on air for years. They also interview celebrities, pass along feel-good stories, and have a ridiculous amount of fun. Watch them live on weekdays at 10 a.m. ET.



FIRST PERSON

# Goodbye to All That

Burdened by the weight of wouldas, shouldas, and couldas, a former compulsive goal setter discovers the freedom of giving up.

BY ABBI WAXMAN





**I** **DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU**, but this time of year, with the back-to-school sales and new-pencil smell in the air, always makes me want to reinvent myself. When I was a kid, every fall was another chance to cast aside the embarrassments of the previous grade and turn into the totally cool individual I was born to be. (I'm still waiting.) Now it's another chance to launch my own version of New Year's resolutions. Let's call it my Fall Agenda of Improvements and Laudable Successes (a.k.a. FAILS). I look at running gear and consider signing up for a marathon. I invest in a new skin care regimen. I stock up on accordion files so I can finally get my papers in order.

This year, however, feels different somehow. Maybe it's because I've come to know myself a little better than I used to, having reached the solid plateau of middle age. Enthusiasm may still want me to swing for the fences, but Experience is tapping me on the shoulder to say she would like a word. That marathon idea, for instance. Firmly but not unkindly, Experience tells me those running shoes will be more like walking shoes. The 10-step skin care routine? Chances are, I'll find a way to turn it into a two-step program. And yes, it would be great to organize my papers, but Experience tells me I'm going to dump them all out, then regain consciousness three hours later clutching letters from old boyfriends, still up to my ankles in canceled bills and banana bread recipes. Everything will go right back into the boxes, which will then sit reproachfully in the corner, taunting me.

I used to think it was admirable to set lofty goals, and to aspire to small, random things for no clear reason. See: the time I was 14 and for three weeks wanted to be an Olympic diver. (I blame Greg Louganis for making the 10-meter look so easy.) First I'd actually have to learn to dive, so my mother dutifully enrolled me in classes, and I turned up ready to plunge from whatever was presented to me with the grace and majesty of a leaping salmon. But alas, we spent the first lesson just jumping from the side of the pool. I never got to the sinewy midair twisting part because I never went back for a second lesson. (My mother was wise enough not to prepay for a block of classes. She'd met me before.) My Olympic career dried up before my towel did, but so what? I was on to the next dream.

The sage advice to keep only what sparks joy applies to ambitions as well as old socks.

Now that I'm a woman of a certain age in moderate disrepair—and it would be a dream just to be able to climb a 10-meter ladder—the goals tend to be more cerebral. Learning to crochet. Bridge classes. Finishing a book (writing one, or even just reading one, to be honest). I'm beginning to realize that I'm using all those unfulfilled aspirations, no matter how small or far-fetched, to poke at myself. Not in a big, bruising way. It's more a low-level, muttering inner monologue. *You could have... You should have... You always... You never...* Honestly, though, the nagging is getting old faster than I am.

So I decided to make a different kind of reinvention list: *Crap I Meant to Do by Now*. Then I began crossing off every item, one after another. Just letting them go. It was a long list. Hobbies I meant to try, projects I've been putting off. I bid farewell to macramé, to scuba diving (sharks!), to redecorating my living room, to competitive ballroom dancing. It felt so good to cross things off that I added some stretch goals to eliminate, like marrying John Taylor from Duran Duran. (I'm sure his wife is heaving a massive sigh of relief.)

When the exercise was done, even though I hadn't lost a single pound (No. 37 on the list!), I felt about 14 tons lighter, as I kissed off the crippling weight of anxious baggage and the nagging sense of underachievement. If you're skeptical about how good it feels to toss your old dreams to the wind, that's because you haven't tried it. The rush is better than skydiving. I think. I'll never know, because that got crossed off too.

Another unexpected benefit of abandoning those old goals: I can better appreciate the things I *have* achieved, now that they're not wedged between things I haven't. I'm a successful writer, something I dreamed of being as a child and actually worked toward my whole life. I raised three kids to young adulthood without losing any of them to crocodiles or quicksand. I had a long marriage that ended in a very amicable divorce, becoming a friendship I value deeply.

As it turns out, the sage advice to keep only what sparks joy applies to ambitions as well as old socks. Remember: Life may be short, but it's never too late to give up on your dreams. ■



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Abbi Waxman's sixth novel, *Christa Comes out of Her Shell*, was published in April.





## NERDING OUT

## KNITTING

Sit back and unravel the surprising history of the craft.

BY JENNY BROWN

**MOST FABRIC TODAY** is made in one of two ways: weaving or knitting. While weaving is an ancient art, knitting is likely pretty new—there's little evidence of it before the Middle Ages. That means until then, people didn't have an easy(ish) method for creating stretchy textiles. No matter what fiber you use (cotton, silk, wool, even spandex), wovens are relatively stiff because you crisscross yarns in a rigid grid. With knitting, you connect

loops of yarn, forming a more flexible cloth. (Typical wovens are jeans and button-ups, and knits are sweaters and socks. Do the tug test: If it's elastic in all directions, it's a knit.) No one knows the exact origins of knitting, but scholars think it emerged around the 10th century, in Africa, probably inspired by *nålbinding*, a laborious technique that used a single needle. From there it took some interesting twists and turns. Follow along!

## A GUY THING

When knitting spread to Europe, it was a huge hit partly because men wanted form-fitting knit stockings to wear with their knee breeches. (Stockings sewn from woven cloth don't cling to the calf quite as well.) A massive industry—for stockings, undergarments, caps, and gloves—was born, dominated by male hand-knitters. They'd go through up to seven years (!!!) of rigorous training to join a guild and qualify to sell their wares to wealthy clientele.

## BOREDOM BUSTER

By the 1800s, people were knitting almost worldwide, with professionals increasingly using machines. Hand-knitting became something middle- and upper-class women did to pass the time. Even though it's super inefficient, they were taught to hold their needles like pens, with their pinkies in the air, to look more ladylike.

## SPY GAMES

Turns out, knitting is a great tool for espionage. During the Revolutionary War and both World Wars, women spied for the military under the guise of knitting. Sometimes they'd hide notes in balls of yarn; other times they'd use the two primary stitches (purl and knit) as a form of Morse code, sneaking secrets into scarves and hats to pass on to other agents.

## A HEALTHY HOBBY

Even as technology advances—MIT recently unveiled a knit dress that changes shape in response to heat—hand-knitting is trendy again. It can induce feelings of calm and improve mental health, research shows, and people of all backgrounds, ages, and genders are doing it. Happily, no one has to worry about looking ladylike—they can hold their needles however they darn well please. ■





THE MINDSET

## GO WITH YOUR GUT

Each of us has a little voice inside that knows more than the conscious mind. It's called intuition, and it deserves your attention.

BY JENNIFER KING LINDLEY





**A GUT FEELING.** A sixth sense. A hunch. All of us have moments when we know something deep in our bones without understanding why. It might be a thunderbolt clap of insight or a persistent inner nagging you can't quite shake. *I just swiped right on my future spouse, or I have a bad feeling about this new job.* That's your intuition working, says Judith Orloff, MD, a clinical staff member at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the author of *The Genius of Empathy*. "It's a still, small voice inside us that tells us the truth about things. We all have one—you just have to learn to listen to yours," she says. While it may seem a bit woo-woo, intuition has become a serious area of study for researchers who want to learn the whys and hows of harnessing our hunches.

Cognitive scientists, who study how human beings think and reason, generally define intuition as knowledge gained without rational thought, and they believe it's a natural part of how our brains work. Humans have two main ways of absorbing information. One is a slow, deliberate process, in which we methodically analyze details—for instance, comparing two laptop models before buying. The second happens almost instantly, and the insight feels like it came out of the blue. In fact, though, it's based on data we've gathered subconsciously over time and, in a flash, connected with our past experiences.

This latter method came in handy for humans, evolutionarily speaking. Our ancestors didn't have the luxury of dawdling through a lengthy check-

list to evaluate whether that rustle was a lion or a mongoose. They had to make a snap decision, and there's ample research showing the brain does that by drawing on subconsciously registered information.

In one study at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) in Australia, students were shown clouds of moving dots, like static on an old TV. Sometimes the dots moved to the right, other times to the left, and the students had to interpret the direction. Meanwhile, photographs flashed on the screen, partially suppressed by flickering patterns to prevent them from being consciously registered. Some photos had positive associations (a baby, for instance), and some had negative ones (a snake!). When the image was positive, the dots moved to the right, and when it was negative, they moved to the left. The images were meant to simulate the kind of information that fuels intuition—emotionally charged material the subconscious absorbs and files away for later. Over the course of four tests, the students began using the subconscious information they were receiving to make correct intuitive guesses.

You've probably experienced this subconscious decision-making many times. For example, you're assigned to a project with a coworker you don't know well, and from your first meeting, the vibes are off. That seemingly psychic feeling is actually the result of your brain picking up on small, subliminal cues, connecting them with

your past experiences to recognize patterns, and delivering an immediate assessment. Maybe your coworker once made a nasty comment your conscious mind has already forgotten, or they remind you of a toxic former boss, which you won't realize until much later.

Because intuition pulls from our storehouse of memories, it may be most trustworthy in realms where we've gathered a lot of experience, says Laura Huang, PhD, professor of management and organizational development at Northeastern University, who studies gut feelings. She analyzed situations in which emergency room surgeons and venture capitalists used their gut to make complex and potentially overwhelming decisions. Successful people, she observed, tap into intuition to supplement their experience and knowledge; in the face of uncertainty, it gives them the confidence to make a final call (*We need to operate stat!*).

So if our intuition is informed by the subconscious brain, why do we call it a "gut" feeling? There's a scientific rationale for that too: Sometimes our impulses are accompanied by physical sensations that originate in our gut, which is occasionally referred to as the body's second brain. "We have neurotransmitters in the gut,

That seemingly psychic feeling is actually  
the result of your brain picking up  
on small, subliminal cues and connecting  
them with your past experiences.



just as we do in the brain, that can pick up on environmental and emotional cues,” Orloff says. The vagus nerve, which links the mind and stomach, acts as our biochemical superhighway, alerting the body before we can verbally articulate what’s happening. You might find yourself feeling sick around somebody you just met, or getting goosebumps as your body’s way of saying, *Yes, yes, yes*. Though scientists are still puzzling out the workings of this complex communication system, “your body’s sensations are a powerful form of intelligence if you learn to pay attention,” Orloff says.

Sometimes intuitive messages defy logical explanation but nonetheless reveal important information. Kim Beam, a social worker in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, who’d always considered herself the pragmatic type, says her intuition saved her life. “I was 33, and I’d been losing weight quickly,” she recalls. “I’d changed my diet, so I thought, *I must have kick-started my metabolism.*” One evening, Beam began distractedly probing her collarbone with her fingers, something she’d never done before. “I found a hard lump below the surface. I know my intuition led me to it. It was like my subconscious said, *There’s a problem, and we’re going to show it to you.*” Beam was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s lymphoma. It was caught very early, and after treatment she recovered fully. “I used to be rational about everything,” she says. “Now I’m more open to my intuition’s messages.”

If you’re curious about tuning in to your own inner voice, try these tips.



### Calm Your Mind

The first step is to reduce the chatter in your brain. “Take a breath and relax,” Orloff says. “You want to be in a place that’s quiet and peaceful. That’s why the shower is like a phone booth for intuitive messages.” Consider it a mini sensory retreat, where your conscious brain is more likely to let your subconscious have the floor.

### Start Small

As you begin to tune in to your intuition, keep the stakes low. (No refinancing your home to bet on that Kentucky Derby pick you’re “certain” about!) Look for tiny ways to respond. If you wake up and think of an old

friend you haven’t talked to for ages, give them a call. Maybe you’ll rekindle an important relationship or hear some life-changing news. If your gut tells you to take the back roads home, do it. Maybe you’ll avoid a freak traffic jam! Following your intuition in small ways can help build your confidence to consult it about bigger issues.

### Listen to Your Body

When you meet a new person or consider a new course of action, notice if your arms are crossed defensively,



Learning to heed your intuition is like  
learning to identify birdcalls:  
It's about training yourself to become more  
adept at a certain kind of presence.

you have a sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach, or you feel an overall sense of lightness. These signals can give you information you might not have gleaned from conscious reasoning. Orloff teaches her patients to recognize their intuitive yeses and nos through awareness of the body. Say you're asking yourself, *Should I take the leap and go to grad school?* Check in with the physical sensations you experience as you consider it. "A yes might make you feel as if you have more energy and clarity. You might feel comfortable and safe. An intuitive no might feel like hitting a brick wall. Your energy has just bottomed out." Rinse and repeat until you notice a pattern and learn to trust it.

### Write It Out

Whether you're struggling with big issues or just looking for guidance as you go about your day, try sitting down in the morning for a 15-minute freewriting session, allowing your mind to wander and writing down whatever comes to you. This exercise can quiet the logical part of the brain and help you access a more instinctive kind of knowing, Orloff says. Don't worry about creating a cohesive piece of prose. The only thing you have to do is keep your pen going until time's up. You may be surprised by what you uncover.

### Trust, but Verify

Your intuition can be a wise adviser, but you shouldn't follow it rashly, Huang says, especially when it comes to high-stakes choices. Think of how

those ER surgeons and business leaders reinforce their gut instincts with rational analysis. "Say you have a feeling when you pull up to the curb: *This is the house I'm going to buy.* Ask yourself where the feeling is coming from," she says. Is it the two-car garage? Does the neighborhood make you feel safe? Or are you just ready for the search to be over? Your intuitive feelings can offer valuable insights into what's important to you—but they're not the end all, be all. You don't necessarily need to buy *that* house.



### Learn to Separate Bad Vibes from Anxiety

If you suffer from chronic anxiety, tuning in to intuition may be tricky because you're painfully accustomed to hearing an insistent inner voice predict the worst. "We often confuse anxiety for intuition," says Keanne Owens, a psychotherapist in Sunrise, Florida, and a provider with the teletherapy platform Grow Therapy. One big clue: If you're ruminating endlessly over impending doom (*I'm going to totally botch this!*)—especially if this is a frequent pattern for you—it's likely anxiety you're hearing. In contrast, Orloff says, intuition typically comes across as a "calm, quiet knowing." It can take practice and patience to learn to tell the difference.

### Keep at It

Another interesting finding from that UNSW experiment: The more the students used their intuition, the better they became at trusting their gut. Learning to heed your intuition is like learning to identify minor chords or birdcalls: It's about training yourself to become more adept at a certain kind of presence and awareness.

It can take time to not only hear that inner voice but rely on it. "You might ignore your intuition and get talked into a volunteer gig from hell, only to realize your mistake after the fact and think, *Why didn't I just listen to myself?*" Owens says. "Think of that as a learning experience. Now that you can identify the feeling, next time you can follow it." ■



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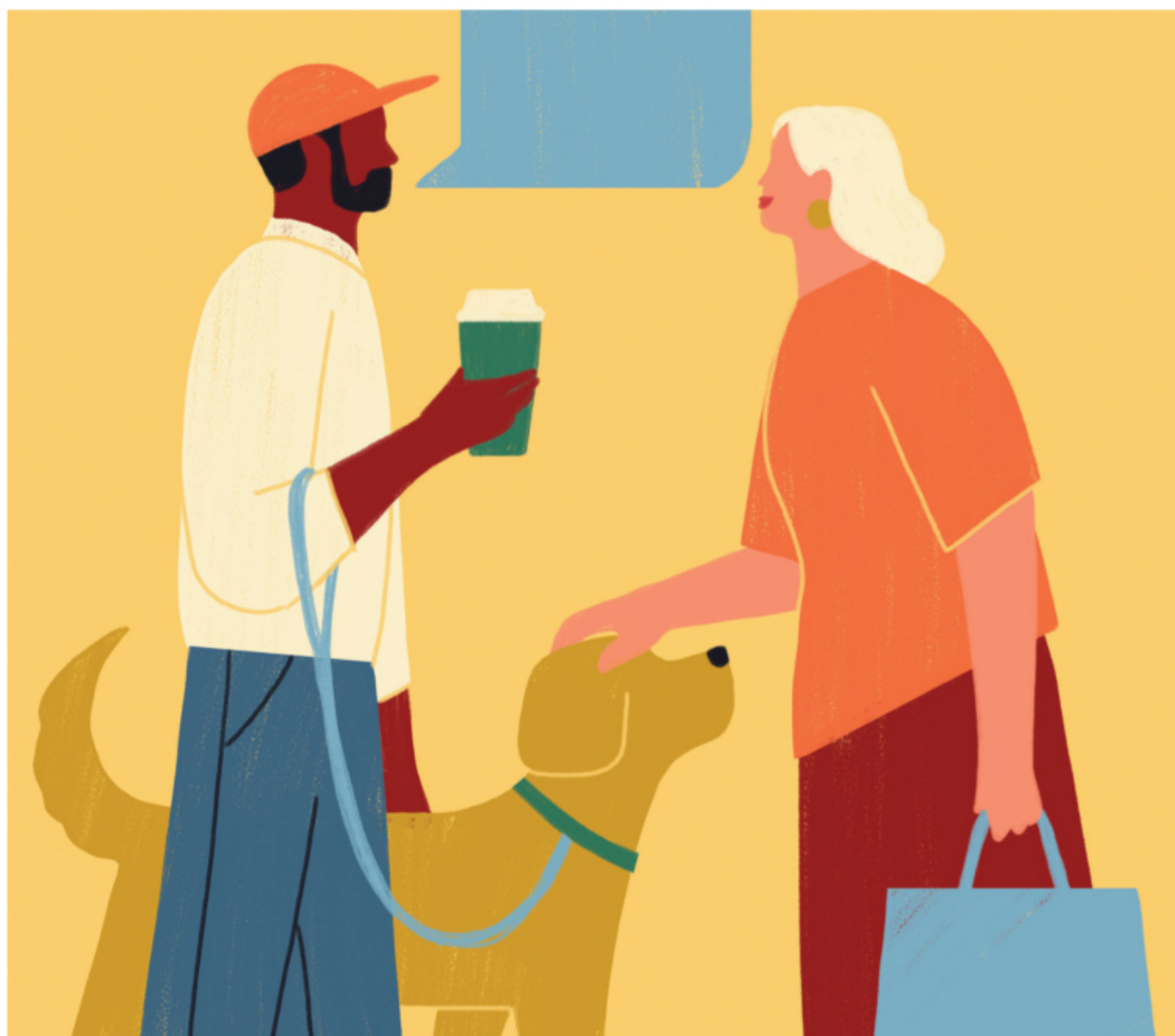
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## BEING HUMAN

# The Kindness of Strangers

America is experiencing a loneliness epidemic, says U.S. Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy, MD, who warns that the emotion is linked to heart disease, stroke, dementia, and premature death. The prescription is connection, even if it's fleetingly forged with a stranger, says Niro Feliciano, a certified cognitive therapist and the author of *This Book Won't Make You Happy*. "Friendly interactions increase the levels of certain mood-elevating hormones in our brain, which encourages prosocial behavior," she says. Meaning: We're more likely to be friendlier to other people in turn. If you find it hard to chat with strangers, try simply complimenting their outfit, commenting on the book/dog/baby they're holding, or commiserating about the pharmacy line. Don't be deterred by a person staring into their phone, Feliciano says: "If you have something nice or empathetic to say, they may need to hear it the most." Making someone else's day just might make yours. —Eleni Gage

## HEADS-UP

# Mitigating Migraines

It's time for crisp air, cozy sweaters, and...headaches. "Fall and spring are when we see the biggest increase in cases, probably due in part to fluctuating weather," says Jaclyn Rosencutter Duvall, MD, a neurologist and headache specialist in Tulsa, Oklahoma. "We're still not sure about the exact process, but when the barometric pressure falls or rises, it affects the pressure in our sinuses. It's also thought to cause the blood vessels there to dilate, which can release a cascade of neurotransmitters, like serotonin." Other culprits: allergens, lower vitamin D levels, and the lost sleep that may come with the end of daylight saving time. But you don't have to be at Mother Nature's mercy, Duvall says. "Migraines are often caused by a few things at once, so focus on those you can control. Avoid food triggers, maintain good sleep hygiene, limit caffeine and alcohol, and find healthy ways to manage stress." If headaches are really a pain, see a specialist.

—Amy Maclin





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An illustration by Katherine Streeter. A woman with dark hair is shown from the chest up, looking down with a somber expression. She wears a teal turtleneck with a white scribbled pattern and leopard-print sleeves. Above her head is a large, dense orange scribble. To the left, a hand holds a yellow heart. The background is dark red with a white hexagonal pattern at the bottom.

RELATING

## CONQUERING YOUR INNER CRITIC

You're able to give everyone else grace when they mess up.  
But when it comes to yourself? Not so much.

BY ALYSSA SPARACINO





**THINK BACK** to the last mistake you made at work, or a time you felt rejected by someone you cared about, or even the morning you could

no longer squeeze into pants you hadn't worn in a while. Now think about how you processed your feelings in that moment. Were you able to acknowledge your disappointment, possibly learn a lesson from it, and move on? Or did you ruminate over what you could have done, what you shouldn't have said, or why you were to blame? Did you spiral? Did the incident nag at you? If so, your inner critic sounds like a real jerk—and it needs a talking-to.

We all have our insecurities. “Most people judge themselves from time to time,” says Marni Amsellem, PhD, a licensed psychologist in Stamford, Connecticut. Self-critique becomes harmful when it sounds more like self-loathing. Rather than telling yourself, *I failed at this work project*, for example, you think, *I'm such a failure*. Over time, characterizing yourself in harsh language can have the same effect external negative feedback does: It cements the idea that you're not good enough.

Left unchecked, the bully in your brain can do real damage, lowering your self-esteem and influencing your life choices, says Olivia Verhulst, a New York City–based licensed mental health counselor specializing in trauma. “Your inner voice is the one you hear all day, every day. So it's a voice you're going to believe,” she

says. “Self-criticism can hold you back, making you feel smaller in relationships and at work. It can prevent you from asking for the promotion or asking your partner for what you need.”

How did you get here, and who let the heckler in anyway? That judgmental inner monologue can happen for numerous, often complex reasons, Verhulst explains. Children with verbally abusive caregivers who said things like “You can't do anything right” may internalize that message and carry it into adulthood. “Because why would you not believe the people you're biologically wired to trust?” Verhulst says. But outside influences aren't always to blame. Sometimes we criticize ourselves based on what we think others think of us. And sometimes people have high standards for themselves and are disappointed when they fall short. “Perfectionism sets you up to fail because we cannot be perfect,” Amsellem says. While most people realize this on a conscious level, shifting their mindset isn't so simple.

Besides, seeing the worst—including in ourselves—is part of being human, Verhulst says. According to a popular social theory, we've evolved to pay more attention to the bad than the good in order to ensure our survival. It's called having a “negativity bias”; positive thoughts and experiences are often ignored in favor of the negative.

This helps explain why it's easy to forget about all your accomplishments after you make a mistake. Negativity bias can be reinforced by confirmation bias, in which we cling to evidence that our thoughts and feelings are accurate. “If we're walking around the world with this core belief about ourselves, we unconsciously seek ways to validate it, particularly when it has developed over many years,” Verhulst says.

The good news: The pattern can be broken. “You can create the possibility of new stories existing, even if you don't believe them yet,” Verhulst says. Being your own hype person isn't always easy, but you can do it! (See? The pep talk is already happening.) Read on for ways to nurture your kinder, more accepting side.

### Try Thought Distancing

Not everything you think is true! When a negative idea about yourself creeps into your brain, step back and recognize it as just that—an idea, quite possibly a false one. “You can say, *Oh, that's a thought*, or *That's a pattern that sometimes happens*, or *It's just a feeling I'm having right now*,” Verhulst says. Simply naming what's going on can help put some emotional distance between you and the negative thought so you don't accept it at face value.

“Your inner voice is the one you hear all day, every day. So it's a voice you're going to believe.”



“The point is that feelings are not facts,” Verhulst says. “Labeling self-talk can also help you avoid slipping into shame, like *Oh my God, I’m being mean to myself again*, which can lead to more bad feelings.”

### Interrogate Your Inner Underminer

With Socratic questioning, you challenge your stream of thought with a series of queries. “When we’re telling ourselves the absolute worst version of a story, an alternative narrative likely exists,” Verhulst says. “We just haven’t found it yet.” Socratic questioning (used alone or with a therapist) can help you gain a new perspective and break the hypercritical cycle. Interrupt your inner critic and examine the validity of what it’s telling you. A few helpful questions: *What assumptions am I making about this experience? Is there any evidence to support my thoughts? Can I find evidence to disprove these ideas? Strictly based on facts, how can I describe what happened?* When you look at a situation intellectually rather than emotionally, you can usually come up with a different, more accurate story.

### Shift Your Thinking Through Meditation

Loving-kindness meditation can help you cut back on self-judgment, says Rachel Goldsmith Turow, PhD, an adjunct faculty member in the psychology department at Seattle University and the author of *The Self-Talk Workout*. Repeat a few compassionate phrases to yourself. *May I*



*be happy, May I be safe, and May I be healthy* are some options Turow recommends. Though not necessary, it’s helpful to do this in a distraction-free environment.

Good old mindfulness meditation can help too. When you’re present in your body and breath, you can better manage your thoughts. Find a quiet spot, get comfortable, and tune in to your senses. Notice the tickle of a breeze against your skin. Pay attention to each inhale and exhale. (For a bit more guidance, Turow likes the free UCLA Mindful app, which offers meditations in 14 languages.) If you get sidetracked, try not to become critical. “Instead of thinking, *My mind went*

*away, and that’s bad*, just notice, then gently redirect yourself back to meditation. You can even tell yourself, *It’s no big deal*,” Turow says. Meditation can train your mind to build new habits, so the more you resist judging yourself *during* the practice, the easier it will be to show yourself grace outside of it. Plus, learning to accept your imperfections means you’re making room for future mistakes—a.k.a. new learning opportunities.

You can begin by doing either meditation a few times a week, but Turow emphasizes that there’s no one-size-fits-all rule. Some people may want to start with five-minute sessions and build up slowly; others may do better



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HOW WE LIVE

“Negative feelings can be important too, and trying to stay positive all the time can backfire.”

starting with longer sessions, such as 15 or 20 minutes. And be patient. “Though it’s possible to feel some benefits during or after a single session, meditation is more like brushing your teeth or doing physical exercise,” Turow says. “The real benefits happen over time, rather than in a single day.”

**Push Out the Attitude,  
Bring In the Gratitude**

What would happen if you redirected your attention from what went wrong to why you feel grateful? Practicing gratitude for 15 minutes a day, five days a week, can help improve emotional well-being and promote long-term attitude changes, according to a 2020 study in the *Journal of Happiness Studies*. “Gratitude is a practice that shifts our focus to the positive elements of our lives and selves,” Verhulst says. Keeping a gratitude log—a plain notebook or a journal with prewritten prompts—is an easy way to jot down your blessings. Find a time of day you can regularly devote to reflection, and answer specific questions: *What recent challenges have I overcome? What strengths helped me at this time? What did this challenge teach me?* If your body image is a perpetual cause of negative self-talk, try asking, *How can I treat my body with gratitude, nourishment, or respect today?*

**Don’t Feel Like You Have to  
Battle Your Critic Alone**

Frequent self-criticism can be a hard habit to break. It may also be a symptom of depression, anxiety, or trauma, which psychotherapy can help alleviate, Verhulst says. A therapist or other mental health professional can help you find the underlying reason you get down on yourself, and once you know that, you can experiment with different methods to adjust your thinking. There are many therapeutic approaches; ultimately, finding someone you click with is the most important. That said, if you’re new to therapy, clinicians who offer an integrated approach, meaning they draw from numerous practices, can be particularly helpful in identifying the causes of negative self-talk.

Remember that self-compassion leaves space for the whole spectrum of emotions. “Negative feelings can be important too, and trying to stay positive all the time can backfire,” Turow says. Your goal is to form an overall loving relationship with yourself. But just like any other relationship, it won’t be perfect, Verhulst says. “Self-compassion is about finding ways to better manage the times when we’re being really hard on ourselves.” With practice, you can develop a more compassionate perspective and be on your way to a stronger connection with your very own wonderful self. ■



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your own heart.



\*Three grams of soluble fiber daily from whole grain oat foods, like Honey Nut Cheerios™ cereal, in a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease. Honey Nut Cheerios cereal provides .75 grams per serving.









## 23 Financial Products Worth Their Weight in Gold

We worked with the brilliant minds at Investopedia to study hundreds of options, analyze thousands of data points, and crunch so, so many numbers to name this year's Smart Money Award winners. They'll help you get more bang for your hard-earned bucks. The data says so!

BY MELISSA MATTHEWS  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRAN PULIDO



# Banking

## Best High-Yield Savings Account

**Popular Direct**

FEE: NONE

Now is not the time to let your emergency fund earn a measly 1% (or less!). “High-yield savings accounts have been paying rates we haven’t seen in years, and you can earn a significant return on the money you stash away if you pick the right account,” says Sabrina Karl, an Investopedia staff writer who specializes in financial products and services. Interest rates change all the

time, so Karl and her colleagues looked at the banks and credit unions with the top annual percentage yields (APYs) between March 2023 and March 2024. Popular Direct appeared in the rankings every single week. (At press time, the online bank was offering a whopping 5.05% APY!) Popular Direct also scored points for having an opening deposit minimum of just \$100 and no minimum balance requirement.

“You can earn a significant return on the money you stash away if you pick the right account.”

## Best Short-Term CD

**CIBC Agility**

FEE: NONE

Putting away cash for a dream vacay or new car? Consider parking your money in a certificate of deposit, Karl advises. “CDs provide an excellent opportunity to earn a predictable interest payment every month,” she says. Unlike with a savings account, your rates are locked in for the length of the term. CIBC Agility wins for short-term investing (less than 12 months) because it has consistently earned a spot on the monthly rankings of institutions with top nationwide rates. (Over the period Investopedia looked at, its APY for short-term accounts ranged from 5.02% to 5.66%.) And you can open an account with just \$1,000 for no fee.

the temptation of spending your savings. “In the case of a true emergency, CIBC Agility and Prime Alliance have lower penalties for withdrawing early,” Karl adds.

## Best Online Bank

**Ally**

FEE: NONE

Brendan Harkness, a senior editor at Investopedia, and his team studied 19 online banks and chose Ally as the best overall. “Though you don’t get in-person customer service, online banks like Ally tend to offer accounts with lower fees, better rates, and lower deposit requirements than traditional brick-and-mortar banks,” he explains. Ally’s checking and savings accounts often boast APYs well above the market averages. The app and website are easy to use, with fun features that can help you budget. (The Surprise Savings tool, for example, analyzes your spending habits, identifies your normal purchases, and transfers money it deems “safe”—meaning you likely won’t spend it—into your savings account.) Ally also offers a wide range of services you don’t always find at online banks, including individual retirement accounts (IRAs), trading, mortgage loans, mort-

## Best Long-Term CD

**Prime Alliance Bank**

FEE: NONE

If you have very big goals—like a down payment on a home—go for a term of 12 months or more. Prime Alliance Bank is your best bet in this case. Yielding between 4.75% and 5.5% on long-term accounts, it also made the top monthly rankings in a one-year span. You’re generally charged a fee if you cash out a CD early, Karl says, which may be a good thing: It can help you avoid





gage refinancing, and auto loans. And there are no annoying monthly maintenance fees or minimum balance requirements to earn interest.

### **Best Free Checking Account**

**SoFi**

FEE: NONE

“Having a free checking account, with no monthly fee, means you never have to worry about meeting monthly requirements,” Harkness says. SoFi also doesn’t charge overdraft fees, and you can access a large network of no-fee ATMs. You have to sign up for a savings account along with checking, but you can benefit from good interest rates. At press time, they were up to 4.6% on savings and 0.5% on checking. Even better: You could earn a bonus of either \$50 or \$300 just for setting up direct deposit, depending on the amount you transfer into your account. Hey, that’s free money for you!

### **Best App for Sending Money**

**Wise**

FEE: VARIES

Zippping money to loved ones—even those in other countries—is simple using Wise. The service is free when you transfer the same currency to another Wise user. With international transfers, there are no hefty fees, long delays, or markups on exchange rates. For each transfer, you’re charged based on the type of currency being converted,

your payment method, and the total amount. Recipients typically get funds within a few minutes to a couple of days, depending on their location. “If you send or receive money internationally, you’ll want an app like Wise, which is inexpensive with no hidden fees,” Harkness says. “It serves 150 countries and has excellent app store ratings.”

## Budgeting

### **Best Budgeting App**

**YNAB**

FEE: \$99 A YEAR

How much do you spend on groceries each month? What about gas and tolls? Not sure? Then consider downloading YNAB, which stands for You Need a Budget. To set up the app, you give every incoming dollar a job—pay bills, buy groceries, build a nest egg, etc. Then you link your banking

and credit card accounts or enter expenses manually to see how you’re *actually* spending your money. The app requires you to be hands-on with your budgeting, but that’s the idea. “YNAB helps you identify areas where you tend to spend more than you think,” Harkness says. “You may be surprised at how much you can save just by becoming more aware of where your money is going.” New budgeters can sign up for a 34-day free trial.









### Best Coupon App Capital One Shopping

FEE: NONE

Whether you're shopping through the app, your smartphone browser, or your computer, Capital One Shopping is like having your best bargain-hunting friend with you at all times, says Hilarey Gould, senior editorial director at Investopedia. It automatically compares pricing on eligible items at more than 30,000 retailers, and it even considers shipping costs and membership rates. Let's say you're eyeing a particular vacuum online. The extension will comb the internet and gather links to listings with cheaper prices. The results appear near the price on the page you're viewing, so you can't miss them. Enjoy that new vacuum!

## Credit Cards

### Best Overall Credit Card Wells Fargo Active Cash Card

FEE: NONE

If you balk at the idea of paying an annual fee or having to track (and activate!) rewards categories each quarter, we get it. "The best rewards card is one that works with your lifestyle, not one you have to jump through hoops to squeeze value from," says Sienna Wrenn, a senior editor and credit card expert at Investopedia. "The Active Cash Card ensures you earn

rewards on every purchase—not just some." You'll get 2% cash back on each transaction, which you can apply toward your credit card balance or another Wells Fargo account (like your mortgage) or redeem as a cash withdrawal at a Wells Fargo ATM.

### Best Card for Premium Travel Perks Chase Sapphire Reserve

FEE: \$550 A YEAR

Once you overcome the sticker shock, it's easy to see why it pays to pony up for this card. Chase often offers robust welcome offers for new cardholders. For instance, at press time, you get 60,000 points after spending \$4,000 in the first three months, which translates to roughly \$900 in vacation expenses if you book through the Chase Travel portal. Then there's the \$100 credit for TSA PreCheck or Global Entry, the \$300 yearly credit for travel-related purchases, and the access to more than 1,300 airport lounges. Even if you don't nab a sign-up bonus, you could still make more than half your money back with the perks alone. Not to mention, hotel and car rentals earn 10 points per dollar, and restaurant tabs earn three points per dollar. "It's the extra perks that make luxe travel cards like this one worth their annual cost," Wrenn says. "For when you're not on the road, this card offers a monthly DoorDash credit, rewards on your Lyft rides, and more."

### Best Card for Budget-Conscious Travelers

### Capital One Venture Rewards Credit Card

FEE: \$95 A YEAR

"Some travel rewards cards are better for lavish, overseas adventurers, while others are better suited for occasional domestic travelers," Wrenn says. "The Venture Rewards card offers value for both." You'll get two miles per dollar spent on every purchase (not just travel), plus some extra

miles if you use the card to make travel reservations through the Capital One portal. There's no limit to how many rewards you can earn, which is pretty rare, and you can redeem your rewards for flights and hotels or get reimbursed for ride-sharing fees. "Jet-setters will love the TSA PreCheck or Global Entry application credit, a perk more commonly seen on premium travel cards with much higher annual fees," Wrenn says.





**Best Card for Dining Out**  
**Capital One SavorOne**  
**Cash Rewards Credit Card**  
FEE: NONE

Meet your new plus-one for dinner dates! This card gets you 3% cash back at restaurants (and grocery stores if you're staying in). Ditto for popular streaming services and certain events, like concert tickets purchased through the Capital One portal. All other purchases earn 1% cash back. As with most Capital One cards, you won't be charged a fee for using it outside the U.S., making it a good pick for interna-

tional travelers. Also: "You can redeem rewards without waiting until you earn a specific amount, which is a requirement of similar cards on the market," Wrenn says.

**Best Card for Household Expenses**  
**Blue Cash Preferred Card**  
**from American Express**  
FEE: NONE FOR THE FIRST YEAR; \$95 AFTER

This card gives you a heaping 6% cash back on grocery store hauls (up to \$6,000 per year)

"Don't be swayed by low premiums when shopping for health insurance. They're usually balanced out by higher deductibles and copays."

and offers a competitive 3% cash back on gas. "Everyday purchases can really add up, but a rewards card like this one can help soften the impact on your wallet," Wrenn says. "It can even be a tool to save on gym memberships, streaming services, or commuting costs if you match your spending habits with its wide array of perks." Paired with American Express's top-tier customer service reputation, this is a clear winner for people who want to save on daily necessities.

cal exams. Most importantly, the company is financially stable, a factor that's often overlooked. "An excellent financial strength rating should be table stakes when you're choosing a provider," says Yasmin Ghahremani, associate editorial director at Investopedia. "You'll be tied to that company for decades, and you want to make sure it'll be in business long enough to pay your beneficiaries what they're owed."

**Best Health Insurance Provider**  
**Blue Cross Blue Shield**  
FEE: VARIES BY PLAN

You've got to consider more than just the price tag. "Don't be swayed by low premiums when shopping for health insurance," Ghahremani says. "They're usually balanced out by higher deductibles and copays." The Investopedia team evaluated nine major health insurers against 40 criteria, including customer satisfaction, premiums, deductibles, copays, and mental health coverage. Blue Cross Blue Shield scored the highest marks. It's a good value given the services provided—particularly for those who don't qualify for Medicare just yet.

**Insurance**

**Best Life Insurance Provider**  
**Nationwide**  
FEE: VARIES BY PLAN

After researching 88 life insurance companies, our friends at Investopedia confidently recommend Nationwide. The provider offers living benefits (meaning you can access money from your plan under certain circumstances), and healthy applicants can get plans that don't require medi-





### Best Health Savings Account

**Fidelity**

FEE: NONE

Signing up for a health savings account (HSA) when you have a high-deductible insurance plan is a no-brainer. (A quick explainer: You load it up with pretax dollars, earn interest, and use the money to pay for medical expenses.) That said, researching HSAs can make your head hurt. Save yourself the pain and look into Fidelity. It tends to offer the best interest rates, there are no fees, and it has a nice array of investment choices. Plus, you can invest your balance right away. “That’s rare, and it means you have more time for your money to grow,” Ghahremani says. No need for that ibuprofen today!

## Investing

### Best Online Broker

**Fidelity**

FEE: NONE FOR MANY TRANSACTIONS

Fidelity is everything you want in a brokerage firm, says Michael Sacchitello, a senior editor at Investopedia who focuses on investing and trading platforms. “One of the most trusted online trading platforms, Fidelity has long been an industry leader when it comes to lower fees, and its transparent and compelling

fee schedule is a key reason its brokerage platform maintains its position at the top of our rankings,” he says, adding that he and his team weighed 89 criteria points to pick this winner. Fidelity also shines for excellent customer service; expansive products, including stocks, exchange-traded funds (ETFs), mutual funds, and crypto; and a large selection of educational resources (podcasts! videos! articles!), which can help us all feel confident in our money-growing decisions.

### Best Investing & Trading App

**E\*Trade**

FEE: NONE FOR MANY TRANSACTIONS

If you can’t remember the last time you managed your finances on a real computer, you know the importance of a mobile investing app that’s easy to use. E\*Trade, according to Sacchitello, has the

right mix of intuitive navigation, robust capabilities, and trading tools that cater to investors of various levels. In fact, it has two easy-to-navigate platforms, E\*Trade and Power E\*Trade. Through the first, you can easily manage your accounts and get real-time quotes. The Power platform offers more in-depth research and analysis, which helps you learn. For instance, you can read about why a particular stock’s price recently went up or down.









“Investors who use ETFs want three things: trustworthiness, liquidity, and choice.”

## Largest ETF Issuer

**iShares**

FEE: VARIES

Sometimes bigger really is better. That’s true in this case. At press time, iShares had the most assets under management (\$2.88 trillion) and 439 ETFs to offer. That means more variety, which means more ways to invest, as well as more funds with lower expense ratios (read: the portion of your money that goes toward operating expenses). “Investors who use ETFs want three things: trustworthiness, liquidity, and choice, and iShares has all three and more,” says Caleb Silver, Investopedia’s editor in chief.

## Best Robo-Adviser

**Wealthfront**

FEE: 0.25% A YEAR FOR MOST ACCOUNTS; NO TRADING COMMISSION OR FEES FOR WITHDRAWALS OR TRANSFERS

Programmed to answer up to 10,000 questions, Wealthfront’s digital financial planner, called Path, is the closest you’ll get to a real human, says Sacchitello, who evaluated 21 options based on 59 criteria points. Yes, you can ask it specific questions! And yes, you’ll get answers! You can also

enter your financial goals and get recommendations for accounts that will help you reach them. You can see your projected net worth over time (the algorithm accounts for inflation and market performance), and you get a custom meal plan. Just kidding about that last part!

## Home & Life Resources

### Best Personal or Home Improvement Loan

**SoFi**

FEE: VARIES

SoFi wins out among the 70 lenders evaluated, says Lars Peterson, a senior editor at Investopedia who specializes in financial products and services. “You may find a lender that offers lower interest rates, but not one that can match SoFi’s winning combination of competitive rates, minimal fees, quick approval, and excellent customer service.” Loan amounts range from \$5,000 to \$100,000, which covers debt consolidation and home improvements, the two likeliest reasons for getting a loan, according to an Investo-

pedia survey. While fees vary, you’ll typically pay less if you have a credit score that’s good or excellent.

## Best Home-Buying App

**Zillow**

FEE: NONE

Zillow simplifies the exhaustive house-hunting process. It has a ginormous database of more than 160 million homes, but it also has detailed filters that help you narrow your search to exactly what you want (think: senior communities, preforeclosures that haven’t hit the market, homes with views of the city skyline, etc.). Not hunting alone? Add your partner and they’ll have access to your saved homes and receive notifications when you add a new property. You can even scout prospective real estate agents within the app. And additional features are always coming out

to adapt to the ever-changing housing market. “It wouldn’t surprise me if Zillow added even more services that used to be offered by agents, like title company referrals, to go with the home-browsing and shopping tools they already provide,” Peterson says.

## Best Tax Preparation

**H&R Block**

FEE: FROM \$89

Less than 100 bucks for professional tax help? Yep! Yay for more time doing what you love and less time googling obscure tax rules. H&R Block offers in-person support, a handy drop-off service, and a newish virtual experience, all starting at \$89. “You can connect with a tax prep pro right from your phone or laptop,” Peterson says. Just download the app, upload your forms, and get the full in-office experience without leaving your home.

## METHODOLOGY

WE PARTNERED WITH OUR COLLEAGUES AT INVESTOPEDIA TO RESEARCH THE MOST IMPORTANT TYPES OF PRODUCTS AND THE TOP NICE-TO-HAVES (LOW FEES, GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE, INTUITIVE DIGITAL INTERFACES, ETC.) FOR REAL SIMPLE READERS. INVESTOPEDIA EDITORS AND EXPERTS THEN LOOKED AT EACH PRODUCT CATEGORY, REVIEWED THE COMPETITION, AND COLLECTED DATA POINTS BASED ON THE LIST OF CRITERIA TO QUANTITATIVELY ANALYZE THE OFFERINGS. FINALLY, THEY REVIEWED THE RESULTS TO SEE IF THE SCORES ALIGNED WITH THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF THE PRODUCT AND WHAT MATTERS MOST FOR READERS. THE QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS ENSURES RECOMMENDATIONS PUT THE READERS FIRST. ALL DETAILS WERE CORRECT AT PRESS TIME. PAST PERFORMANCE DOES NOT GUARANTEE FUTURE RESULTS.





**KILLS 99.9% OF BACTERIA  
SMELLS 100% AMAZING  
KILLIN' IT.**



**GET SUDSY**

\*EFFECTIVE AT ELIMINATING 99.9% OF REPRESENTATIVE BACTERIA  
AS PER FDA MONOGRAPH IN AS LITTLE AS 30 SECONDS



# KILLIN' IT.

## TIP #1

**IT STARTS AT HOME**

Ensure your kids stay healthy by practicing good hygiene at home. Instilling the importance of handwashing after all messy moments—like when they decide to “help” you make dessert—encourages them to do the same while at school.

## TIP #2

**SNEEZE SMARTER**

Teach your kids a very important lesson: how to slow the spread of germs and protect their classmates. Getting them used to sneezing into their elbow (instead of their hands) will set them up to form other healthy habits as they grow older.

## TIP #3

**PROTECT AND ENJOY**

A soap that kills 99.9% of bacteria\* while maintaining your skin's pH AND looking good next to your sink? Sign us up. Switching to Safeguard means you can have the peace of mind that your family is protected while also enjoying the luxurious scents, smooth lather, and minimalistic design.

**THE ONLY SOAP YOU NEED**

Find the best hand soap for back-to-school season at your local retailer or online at [safeguardna.com](http://safeguardna.com).



## HEALTHY HABITS FOR BACK-TO-SCHOOL

Keep the whole family feeling good this fall with Safeguard.

With summer winding down, there's a certain excitement in the air as kids and parents around the country get ready for school to start again. But in between picking out notebooks and pencils and the first few weeks of class, something else usually starts circulating through the air (and on your little one's hands): germs. Luckily, Safeguard has hand soaps that help protect the whole family from back-to-school sickness without getting in

the way of your home's carefully curated style, so you can ditch the overly medicinal soaps you hide upstairs. We all know that washing your hands regularly is an important way to help stay healthy, but there are some other habits that you can adopt to make this back-to-school season the cleanest one yet. Keep reading for tips on how to keep your family protected, including fighting germs in style with Safeguard.

\*Effective at eliminating 99.9% of representative bacteria as per the FDA monograph in as little as 30 seconds.





# SAME YEAR, NEW YOU!

## 25 little ways to reset yourself for fall

BY SARAH Z. WEXLER ♦ ILLUSTRATIONS BY MONICA GARWOOD

After all those autumns of new notebooks and new responsibilities, cooler air and a clean slate, we still tend to see the season as the start of something. Now the focus is less on buying a bangin' backpack and more on creating systems that make life feel manageable as it gets busy again. To set you off on the right foot, we scoured studies and asked experts for the little things you can do right now to get it together and feel ready for fall, y'all.



## Take a Ferris Bueller–style day off

Planning a week off from work requires a lot of, um, work. (Managing projects at the office! Researching your trip! Booking everything!) The good news: Even a single day off can help reduce burnout, increase feelings of gratitude, and possibly prevent a mental health crisis, like a depressive episode or panic attack, according to Angela Theisen, a therapist with the Mayo Clinic in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. What to do with your one wild and precious personal day? Anything you want! Do some shopping. Take a hike. Go to a concert. (Keep reading for more on all three of those suggestions.)





## Find more time in nature



Raise your hand if you ever experience “time scarcity”—the official term for feeling like the minutes are flying by and there are never enough hours in the day. Take it outside! A new study from the University of Turku in Finland found that, in some cases, time may feel different depending on our surroundings. When we’re in nature, it can stretch longer, and we’re also better able to jump between thoughts about the past, present, and future, giving us a more well-rounded perspective on the passing of time. So while you can’t technically find more than 24 hours in a day, walking in the woods can at least make your day feel a little longer.

## MAKE A NEW FRIEND

Connecting with strangers as a grown-up is one of the most awkward experiences our species can endure. Anna Goldfarb, author of the new book *Modern Friendship: How to Nurture Our Most Valued Connections*, has a suggestion: “Start by asking a potential new friend what they’re into these days. If there’s overlap with your interests, that’s a natural connection point.” And when you invite them to hang out, explain why you want to. (“We should get lunch” falls flat, Goldfarb says, because the person may wonder whether you really mean it.) If you both love knocking on doors during election season, you could ask, “Would you ever want to meet up and canvass together? We could be better as a team!” Then see how it goes!



## SWAP OUT ONE LITTLE HOME DECOR ITEM

Where’s that magic wand to make our homes look like the ones on our Pinterest boards? Interior designers say you only have to change one thing for a quick vibe shift.

They recommend replacing...

### “A large area rug for a bedroom or living room.

Green is definitely trending, so try jade, chartreuse, or olive.”

—Dabito, designer and author of *Old Brand New*

### “Kitchen cabinet hardware.

It makes things feel totally different. I’d update to unlacquered brass or polished nickel.”

—Emily Henderson, designer and winner of HGTV *Design Star*

### “A faucet for the kitchen or bathroom.

You can get an inexpensive brass one. No plumbing work required.”

—Breegan Jane, designer and HGTV host

## Bail on that book you’re not feeling

When you don’t love a book, reading can feel like homework. Quit it, says Shannon Reed, author of *Why We Read: On Bookworms, Libraries and Just One More Page Before Lights Out*. “There are so many great books out there that you have to be picky!” she says, adding that it’s totally fine to put something on the DNF (did not finish) list. “If you feel guilty, you can tuck it into your bookshelf to be rediscovered in a few years when it may be a better fit for you.”

## SIMPLIFY YOUR SKIN CARE ROUTINE

“You can get what you need with three essential items: a cleanser, a day product, and a night product,” says Noëlle S. Sherber, MD, clinical associate professor of dermatology at the George Washington University School of Medicine & Health Sciences. “For daytime, think defense. For nighttime, think repair.” In the morning, use a cleanser, then a moisturizer with SPF. At bedtime, cleanse again and follow with a product to treat specific issues while you sleep.





## See your friends more often

More than half (61%!) of the people in a 2023 Pew Research Center survey said that having friends is important to leading a fulfilling life—more than having a spouse, kids, or lots of money. Still, it can be hard to fit dinners or even happy hours into our busy schedules. Your solve? Make the friendship more convenient, says Sheila Liming, PhD, author of *Hanging Out: The Radical Power of Killing Time*. “If I’m in my friend’s neighborhood, I’ll text to ask if she wants to meet for lunch, if I can drop by her place for a quick cup of tea, or if she wants to run an errand together. It’s as simple as: ‘Hey! I’m heading to your area to grab plants at the nursery. Want to join? I can pick you up on the way.’ Maintaining friendships is often simply a matter of showing up.”







## Become a smarter snacker

American adults eat what amounts to an entire extra meal in snacks every day, according to a new study from The Ohio State University. These nibbles tend to lack the good stuff you'd want from a meal (protein! fiber!) and are often high in other stuff (sugar! fat! carbohydrates!). The researchers from the study recommend planning your midmorning and midafternoon snacks the same way you plan meals—with intention and care and lots of good nutrients—so you're not left hungry and reaching for processed convenience foods.





## Politely protect your bandwidth



## CRANK UP YOUR RETIREMENT ACCOUNT

Increasing your 401(k) contribution by 1% likely won't feel noticeable in your day-to-day life. In the long run, though, it'll be a huge boost. Keep the increase going for 10 years and you should end up with about double your money. The math: On a \$100,000 salary with a 5% contribution (and a yearly standard-of-living raise), you'll have \$57,000 saved in 10 years. Up that by 1% a year, and in a decade you'll have \$111,000. Just know your annual contribution maximum, says Ann Garcia, a certified financial planner and the author of *How to Pay for College*. (If you're under 50, that's \$23,000; \$30,500 if you're over.) While you're doing that, Garcia says to update your beneficiaries if necessary.

Your coworker asks you to cover his call with the China office at 8 p.m. Your neighbor pressures you to host the next book club. You'd love to... if the timing were better. To say no gracefully, respond to the asker directly, says etiquette expert Elaine Swann, founder of the Swann School of Protocol. Reply to them individually or circle back solo after a meeting, she suggests. Be clear and truthful. Start with "I apologize," then give a reason, which softens the blow, such as "I have another project I'm working on" or "I have obligations at home." If it's something you would do in the future, bow out with what Swann calls a "Next time!" to show you'd be happy to help when you can. As long as you're not consistently saying no or neglecting legit responsibilities, it shouldn't affect how you're viewed by anyone.



## LET YOURSELF SLEEP

The common wisdom—and maybe a point of imagined superiority for those who leap out of bed at the first sound of their alarm—is that hitting snooze and nodding off, especially more than once, makes you groggy. According to new research from Stockholm University, people who went back to sleep after their alarm went off, and even hit snooze up to three times, didn't have any worse outcomes in terms of morning tiredness, metabolism-related cortisol levels, or mood. The point: Snooze away!

## Reprogram your thermostat

The U.S. Department of Energy recommends keeping your thermostat no higher than 70°F in the winter, and turning it down by 7°F to 10°F for eight hours a day. Do so at night (the National Sleep Foundation says an optimal snoozing temp is between 60°F and 67°F) or when you're at work. And don't believe the myth that your furnace has to work harder to heat back up. According to the DOE, you can save 10% on your heating bill this way.



## CRY IF YOU WANT TO

It's good for us, says Pepita Sandwich, author of the new book *The Art of Crying*. "When we cry, especially during times of intense emotions, such as sadness, grief, stress, or even extreme happiness, it acts as a release valve," she explains. These tears—as opposed to the kind we shed when we get dust in our eyes—have been found to contain higher levels of stress hormones, like leu-enkephalin. Flushing out these hormones may help regulate the body by releasing oxytocin and endorphins, which help reduce physical and emotional pain. So if you feel the waterworks coming on, let them.





### GO TO MORE CONCERTS

Neuroscientists at the University of Zurich took MRIs of people while they listened to the same song live and recorded. The live performance triggered a stronger emotional response in the amygdala than the song played from a device. The experience of connection, either with the performers or fellow listeners, may have something to do with it. Go see a local cover band, an orchestra, or Taylor Swift (if you can get your hands on some affordable tickets).

### TRY THE “5 THINGS TIDYING METHOD”

Developed by licensed professional counselor KC Davis, this approach calls for focusing on five categories—trash, laundry, dishes, stuff that has a place, and stuff that doesn’t—and nothing else. Learn more at [realsimple.com/5things](https://realsimple.com/5things).



### Romanticize your handwashing routine

We all know that, to prevent illness, we should regularly scrub off germs—vigorously, with soap, for 20 seconds. Still, handwashing rates have dropped by 30% over the last three years, returning to prepandemic levels, according to one 2023 survey. To get your numbers (and microbe-protection) back up, try a soap with a scent you love—floral, woody, citrusy, or herbal—and make scrubbing feel like a self-care moment.

### TOUGHEN UP YOUR ONLINE SECURITY

Digital scams are on the rise, with Americans losing more than \$10 billion to fraud last year, according to the Federal Trade Commission. Think of how you protect yourself in the physical world, like locking your house and car, says Hazem Said, PhD, a professor at the University of Cincinnati’s School of Information Technology. “You need to be just as cautious in the digital world,” he says. Two things you can do right now:

#### Update your passwords

Doing so is essential, not only for anything that unlocks sensitive information, like banking and government accounts, but also for your email, social, and shopping accounts. “Choose a unique password for each that’s a mix of uppercase letters, lowercase letters, numbers, and special characters,” Said says. A password manager, like LastPass, can help you keep them all straight, as well as generate hard-to-guess passwords for you.

#### Turn on multifactor authentication

Log into your email and any banking accounts you have and opt in on multifactor authentication. This is like a double lock—to access the account, you need a security code that’s sent to your phone or email, in addition to your password.



### Be a calm(er) party host

Stress is the killer of joy, says New York City–based celebrity wedding planner and designer Jove Meyer. His biggest tips for people who want to entertain but find it daunting: Start early and outsource. Do the parts of hosting you like and delegate the rest. “If you love to cook, focus on that, and pick up a bouquet of flowers, serve on mismatched or compostable dishes, and put someone else in charge of the music,” he says. Once you’ve decided what parts you’re going to handle, do as much as possible in advance. Then take deep breaths, smile, and enjoy—because no one’s judging you on your performance. As Meyer likes to say, “This is not a White House state dinner!”



## Buy a jar (or three) of local honey

You've heard the buzz that pollinators, such as bees and butterflies, are in trouble and, as a result, so is our food supply. You can help in an easy, delightful way:

Buy local honey at your farmers market or grocery store. According to The Bee Conservancy, your purchase helps beekeepers afford to grow their hives, protecting more endangered bees and leading to more bees pollinating more plants, which benefits all local wildlife. Plus, you can hold a little taste test. See if you can pick up on the subtle flavor differences between honey from bees that collected pollen from lavender vs. sage vs. orange blossoms.







## Write a thank-you note

Bust out that stationery! According to University of Pennsylvania research, when people wrote and personally delivered thank-you notes, they immediately reported an increase in happiness—and it lasted for a month! While we often focus on what's wrong, writing a thank-you note feels so great because it helps us focus on what's right. "It's basking in someone's generosity toward you," says Gina Hamadey Bergman, author of *I Want to Thank You: How a Year of Gratitude Can Bring Joy and Meaning in a Disconnected World*. Think beyond the obvious recipients, she advises. Write one to your kid's school custodian, or your dry cleaner, or your best friend's dad. "I wrote to the chef of a restaurant I used to love that had closed," she says. "She wrote the most beautiful reply."





## PICK UP A FEW KEY PIECES FOR YOUR CLOSET

Most of us aren't trying to replace our entire wardrobes with whatever is trending this season. That said, we don't want to look like relics either. Just shop for a few things, says fashion pro Stephanie Tricola, who styled the looks on page 122.

### Barrel-leg jeans

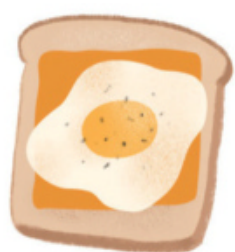
They're shaped (you guessed it) like a barrel: tight on the top and bottom and flared out in between. They're on-trend but also comfortable. Levi's has a few pairs Tricola likes.

### Ballet flats

Yay! We couldn't be happier about the return of ballet flats. Wear 'em with dress pants or jeans for max comfort. Check out Camper, Dolce Vita, and Madewell for lots of great and colorful options.

### A crossbody bag

"Downsize to a mini crossbody bag that basically just fits your phone and a lipstick," Tricola says. Anthropologie has some inexpensive ones. Lighten your load and look cute doing it!



## Get more protein at breakfast

Thanks to the steak and burgers of it all, many people eat as much as three times more protein at dinner than at breakfast. But some research shows you build more muscle when you distribute protein evenly throughout each meal, and protein in the morning can help you feel full until lunch. To get that a.m. boost, try two eggs with cheddar cheese and a piece of sprouted-grain toast smeared with peanut butter (33 grams), or Greek yogurt with pumpkin seeds (28 grams).

## STOP RANTING & RAVING

It feels so good to vent about your colleague or the person who cut you off in traffic, or to go for a really hard run after a fight with your partner. Don't.

Because you're not actually "blowing off steam." According to researchers at The Ohio State University, venting and running don't lower your physiological arousal level. In fact, they increase it! Unfortunately for those who prefer to smash it out in a rage room, the proven ways to relax are through deep breathing, meditation, slow-flow yoga, or simply stepping away from the drama.

## Be a good citizen of the world

On a deeper note: Between the crises in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, Haiti, and other places around the globe (not to mention extreme weather events, rollbacks of human rights, and mass shootings), it's easy to feel overwhelmed and hopeless, says Michael Z. Cahana, senior rabbi at Congregation Beth Israel in Portland, Oregon, who served as a copetitioner of a local ballot measure for gun safety legislation. "My mother was a survivor of Auschwitz.

I grew up knowing that even in the darkest places, the human heart can find light and hope when we come together." His suggestion: Do what you can. "Feed a hungry person, volunteer at a shelter, speak up for voting rights. You might not influence events on the other side of the planet, but you can help someone in your community, and that makes a difference."



## Start prepping for next summer's vacation

It's never too early! Do you hope to re-create this year's beach day with friends, white water rafting trip, or grown-up tennis camp? Was there something you wish you'd done? Make your goals for 2025 and start saving, Garcia says. Set a dollar amount to automatically transfer into a high-yield savings account every month. "Given the short-term nature of the goal, you don't want to put the money at risk, and with the current interest rates starting at around 4%, the earnings can add up." Come spring, book away.





## Long Shorts

Knee-skimming bottoms are going to be everywhere this season. Just for fun, we worked another trend in here: monochrome. And one more: burgundy! Pick one idea or copy this look and hit all three.

*Coralie Faux Leather Bermuda Shorts, \$99, and Dianne Polo Shirt, \$115; thefrankieshop.com Stacie Boots, \$530; maileworld.com Zoey Shimmer Hoops (similar to shown), \$68; gorjana.com Blushed Matte Horn Bangle Set (similar to shown), \$76; sunshinetienda.com*





# What to Wear *for the* In-Between Weather

Will it be hot outside,  
or brisk and chilly? Yes!  
And these on-trend  
pieces will help  
you get it just right.

BY MUZAM AGHA • PHOTOGRAPHS BY NADYA WASYLKO • STYLING BY STEPHANIE TRICOLA  
SET DESIGN BY CHELSEA MARUSKIN • HAIR BY CHARLES MCNAIR • MAKEUP BY DEBORAH ALTIZIO • NAILS BY YUKIE MIYAKAWA



## Black Leggings

Leggings are pants! Especially when combined with a crisp button-up and an oversize blazer. This silhouette is not going anywhere—and it can take you everywhere.

*Supima Cotton Leggings, \$29; calzedonia.com Camila Coelho Arielle Blazer (similar to shown), \$178; revolve.com Cotton Shirt, \$119; stories.com Agent Heeled Sandals, \$140; jeffreycampbellshoes.com Mini Hoops, from \$90; keannenewyork.com 3-Pack Rings (similar to shown), \$13; hm.com*








## Classic Trench

If it seems like this coat never goes out of style, that's because it doesn't. Throw one on over a bunch of layers and you're good to go. PS: Say yes to power-clashing with stripes.

*The Rox Trench Coat, \$498; kule.com (see page 12 for a discount) Breton Striped Tank, \$130, and Pleated Denim Mini Skirt, \$190; tommy.com Ultimate Cropped Shirt, \$30; asos.com Aster Ruched Knee-High Boots (similar to shown), \$103; charleskeith.com 3-Pack Signet & Ridge Rings, \$20; dynamiteclothing.com Chunky Medium Hoops (similar to shown), \$98; mejuri.com*





## Quilted Shell

Another classic! What keeps this one from getting boring? The snug cut and the aggressively neutral tone of the entire 'fit.

Try it with shades of any rich, fall color.

*Annandale Quilted Jacket (similar to shown), \$220; barbour.com Cardigan, \$285; softgoat.com Paige Brooklyn Wide Leg Pants, \$239; bloomingdales.com Tiny Twinkles Pavé Mini Hoops (similar to shown), \$38; katespade.com 2 Pack Cut Out Ring Set (similar to shown), \$20; asos.com*





## Cropped Bomber

Let's talk about balance. A boxy leather jacket with an unstructured slip skirt (or dress) nails the dressy-yet-casual vibe and feels effortlessly cool.

*Micky Faux Leather Cropped Bomber, \$436; thefrankieshop.com* *Satin Raw-Edge Paneled Slip Skirt, \$345; vince.com* *The Wynn Baby Tee, \$78; kule.com (see page 12 for a discount)* *Xeli Metallic Triangle-Heel Mules (similar to shown), \$73; charleskeith.com* *Sterling Silver Puffed Hoop Earrings (similar to shown), \$70; womanwithin.com* *Niki Leist Melted Bar Ring (similar to shown), \$50; lovesitch.com*





## Denim Maxi Skirt

When you're not quite ready for jeans, a long denim skirt is a good way to go. Add a tee and the season's ubiquitous vest for a look that can be dressed up with heels or down with sneaks.

*Ankle Column Skirt, \$98; levi.com Basic Jersey Love Cats Relaxed T-Shirt, \$145; ganni.com Theory Sleeveless Waist Coat, \$325; bloomingdales.com Miss M Mini Eyelet Leather Bag, \$435, and Pointed Pumps with Bow Detail, \$435; us.maje.com Organic Resin Bracelet, \$20, and Dome Bangle Bracelet, \$20; dynamiteclothing.com Open Edit Resin Teardrop Stud Earrings (similar to shown), \$30; nordstrom.com*



# Bouclé Jacket

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How to prevent this topper from reading stuffy: Wear it with a tank top and your favorite jeans. Yes, even ripped ones.

*Kasey Cuff Detail Jacket, \$525; lagence.com*  
*Clean Lines Halter Cami, \$38; freepeople.com*  
*Ribcage Wide Leg Women's Jeans (similar to shown), \$98; levi.com*  
*Delicate Bow Earrings, \$18; dynamiteclothing.com*  
*Imitation Pearl Necklace (similar to shown), \$69; macys.com*  
*6-Pack Rings (similar to shown), \$9; hm.com*







## Rugby Shirt

It's back! Only this time, the baggier, the better.

Pair it with shorts or jeans to be ahead of the game—and as comfy as possible.

*Striped Cropped Jersey Rugby Shirt, \$188; [ralphlauren.com](https://www.ralphlauren.com)  
Tailored Longline Denim Jorts, \$45, and Heart Crossbody Bag, \$35; [asos.com](https://www.asos.com)  
Coconuts Pistol Cowboy Bootie, \$60; [dsw.com](https://www.dsw.com)*



# Tweed Coat

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Houndstooth? Plus  
argyle? Plus pinstripes?!

They all play well  
together because the  
scales are varied and  
the colors are in sync.

*Houndstooth Tweed Coat, \$398;  
katespade.com The Baxter  
Cardigan, \$328; kule.com (see  
page 12 for a discount) Dani Silk  
Blouse, \$345; lagence.com  
Pleat Front Wide Leg Pants, \$95;  
asos.com Esmerelda Mules,  
\$155; jeffreycampbellshoes.com  
Margaret Silver Earrings  
(similar to shown), \$72;  
heyharper.com Spiral Ring,  
\$80; keanewyork.com*











# Change of plants

Haven't had much luck with your indoor greenery? You may need to rethink what you're growing, where you're putting it, and a few other factors. Shift gears with these tips and know that we're rooting for you!

EDITED BY HANNAH BAKER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
TED CAVANAUGH

PROP STYLING BY  
SOPHIA PAPPAS







# Brighten Up Some Dark Corners

The most important thing to know in this case: Low light doesn't mean no light.

These houseplants are meant for shadier spaces that get indirect sunlight, like north-facing rooms.

## NEON POTHOS

Huzzah! This won't even tolerate direct sunlight, says Breanna Sherlock, in-house plant expert for Planta, a plant care app. "It adds a pop of color and doesn't grow too large or too fast."

Allow the soil to dry out completely between waterings, as it's especially prone to root rot.

## BABY RUBBER

A versatile member of the pepper family, this has "semisucculent" properties. Meaning: Its fleshy leaves retain water for the plant to draw on if conditions get too dry, says Puneet Sabharwal, CEO and cofounder of the houseplant subscription service Horti and author of *Happy Plant: A Beginner's Guide to Cultivating Healthy Plant Care Habits*.

## SILVER PHILODENDRON

Also known as satin pothos, it has velvety leaves and is fairly low-maintenance, says Lisa Eldred Steinkopf, author of *Houseplants: The Complete Guide to Choosing, Growing, and Caring for Indoor Plants*. It can wait for water until the topsoil is totally dry.

## BIRD'S-NEST FERN

Ferns have an unfair reputation for being tough to grow. As long as they're kept moist, they make great houseplants, Steinkopf explains. Water when the top inch of soil is dry.  
—Ashley Abramson & Lisa Milbrand



## AVOID THESE PITFALLS

**Plant parenting is hard! Get it right with advice from Bliss Bendall, a horticulturist in New York City.**

### **You're using tap water**

What's wrong with tap water?! It can contain sodium, and salt buildup is poisonous for almost all houseplants, Bendall says. Instead, buy distilled water or boil your tap water, let it cool, and use it within 24 hours.

### **You're forgetting to dust the leaves**

"Dust can block sunlight from leaves, which slows down photosynthesis," Bendall says. Gently wipe leaves with a microfiber cloth on occasion. Use a dry cloth on small, delicate plants and a slightly damp one on larger, broad-leaved plants.

### **You're putting them on vents**

Plants are sensitive, living things. Overexposing them to cold or hot temperatures they aren't meant for can lead to a sad, untimely death, Bendall warns.

### **You're not doing your research**

You may want a specific plant, but if you don't have the right conditions in your home, it won't thrive. "No matter how badly you want a fiddle-leaf fig, for example, if you do not have very bright, filtered sun exposure for six to eight hours a day, the plant will die," Bendall says. (Filtered light means it passes through curtains, blinds, or trees right outside.)

### **You're not repotting them**

If you notice that a plant's soil is drying out quicker than usual between waterings, it could be time to repot, Bendall says. Other possible signs: The roots are growing through the drainage hole, the leafy part is more than three times taller than the width of the pot, or the plant's growth has slowed down. Use indoor potting soil for best results.  
—Amanda Lauren

Get even more tips and info at [realsimple.com/houseplants](https://realsimple.com/houseplants).



## TRY SOME IMPOSSIBLE-TO-KILL PLANTS

**There's a murderer on the loose—and it's you! These hardy heroes can survive your not-so-green thumb.**



### Snake plant

To kill a snake plant, you practically have to do it on purpose, says Justin Hancock, a horticulturist at Costa Farms, a plant company based in Miami, Florida. Low light, drought, and insects are no match for this cool, spiky guy.



### Christmas cactus

Contrary to the name, this beauty can bloom year-round, says Barbara Pierson, nursery manager at White Flower Farm in Litchfield, Connecticut. "It ranges in color, thrives on neglect, and can be kept indoors all year."



### ZZ plant

Leaf this plant alone! The less you do, the better. It stands up well against dry winter air—and the edges of its thick, rubbery leaves won't turn brown and crispy. "It's virtually indestructible," Hancock says. —*Marla Christiansen & L.M.*

## Rethink Those Super-Sunny Spots

While some green things get sunburned easily (plants—they're just like us!), everything on this list thrives in bright light. Pick one for a window or a south-facing room.

### HOYA COMPACTA

Though it can tolerate lower light, hoya is happiest in bright light. Its trailing, curling foliage makes it a great hanging plant too, Hancock says.

### SPIDER PLANT

Believed to bring good fortune and prosperity, it would be nice in, say, a home office. Hancock explains that its grassy leaves propagate super easily, so you can repot or share with fellow plant fans.

### CHAMOMILE

Yes, like the tea! This plant grows little yellow-centered flowers that are basically tiny versions of daisies. In fact, chamomile is in the same family. Harvest some buds and make your very own cuppa.

### MINT & BASIL

These herbs are not only wonderfully fragrant, they're also a practical addition to your plant collection, as they'll save you money when you're grocery shopping. —*Debbie Wolfe & Sarah Yang*

## Call for Backup

A few apps that will help you help your plants:

### HAPPY PLANT

Each of your plants gets a profile in the app, which reminds you of everyone's unique watering schedule. The app even encourages you to snap a photo during every watering session to track growth via a time-lapse video. *Free for up to 3 plants, \$2 for 4 or more plants (iOS only); happyplantapp.com*

### PICTURE THIS

Upload a pic of your plant and the app will give you detailed care instructions. It can even diagnose and offer remedies for problems (like browning!) and tell you if your plant needs more direct sunlight or fertilizer. For a fee, you can access a human expert. *\$40 a year (iOS and Android); picturethisai.com*

### GARDENIA

To use this app, you have to know the types of plants you have. Once you enter that info, it will list their requirements and send push notifications when it's time to water and fertilize. Like the other apps, it can also help with your outdoor plants. *Free (iOS and Android); getgardenia.co* —*Rachel Sylvester*











# Welcome Plant Friends to a Steamy Bathroom

These spunky options will turn your most humid space into a spalike oasis.

## ALOCASIA

It'll appreciate being close to your shower, as long as you don't put it in direct sunlight (it's prone to sunburn).

## ALOE

This succulent doesn't *need* humidity to be happy, but it's a smart choice for your bathroom, right near your first aid kit, says Erin Marino, a plant expert at The Sill, an online plant shop that ships nationally, with stores in New York and Maryland. "The gooey insides of aloe leaves can help soothe skin, heal minor burns, reduce itch, and more." Just snip off a leaf, scrape out the gel, and apply.

## BOSTON FERN

Popularized in the Victorian era, this full, hardy plant is still a classic choice for Southern porches—and bathrooms all over. Put one on a stand or in a hanging planter next to your tub and it'll thrive.

## AIR PLANT

Air plants don't need much—not even soil! Our friends at The Sill say to add some to your bathroom if you have a large, sunny window.

—Katie Holdefehr



## STOP BUGGING OUT

**The earlier you catch pests, the more likely you are to prevent a major infestation. Estany Clark, a horticulture expert in Hillsboro, Oregon, has tips.**

### **Aphids**

Little sap suckers, these produce a sugary liquid waste called "honey-dew," which causes a fungus to grow, turning leaves and branches black. Check for them near the opening of flower buds and around new growth, Clark says. You can dislodge aphids and eggs by squirting them with water or rinsing the leaves in the sink, she says. Follow up with an application of neem oil or insecticidal soap for several weeks to ensure you've killed all the eggs.

### **Fungus gnats**

"These are a problem in houseplants where the soil frequently remains wet," Clark says. Getting rid of them requires a change in watering habits. "Only water once the top two inches of soil are dry, and even less frequently during

the cold months," she suggests. It's also essential to catch the adult gnats so they can't lay new eggs in the soil. A sticky fly trap is your best bet; you may have to use some for several weeks to get 'em all.

### **Mealybugs**

Similarly to aphids, these fluffy-looking waxy buggers suck sap out of your plant and cause leaves to yellow. They're inconspicuous at first, Clark warns. "Unfortunately, by the time the adult female is spotted, she's probably hatched hundreds of eggs." Remove them by washing or wiping the leaves or stems. You can also spot-treat an area with a cotton swab dipped in isopropyl alcohol. —D.W.



## Blackberry & Pear Breakfast Crisp

It may look like dessert,  
but it's less sugary  
and topped with yogurt,  
not whipped cream!







## Steamed Egg & Sausage Breakfast Sandwiches

Who needs the drive-through  
when you've got  
these babies prepped?

# MORNING GLORIES

These super-satisfying breakfasts have it all: They can be made in advance, they feed a crowd, and they're downright delicious.

BY NICOLE HOPPER / PHOTOGRAPHS BY GREG DUPREE  
FOOD STYLING BY CHELSEA ZIMMER / PROP STYLING BY CLAIRE SPOLLEN



## Blackberry & Pear Breakfast Crisp

ACTIVE TIME **20 MINUTES**  
TOTAL TIME **1 HOUR, 25 MINUTES**  
SERVES **8**

- 2 lb. (about 5) fresh pears (such as Bartlett), chopped into 1-in. pieces
- 2 10-oz. pkg. (about 5 cups) frozen blackberries
- 3 Tbsp. cornstarch
- 1 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice (from 1 lemon)
- 1/2 tsp. fresh grated ginger (from a 1-in. piece)
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/4 cup plus 2 Tbsp. honey, divided
- 1/4 cup (1/2 stick) unsalted butter
- 1 1/2 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
- 1/2 cup whole-wheat or all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans
- 1/4 cup sunflower seeds
- Plain whole-milk yogurt, for serving

**PREHEAT** oven to 350°F. Stir together pears, blackberries, cornstarch, lemon juice, ginger, salt, and 2 tablespoons honey in a large bowl; toss until evenly coated. Transfer mixture to a 13-by-9-inch baking dish.

**HEAT** butter and remaining 1/4 cup honey in a medium saucepan over medium-low until butter is melted and mixture is runny. Remove from heat; stir in oats, flour, pecans, and seeds. Sprinkle mixture over fruit in baking dish.

**PLACE** baking dish on a rimmed baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake until bubbling and topping is golden brown and crisp, 45 to 50 minutes. (Tent with aluminum foil after 30 minutes if browning too quickly.) Let cool slightly, about 20 minutes, or cover and refrigerate until completely cooled. Serve warm or chilled, topped with yogurt.

**MAKE AHEAD:** Cover and refrigerate baked crisp for up to 5 days. Reheat, covered with foil, in oven at 300°F, or reheat a single serving in microwave. Or serve cold or at room temp. Top with yogurt.

## Steamed Egg & Sausage Breakfast Sandwiches

ACTIVE TIME **30 MINUTES**  
TOTAL TIME **50 MINUTES**  
SERVES **9**

- Cooking spray
- 12 large eggs
- 3/4 cup whole milk
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 9 breakfast sausage patties (from 2 [12-oz.] pkg.)
- 9 English muffins, split
- 9 slices Swiss cheese (8 oz. total)
- 9 Tbsp. mayonnaise
- 9 Tbsp. red pepper jelly
- 3 cups baby arugula (from a 5-oz. pkg.)

**PREHEAT** oven to 300°F. Coat a 9-inch square baking pan with cooking spray; place on a large rimmed baking sheet.

**WHISK** eggs, milk, salt, and pepper in a large bowl. Pour into prepared baking pan. Place in oven; carefully pour 2 cups hot water into baking sheet. Bake until eggs are just set, about 25 minutes. Remove baking pan from baking sheet and let cool for 5 minutes. Run a knife around edges of baking pan; invert eggs onto a cutting board. Slice into 9 squares.

**MEANWHILE**, cook or heat sausage patties according to package directions.

**INCREASE** oven temperature to broil. Place English muffins, cut side up, on a baking sheet; broil until toasted and golden, 1 to 2 minutes.

**LINE** a baking sheet with foil. Place egg squares on foil and top each square with 1 slice cheese. Broil until cheese is melted, 1 to 2 minutes.

**SPREAD** mayonnaise on bottom halves of English muffins and pepper jelly on top halves. Make sandwiches with sausage patties, eggs, and arugula.

**MAKE AHEAD:** Omit arugula and wrap sandwiches in foil. Refrigerate for up to 5 days. Reheat, still wrapped, in oven at 350°F until heated through, 10 to 15 minutes. Add arugula and serve.

## Skillet Baked Eggs with White Beans & Mushrooms

ACTIVE TIME **30 MINUTES**  
TOTAL TIME **40 MINUTES**  
SERVES **6**

- 4 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 lb. mixed mushrooms (such as cremini, shiitake, and oyster), sliced
- 1/4 cup finely chopped shallot (from 1 shallot)
- 1 tsp. dried thyme
- 1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more for garnish
- 1 1/4 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 4 cups chopped lacinato kale (from 1 bunch)
- 2 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 cups whole milk
- 2 15-oz. cans cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 6 large eggs
- 3 Tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese

**PREHEAT** oven to 375°F. Heat 3 tablespoons oil in a large, deep skillet over medium-high. Add mushrooms; cook until browned on bottom, 5 to 7 minutes. Stir; cook, stirring occasionally, until browned all over, 4 to 5 minutes.

**REDUCE** heat to medium. Add remaining 1 tablespoon oil, shallot, thyme, pepper, and 3/4 teaspoon salt to skillet; cook, stirring, until softened, 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in kale; cook, stirring often, until wilted, about 2 minutes. Add flour and stir until evenly coated. Add milk, stirring and scraping bottom of skillet, until combined. Add beans, mustard, and 1/4 teaspoon salt; bring to a simmer.

**REMOVE** skillet from heat. Form 6 wells in mixture. Crack 1 egg into each well; sprinkle with remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt. Transfer skillet to oven and bake until egg whites are fully set and yolks are set to desired doneness, 10 to 15 minutes. Sprinkle with cheese and pepper.

**MAKE AHEAD:** Refrigerate, covered, for up to 3 days. Reheat individual portions in microwave until warm.



There's some  
major veggie power  
in this cozy,  
protein-filled meal.







## Lemon Poppyseed Sheet Pan Pancakes

Skip the flip and the fuss  
and make these  
fluffy flapjacks all in one  
go in the oven.



## Apple Cinnamon Chia Pudding

Fall is coming!  
And this is one of  
the falliest ways to  
start your day.







Say goodbye  
to the sweet version  
and *hellooo* to  
this savory, pillowy,  
Indian-inspired  
breakfast bake.



## Savory French Toast Casserole

ACTIVE TIME **15 MINUTES**  
TOTAL TIME **1 HOUR, 20 MINUTES**  
SERVES **8**

- Cooking spray
- 1 1-lb. loaf day-old soft white bread, sliced  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. thick
- 10 large eggs
- 2 cups half-and-half
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup finely chopped fresh cilantro, plus more for garnish
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup finely chopped red onion (from 1 onion)
- $2\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. kosher salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp. ground turmeric
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. ground coriander
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. ground cumin
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. ground ginger
- 1 medium Fresno chile, stemmed, seeded, and finely chopped (about 2 Tbsp.)
- Chutney (such as mango or mint), for serving

**COAT** a 13-by-9-inch baking dish with cooking spray. Arrange bread in baking dish, overlapping slices (they should fit snugly in dish).

**WHISK** eggs in a large bowl. Whisk in half-and-half, cilantro, onion, salt, turmeric, coriander, pepper, cumin, ginger, and chile until well incorporated. Pour egg mixture over bread slices, pressing gently to submerge. Let soak until bread absorbs most of egg mixture, at least 30 minutes and up to 24 hours. (If soaking longer than 1 hour, cover and refrigerate; let sit at room temperature for 30 minutes before baking.)

**PREHEAT** oven to 350°F. Bake until golden and puffed, 35 to 40 minutes. Serve hot with a drizzle of chutney.

**MAKE AHEAD:** Refrigerate, covered, for up to 3 days. Reheat individual portions in microwave until warm.

## Lemon Poppyseed Sheet Pan Pancakes

ACTIVE TIME **30 MINUTES**  
TOTAL TIME **30 MINUTES**  
SERVES **6**

- Cooking spray
- 2 cups (240 g) all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup poppy seeds
- 1 Tbsp. baking powder
- $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp. kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. baking soda
- 4 large eggs
- $1\frac{1}{4}$  cups whole milk
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (50 g) granulated sugar
- 3 Tbsp. lemon zest plus  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup and 2 tsp. fresh juice (from 4 lemons), divided
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 8 oz. whole-milk ricotta cheese
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup pure maple syrup
- 3 cups (about 1 lb.) fresh or frozen blueberries, divided

**PREHEAT** oven to 400°F. Coat an 18-by-13-inch rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray. Line with parchment paper.

**WHISK** flour, poppy seeds, baking powder, salt, and baking soda in a medium bowl. Whisk eggs, milk, sugar, lemon zest,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup lemon juice, vanilla, and cheese in a large bowl. Add flour mixture to egg mixture; stir until no visible flour streaks remain (mixture should be slightly lumpy). Pour into prepared baking sheet and smooth into an even layer.

**BAKE** until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 10 to 12 minutes. Increase oven temperature to broil; broil until top is golden, 1 to 3 minutes.

**MEANWHILE**, heat maple syrup, remaining 2 teaspoons lemon juice, and 2 cups blueberries in a medium saucepan over medium. Cook, stirring often, until blueberries burst and mixture is syrupy, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup blueberries (thawed if frozen).

**SLICE** pancake into squares. Serve with blueberry syrup spooned over top.

**MAKE AHEAD:** Refrigerate untopped slices for up to 5 days, or freeze for up to 2 months. Reheat in microwave or toaster. Refrigerate blueberry syrup for up to 1 week.

## Apple Cinnamon Chia Pudding

ACTIVE TIME **15 MINUTES**  
TOTAL TIME **4 HOURS, 30 MINUTES**  
SERVES **6**

- 3 cups dairy or unsweetened nondairy milk
- 1 Tbsp. green cardamom pods, lightly crushed
- 3 4-in. cinnamon sticks
- 1 cup plain whole-milk strained (Greek-style) yogurt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup pure maple syrup, plus more for serving (optional)
- 2 Tbsp. natural creamy nut butter
- 1 Tbsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1 tsp. orange zest (from 1 orange)
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup black chia seeds
- Chopped apples or quartered fresh figs, sliced toasted almonds, and ground cinnamon, for topping

**BRING** milk, cardamom, and cinnamon sticks to a simmer in a medium saucepan over medium. Remove from heat and let steep for 20 minutes.

**WHISK** yogurt, maple syrup, nut butter, vanilla, and orange zest in a large bowl until smooth. Strain milk mixture through a fine-mesh strainer into yogurt mixture, discarding solids; whisk until smooth. Whisk in chia seeds. Set aside, whisking occasionally to break up any clumps of chia seeds, until mixture starts to thicken, about 15 minutes.

**DIVIDE** mixture among 6 (8-ounce) jars. Cover and refrigerate until thickened, at least 4 hours and up to 5 days.

**TOP** with apples or figs and sliced almonds; sprinkle with cinnamon. Serve with more maple syrup, if desired.

**MAKE AHEAD:** Refrigerate, untopped and covered, for up to 5 days.



## No-Bake Fruit & Nut Bars

ACTIVE TIME **20 MINUTES**  
TOTAL TIME **2 HOURS, 20 MINUTES**  
MAKES **14 BARS**

- Cooking spray
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
- 1/2 cup chopped cashews
- 1/2 cup chopped pistachios
- 1/4 cup chopped dried apricots
- 1/4 cup chopped unsweetened dried mango
- 1/4 cup dried tart cherries or cranberries
- 1/4 cup finely shredded unsweetened dried coconut (optional)
- 2 1/2 cups (about 25) pitted Medjool dates
- 1/4 cup creamy natural almond or peanut butter
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt

**COAT** a 9-inch square baking pan with cooking spray. Line with parchment paper, leaving a 1-inch overhang on 2 sides. Lightly coat parchment with cooking spray.

**STIR** together walnuts, cashews, pistachios, apricots, mango, cherries, and coconut (if using) in a large bowl. Remove 1/4 cup mixture; reserve for topping.

**PROCESS** dates, nut butter, salt, and 1 tablespoon hot water in a food processor until a smooth paste forms, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer to bowl with nut mixture; stir and knead until well combined.

**TRANSFER** mixture to prepared baking pan and press firmly into an even layer. Scatter reserved 1/4 cup nut-and-fruit mixture on top, pressing to adhere. Cover and refrigerate until firm, about 2 hours. (Or freeze until firm, about 30 minutes.)

**USING** parchment paper as handles, lift from baking pan and transfer to a cutting board. Slice into bars.

**MAKE AHEAD:** Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 1 week, or freeze for up to 2 months.

## Sweet Potato & Black Bean Breakfast Tacos

ACTIVE TIME **40 MINUTES**  
TOTAL TIME **40 MINUTES**  
SERVES **6**

- 5 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 cup chopped red onion (from 1 onion)
- 2 large sweet potatoes, scrubbed and cut into 1/2-in. cubes (about 4 cups)
- 2 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 1 Tbsp. chili powder
- 1 15-oz. can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 8 large eggs
- 12 6-in. flour tortillas, warmed
- 2 avocados, sliced
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro
- Hot sauce, for serving (optional)

**HEAT** 2 tablespoons oil in a large skillet over medium. Add bell pepper and onion; cook, stirring occasionally, until starting to soften, 3 to 4 minutes. Add potatoes, 2 tablespoons oil, and 1 1/2 teaspoons salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until potatoes are tender, 12 to 15 minutes.

**ADD** chili powder to skillet; cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in beans and 1/4 cup water; cook, stirring and scraping bottom of skillet, until liquid is mostly evaporated, 1 to 2 minutes. Remove from heat.

**WHISK** eggs and remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt in a large bowl. Heat remaining 1 tablespoon oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-low. Add eggs; scramble until softly set, 3 to 4 minutes.

**DIVIDE** potato mixture among tortillas. Top with scrambled eggs, avocado, and cilantro. Drizzle with hot sauce, if desired.

**MAKE AHEAD:** Assemble tacos without avocado and cilantro. Wrap in parchment or foil. Refrigerate for up to 3 days or freeze for up to 1 month. Reheat in microwave, or crisp in a skillet with oil, like a quesadilla. Add toppings and serve.

Feel free to customize! Just follow our failproof nut-to-fruit ratio.





Protein, more protein,  
fiber, and tons  
of flavor—these might  
even make it into  
the dinner rotation.



## Dining Room

This room had a little molding, but Natalie added even more, plus a ceiling medallion, to emphasize the home's classic feel. Then she painted everything the same shade. "I color-drenched the entire dining room to give this space warm, cozy vibes—so you'd want to spend hours around the table catching up with friends and family," she says.

### SHOP THE ROOM

Smoky Azurite SW 9148 Paint, \$70 per gallon; [sherwin-williams.com](https://www.sherwin-williams.com) Angelo Dining Chairs, \$439 each; [roveconcepts.com](https://roveconcepts.com) Artcraft Comet Chandelier, \$382; [lightology.com](https://lightology.com) Art by Juniper Briggs; [juniperbriggs.com](https://juniperbriggs.com)







ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF NATALIE PAPIER: PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARGARET RAJIC; PROP STYLING BY BRANDI DEVERS

# bouh- boye, beige!

Magnolia Network star and interior designer Natalie Papier colorized a classic 1920s Oak Park, Illinois, home using lots of paint, some wallpaper, and a bunch of brilliant tricks.

BY ERICA FINAMORE



N

**ATALIE PAPIER IS NOT** (we repeat: not) a fan of most neutrals. The designer, who cohosts *Artfully Designed* on the Magnolia Network and cowrote the upcoming decorat-

ing book *Start with the Art*, often goes for bold, saturated colors that pop against clean, bright whites. Meaning: She was the right person to call to liven up a beige suburban Chicago colonial. “The family wanted more personality infused into their home,” she says. She started the project as she usually does—by picking a color palette to use throughout the house. Pulling shades from pieces the family already owned and loved, they landed on olives, blues, blush, and terra-cotta. Next, she figured out how to combine them with the house’s traditional elements to create a truly happy place. How’d she do it? Allow her to explain.







The ceilings in the kitchen, breakfast nook, and living room all got the same light pink paint for added warmth.

## Kitchen

See that peachy paint around the doorway? It matches the accent color in the dining room rug. “If there’s a color in one room, I try to bring it into another space in a different way,” she says.

As for the olive green tones used in other rooms, Natalie wanted to pare it down a bit in the kitchen. Her solution was to paint the island a soft shade of sage. And because the sage and peach are both pretty muted, she decided to invite another color to punch things up: a bright red-orange, which pops on the legs of the stools.

### SHOP THE ROOM

*Persimmon SW 6339 Paint (around doorway), Malted Milk SW 6057 Paint (ceiling), Extra White SW 7006 Paint (cabinets), and Avocado SW 2861 Paint (island), \$70 per gallon; sherwin-williams.com Matteo Modern Ruff Pendants, from \$185 each; lightology.com Racer Stools, \$495 each; bludot.com*

## Hallway

(Far left) Throughout the home, Natalie created vignettes with unexpected art—like the funky presidential prints by Mel Remmers. (There’s George right here, and Honest Abe in the living room!) The table is a Facebook Marketplace score that got a new life after a few coats of black paint. “It’s about finding those cool shapes and curves and thinking about the potential.”

### SHOP THE ROOM

*OGG Money Print, from \$56; melremmers.com Rusper Table Lamp, \$105 (similar to shown); abigailahern.com*



## Living Room

"If you had all bulky furniture in the same room, it would feel overcrowded," Natalie warns. Here, she combined a chunky coffee table and channeled leather sofa with a slim, modern chair and sleek planters. The red-orange fireplace is bold on purpose, to detract attention from the big black rectangle (that'd be the TV) hanging above it.

### SHOP THE ROOM

Red Tomato SW 6607 Paint, \$70 per gallon; [sherwin-williams.com](http://sherwin-williams.com) Strato Channeled Leather Sectional, from \$7,997; [cb2.com](http://cb2.com) Leanne Ford Tom Three-Legged Coffee Table, \$1,799; [crateandbarrel.com](http://crateandbarrel.com) Threshold Esters Wood Armchair, \$300; [target.com](http://target.com) Freakin' Lincoln\$ Print, from \$56; [melremmers.com](http://melremmers.com)











This mirror in the dining room helps amplify the natural light and makes the space feel brighter.



## Breakfast Nook

Globe pendants in the kitchen, a chandelier in the dining room, and an old-school candelabra in the breakfast room. It all works! When rooms share a color story, you can do whatever you want in the lighting department, Natalie says. "Lighting is an opportunity for another kind of sculptural art moment."

### SHOP THE ROOM

*Blaise Wallpaper*, \$160 for a double roll; [yorkwallcoverings.com](http://yorkwallcoverings.com) *Sonali Dining Table*, \$1,798, and *Tiered Tapers Chandelier*, \$2,730; [anthropologie.com](http://anthropologie.com) *Chartreuse Houseplant Print* by Bailey Schmidt, from \$50; [baileyschmidtart.com](http://baileyschmidtart.com)



## Powder Room

A tiny space is a great place to go big on style, Natalie says, because it's relatively low-risk! She drew out the light blue color woven into the wallpaper by installing a bold blue sconce. "It adds that one more kick of color the space needs," she says.

### SHOP THE ROOM

*Persimmon SW 6339 Paint*, \$70 per gallon; [sherwin-williams.com](http://sherwin-williams.com) *Hayli Scallop Mirror* (similar to shown), \$279; [ballarddesigns.com](http://ballarddesigns.com) *Double Valmont Sconce*, \$495; [sazeracstitches.com](http://sazeracstitches.com)





## Entryway

This bentwood chair announces the home's bold accent color to visitors. "I really wanted to find details that tell the story from the get-go," Natalie says.

### SHOP THE ROOM

Rainwashed SW 6211 Paint, \$70 per gallon; [sherwin-williams.com](https://www.sherwin-williams.com) Ton 18 Bentwood Chair, \$499; [schoolhouse.com](https://www.schoolhouse.com) Fluted Marble Flush Mount Lights, \$389 each; [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)





# love it or lose it

Time is running out to protect the Northern Great Plains.

**Act now.** [wwf.org](http://wwf.org)



[wwf.org](http://wwf.org)



# what to cook

RECIPES FOR  
REAL LIFE



California grows about 90 kinds of grapes for eating—plus a whole bunch for wine.

IN SEASON

## GRAPES

These sweet, juicy berries (yes, berries!) may seem seasonless, but in the U.S., most varieties peak in the summer and fall.

**SHOP** Select plump, unwrinkled fruit, and don't worry about a whitish coating. That's called "bloom." It helps seal in moisture and is a sign of freshness.

**STORE** Refrigerate in a well-ventilated container for two to three weeks, making sure the grapes aren't smooshed. Rinse just before eating.

**EAT** Classic as a snack (frozen for a treat), on a cheeseboard, or tossed in a salad, grapes of all colors are also fantastic roasted with chicken or pork. Separate them or, for a pretty presentation, keep them on their stems.

—Jenna Helwig

Photograph by Jennifer Causey

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# Easy Dinners

## #1 / Falafel-Inspired Stuffed Peppers

ACTIVE TIME **25 MINUTES** TOTAL TIME **45 MINUTES** SERVES **4**

✓ Make Ahead ✓ Vegan ✓ Gluten-Free

- 4 medium bell peppers, halved lengthwise and seeded
- 2 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 3 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped (about 2 cups)
- 2 15-oz. cans chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup finely chopped plum tomato (from 1 tomato), plus more for garnish
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley, plus more for garnish
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 2 Tbsp. tahini
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice (from 1 lemon)

**PREHEAT** oven to 400°F. Arrange peppers, cut side up, in a 13-by-9-inch baking dish. Sprinkle with  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt.


**HEAT** 1 tablespoon oil in a large skillet over medium. Add onion; cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, 3 to 5 minutes. Remove skillet from heat. Stir in chickpeas, tomato, parsley, cumin, and 1 teaspoon salt until combined. Using the back of a spoon, mash about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of chickpeas to thicken mixture. Divide mixture among peppers. Bake until peppers are tender, about 30 minutes.

**MEANWHILE**, whisk tahini, lemon juice, and remaining 2 tablespoons oil and  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt in a small bowl. (Whisk in 1 tablespoon water if mixture is too thick to drizzle.) Spoon tahini dressing over baked peppers. Garnish with tomato and parsley.

**PER SERVING:** 369 Calories, 18g Fat (2g Saturated), 0mg Cholesterol, 12g Fiber, 12g Protein, 44g Carbs, 817mg Sodium, 0g Added Sugar

Recipes by Melissa Gray  
Photographs by Greg DuPree



- 
- 4 6-oz. bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs, patted dry  
1½ tsp. kosher salt  
½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper  
1 Tbsp. olive oil  
1 medium red onion, coarsely chopped (about 2¼ cups)  
¼ cup unsalted chicken broth  
1½ Tbsp. finely chopped canned chipotle chiles in adobo sauce (from a 7-oz. can)  
2 15-oz. cans black beans, drained and rinsed  
2 Tbsp. chopped fresh cilantro, plus more for garnish  
2 Tbsp. fresh lime juice (from 2 limes), plus wedges for serving  
Corn tortillas, warmed, for serving

**PREHEAT** oven to 425°F. Season both sides of chicken with salt and pepper. Heat oil in a medium oven-safe skillet over medium-high. Add chicken, skin side down; cook, undisturbed, until golden brown and crisp, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a plate.

**ADD** onion to drippings in skillet; cook over medium-high, stirring occasionally, until beginning to brown, about 1 minute. Stir in broth, chiles, and beans. Return chicken to skillet, skin side up.

**BAKE** until a thermometer inserted in thickest part of chicken reads 165°F, about 15 minutes. Stir in cilantro and lime juice. Garnish with cilantro. Serve with lime wedges and tortillas.

**PER SERVING:** 360 Calories, 8g Fat (2g Saturated), 96mg Cholesterol, 12g Fiber, 31g Protein, 41g Carbs, 738mg Sodium, 0g Added Sugar


## #2 / Chile-Lime Chicken Thighs & Black Beans

ACTIVE TIME **25 MINUTES** TOTAL TIME **40 MINUTES** SERVES **4**

✓ One Pan ✓ Dairy-Free ✓ Gluten-Free







## #3 / Lamb Burgers with Mint-Yogurt Sauce

ACTIVE TIME **30 MINUTES** TOTAL TIME **30 MINUTES** SERVES **4**

✓ Quick Cooking



- 1 lb. ground lamb
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped (about 1 Tbsp.)
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 2 tsp. lemon zest plus 4 Tbsp. fresh juice (from 2 lemons), divided
- 3 Tbsp. finely chopped fresh mint, divided
- 1¾ tsp. kosher salt, divided
- ½ cup plain whole-milk strained (Greek-style) yogurt
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 4 cups lightly packed baby arugula (from a 5-oz. container)
- 4 hamburger buns, toasted
- Potato chips, for serving (optional)

**MIX** together lamb, garlic, cumin, lemon zest, 1 tablespoon mint, and 1 teaspoon salt until combined. Divide mixture into 4 equal portions. Shape each portion into a 4-inch-wide, about ½-inch-thick patty.

**STIR** together yogurt, 2 tablespoons lemon juice, ½ teaspoon salt, and remaining 2 tablespoons mint in a small bowl. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

**HEAT** oil in a large, heavy skillet over medium-high. Add patties; cook until a thermometer inserted in center reads 160°F, 3 to 4 minutes per side. Transfer to a plate and let rest for 5 minutes.

**TOSS** arugula with remaining 2 tablespoons lemon juice and ¼ teaspoon salt in a medium bowl.

**SPREAD** about 1 tablespoon yogurt sauce over cut sides of each bun. Place patties on bottom buns. Top each with 1 cup dressed arugula and place tops of buns over arugula. Serve with potato chips, if desired.

**PER SERVING:** 522 Calories, 34g Fat (13g Saturated), 87mg Cholesterol, 2g Fiber, 28g Protein, 27g Carbs, 820mg Sodium, 0g Added Sugar



- 1 tsp. light brown sugar
- 1/2 tsp. ground coriander
- 1 3/4 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 4 6-oz. skinless salmon fillets (about 1 in. thick)
- 4 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 2 avocados, chopped
- 3 ears fresh yellow corn, kernels removed (about 1 1/2 cups)
- 2 plum tomatoes, chopped
- 1/3 cup chopped red onion (from 1 onion)
- 3 Tbsp. chopped fresh basil

**STIR** together sugar, coriander, and 1 teaspoon salt in a small bowl. Rub spice mixture evenly over salmon.

**HEAT** 1 tablespoon oil in a large skillet over medium. Add salmon; cook, undisturbed, until well browned on underside, 5 to 7 minutes. Flip and cook, undisturbed, until a thermometer inserted in thickest part reads 130°F, 3 to 5 minutes.

**MEANWHILE**, gently stir together avocados, corn, tomatoes, onion, basil, and remaining 3 tablespoons oil and 3/4 teaspoon salt in a medium bowl. Serve with salmon.

**PER SERVING:** 552 Calories, 37g Fat (5g Saturated), 94mg Cholesterol, 7g Fiber, 38g Protein, 21g Carbs, 581mg Sodium, 1g Added Sugar

## #4 / Salmon with Sweet Corn & Tomato Salad

ACTIVE TIME **25 MINUTES** TOTAL TIME **25 MINUTES** SERVES **4**

✓ Quick Cooking ✓ Dairy-Free ✓ Gluten-Free



## WHAT TO COOK

- 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- 2 8-to-9-oz. boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into ½-in. pieces
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped (about 2 cups)
- 2 tsp. grated fresh ginger (from a 2-in. piece)
- 1 6-oz. can tomato paste
- 1 tsp. ground coriander
- 1 tsp. smoked paprika
- ½ tsp. ground turmeric
- 1¾ tsp. kosher salt
- 1 cup basmati rice
- 1 cup frozen green peas (from a 10-oz. pkg.)
- ¾ cup heavy cream
- Fresh cilantro leaves, for garnish

**SELECT** sauté setting on a pressure multicooker (such as an Instant Pot). Select high temperature setting and preheat for 3 to 5 minutes.

**ADD** butter, chicken, onion, and ginger to pot. Cook, stirring occasionally, until chicken is light golden brown and onion is softened, about 5 minutes. Add tomato paste, coriander, smoked paprika, and turmeric; cook, stirring constantly, until darkened, about 1 minute. Press cancel.

**ADD** 1 cup water and salt to pot. Lock lid in place. Turn steam-release handle to sealing position. Select manual/pressure cook setting. Select high pressure and cook for 5 minutes.

**MEANWHILE**, cook rice according to package directions.

**CAREFULLY** turn steam-release handle to venting position and let steam fully escape (float valve will drop). Stir in peas and let sit for 1 minute. Stir in cream. Serve with rice and garnish with cilantro.

**PER SERVING:** 621 Calories, 25g Fat (15g Saturated), 149mg Cholesterol, 6g Fiber, 35g Protein, 67g Carbs, 766mg Sodium, 0g Added Sugar

## #5 / Instant Pot Butter Chicken

ACTIVE TIME **20 MINUTES** TOTAL TIME **40 MINUTES** SERVES **4**

✓ Pressure Cooker ✓ Freezable ✓ Make Ahead ✓ Gluten-Free



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Royal's 90-second microwavable rice has a new look  
with the authentic flavor your family will love!





## #6 / Filipino-Style Veggie Coconut Stew

ACTIVE TIME **25 MINUTES** TOTAL TIME **40 MINUTES** SERVES **4**

✓ Make Ahead ✓ One Pot ✓ Vegan ✓ Gluten-Free

- 4 scallions, trimmed
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 2-in. piece fresh ginger, peeled and finely chopped (about 2 Tbsp.)
- 1 large sweet potato, peeled and cut into 1-in. cubes (about 3 cups)
- 2 13.66-oz. cans unsweetened coconut milk
- 2 medium zucchini, cut into ½-in.-thick half-moons (about 4 cups)
- 1 8-oz. pkg. haricots verts (French green beans), cut into 2-in. pieces (about 2 cups)
- 2½ tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ cup chopped fresh mint, plus more for garnish
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lime juice (from 2 limes)

**THINLY** slice scallions, separating white and light green parts from dark green parts.

**HEAT** oil in a medium pot over medium. Add ginger and white and light green scallion parts; cook, stirring occasionally, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add potato; cook, stirring occasionally, until beginning to soften, about 5 minutes. Stir in coconut milk, using a wooden spoon to scrape any browned bits from bottom of pot.

**INCREASE** heat to medium-high and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Stir in zucchini, haricots verts, and salt. Reduce heat to medium and cover; cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are tender, about 12 minutes.

**REMOVE** from heat. Stir in mint, lime juice, and dark green scallion parts. Garnish with mint.

**PER SERVING:** 557 Calories, 43g Fat (35g Saturated), 0mg Cholesterol, 6g Fiber, 7g Protein, 37g Carbs, 792mg Sodium, 0g Added Sugar



PROMOTION

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## FIND YOUR DREAM COLOR

Looking to simplify your paint selection?  
Take a page from designer Patti Wagner's  
(@patticakewagner) book. When she  
decided to bring color to her dining room,  
she teamed up with Sherwin-Williams to  
help her find the perfect shade. With several  
sampling options, Sherwin-Williams lets you  
try before you buy, boosting your color  
confidence every step of the way.

"Sherwin-Williams Peel & Stick samples  
make it so easy to test out different colors  
without any mess or dry time. They're also  
removable and repositionable so I can move  
them from wall to wall."

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You can also skip the skillet and make this in an outdoor pizza oven!

- 3 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 lb. fresh pizza dough, at room temperature
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup pepperoni slices (about 2 oz.), divided
- 6 oz. low-moisture part-skim mozzarella cheese, shredded (about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups)
- $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp. dried basil, divided (optional)
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup marinara sauce
- 1 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- 4 cups spring mix salad greens (from a 5-oz. container)
- 1 cup halved cherry tomatoes (from a 1-pt. container)
- Kosher salt

**PREHEAT** oven to 500°F with rack in lower third position.

**COAT** bottom and sides of a 12-inch cast-iron skillet with 2 tablespoons oil. Press dough into skillet in an even layer. Place half of pepperoni on top of dough. Sprinkle with cheese all the way to edge of skillet. Top with remaining half of pepperoni. Sprinkle with  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon basil, if using. Dollop marinara over pepperoni. Bake until crust is golden and cheese is melted and crispy around edges, 15 to 20 minutes.

**MEANWHILE**, whisk vinegar and remaining 1 tablespoon oil and  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon basil (if using) in a large bowl. Add greens and tomatoes; season with salt. Toss to coat.

**RUN** a small offset spatula around edge of skillet to release pizza. Cut pizza into 8 slices. Serve with salad.

**PER SERVING:** 646 Calories, 31g Fat (9g Saturated), 44mg Cholesterol, 4g Fiber, 25g Protein, 69g Carbs, 1,444mg Sodium, 0g Added Sugar

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A top-down photograph of three bowls of vegetable dips arranged on a vibrant blue textured cloth. The top-left bowl is blue and contains a thick green dip, likely avocado-based, topped with sliced almonds. The bottom-left bowl is white and contains a thick orange-red dip, possibly roasted red pepper hummus, also topped with almonds and fresh herbs. The right bowl is light blue and contains a thick white dip, likely hummus, topped with olive oil, fresh herbs, and several halved cherry tomatoes. In the top right corner, a small white plate holds several whole and sliced radishes alongside a few rectangular crackers. A gold-colored spoon is visible in the green dip bowl, and another gold-colored spoon is in the white dip bowl.

BETTER FOR YOU

## SLAM DUNKS

These dips, featuring end-of-summer  
veggies, win every time.

BY NICOLE HOPPER



## Charred Poblano, Avocado & Pepita Dip

ACTIVE TIME **25 MINUTES**  
TOTAL TIME **30 MINUTES**  
MAKES **1¾ CUPS**

- 2 large poblano chiles
- 1 bunch scallions (about 6 medium), trimmed
- 2½ Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, divided, plus more for drizzling
- 1 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 1 small, ripe avocado
- 1 cup fresh cilantro leaves and tender stems (from 1 bunch)
- ¾ cup pepitas, toasted, plus more for garnish
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice (from 3 or 4 limes)
- ¼ tsp. ground cumin
- ¼ tsp. ground coriander

**PREHEAT** broiler with oven rack 6 to 8 inches from heat. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil.

**PLACE** chiles and scallions on prepared baking sheet. Coat with ½ tablespoon oil and sprinkle with ¼ teaspoon salt. Broil until scallions are charred, 3 to 4 minutes, turning scallions once halfway through; set scallions aside on a plate. Turn chiles and continue broiling until charred, 5 to 6 minutes more.

**PLACE** chiles in a large bowl. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and let steam for 5 minutes. Rub skin off chiles. Discard skins, stems, and seeds.

**PROCESS** avocado, cilantro, pepitas, lime juice, cumin, coriander, scallions, chiles, and remaining 2 tablespoons oil and ¾ teaspoon salt in a food processor until smooth.

**TRANSFER** dip to a bowl. Drizzle with oil and garnish with toasted pepitas.

## Grilled Eggplant & Red Pepper Dip

ACTIVE TIME **45 MINUTES**  
TOTAL TIME **45 MINUTES**  
MAKES **2 CUPS**

- Neutral oil (such as canola), for grill
- 1 medium eggplant
- 2 medium red bell peppers
- ⅓ cup pine nuts or chopped raw almonds, plus more for garnish
- 2 Tbsp. red wine vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
- 1½ tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. tomato paste
- ¼ tsp. smoked paprika, plus more for garnish
- ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1 clove garlic, grated on a Microplane zester (about ½ tsp.)
- Chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley, for garnish

**PREHEAT** grill to medium-high (400°F to 450°F) and lightly oil grates. Prick a couple of holes in eggplant using a paring knife. Place eggplant and bell peppers on grates. Grill, turning occasionally, until bell peppers are charred all over, about 15 minutes. Transfer bell peppers to a large bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and let steam for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, continue grilling eggplant until completely blackened and slumping into itself, 10 to 15 minutes more.

**RUB** skin off bell peppers and eggplant. Discard skins, stems, seeds, and any accumulated juices.

**PROCESS** eggplant, bell peppers, pine nuts, vinegar, olive oil, salt, tomato paste, smoked paprika, black pepper, and garlic in a food processor or blender until smooth, 3 to 4 minutes.

**TRANSFER** dip to a bowl. Drizzle with olive oil. Garnish with parsley, pine nuts, and smoked paprika.

## Hummus with Jammy Tomatoes & Garlic

ACTIVE TIME **30 MINUTES**  
TOTAL TIME **2 HOURS**  
MAKES **1½ CUPS**

- 2 medium heads garlic
- 1 pt. cherry tomatoes
- 2 strips lemon peel plus 1 Tbsp. fresh juice (from 1 lemon)
- 2 sprigs fresh oregano
- 1¼ tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 15-oz. can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- ⅓ cup tahini, well stirred
- Za'atar (optional) and fresh oregano leaves, for garnish

**PREHEAT** oven to 275°F. Cut off and discard top ½ inch of garlic heads to expose cloves inside. Place garlic heads, cut side down, in an 8-inch square baking dish. Arrange tomatoes, lemon peel strips, and oregano sprigs around garlic. Sprinkle with ½ teaspoon salt and top with oil (tomatoes should be mostly submerged).

**BAKE** until tomatoes are softened and wrinkled but not opened and garlic is tender, about 1½ hours. Transfer garlic to a plate and let cool for 10 minutes. Using your hands or tongs, squeeze garlic cloves from heads.

**MEANWHILE**, place chickpeas in a kitchen towel; gently rub to loosen skins. Remove and discard loose skins (it's fine if some remain).

**PROCESS** chickpeas, tahini, lemon juice, 2 tablespoons oil from baking dish (reserve remaining oil for another use), half of garlic cloves, and remaining ¾ teaspoon salt in a food processor until smooth, 1 to 2 minutes. With processor running, add 3 to 4 tablespoons ice-cold water until desired consistency is reached.

**TRANSFER** hummus to a bowl. Using a slotted spoon, arrange tomatoes over hummus. Top with remaining half of garlic cloves. Garnish with za'atar (if using) and oregano leaves.

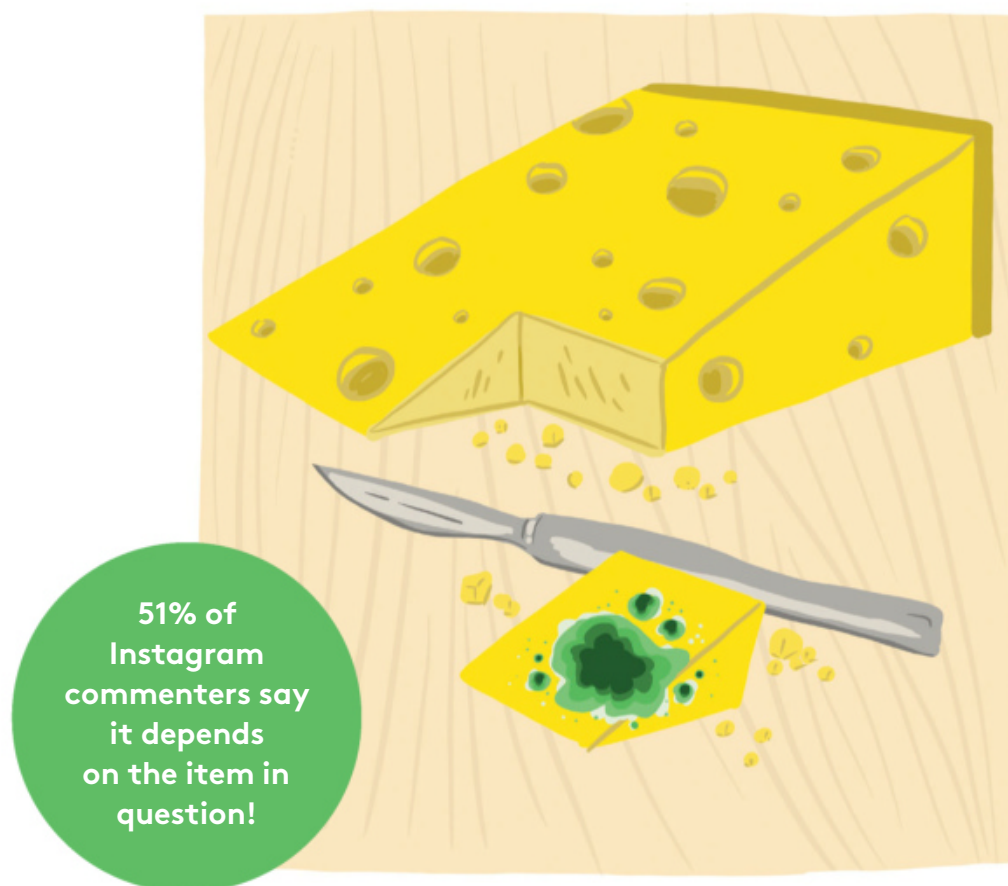


MINOR ISSUES, MAJOR OPINIONS

## IS IT OK TO EAT AROUND THE MOLDY PARTS OF BREAD & CHEESE?

Everyone's got thoughts! We collected yours, then called on the experts to settle the debate once and for all.

BY DANA McMAHAN



### Readers say...

#### Absolutely!

"I just did this last night. I had a brick of pepper Jack with a little mold on one corner. I cut that edge off, and I'm fine."

Instagram CSPOLSKI23

"Nothing will stand between me and my cheese."

Instagram KRI.SULLY

#### Blech, no way!

"I'm not a risk taker. I throw it all out."

Instagram SCKMONKEY

"If I'm seeing mold anywhere on the cheese or bread, I assume the bacteria levels are higher than they should be throughout the whole thing. I'd toss it all."

Instagram SABINEDEMAIN

#### It depends

"I like to live on the edge, just not the moldy edge, so cut it off and pop the rest on the cheese board. Bread? Hard pass. A girl's gotta have some standards."

Instagram AMYZING21

"How hungry am I at the time of the decision?"

Instagram ADRIENNE\_DECAIRE

### The experts say...

A spokesperson for the FDA suggests playing it safe ("We're pretty conservative and say if it has mold, throw it out"), but after asking around, we learned that the answer really depends on the food and the type of mold. Benjamin Chapman, PhD, a foodborne illness researcher and professor at North Carolina State University, says, "Certain types of molds that are more prevalent in certain foods could lead to getting sick from toxicity."

Bread can be problematic, Chapman says, because its texture might

make mold hard to see. "It can be a very similar color to the bread itself." Unsure? Toss it. As for cheese, Josh Windsor, senior caves manager for Murray's Cheese in New York City, reminds us that the art of making cheese is the "symbiosis between the microbial community in the rind and the microbial community in the interior." Meaning: Mold is important in cheese production! Of course, less desirable mold can grow if you don't eat your cheese fast enough. (We're told it happens.) Potentially toxic mold can move undetectably

through soft cheeses—such as goat and Brie—more easily than through hard cheeses. With something like Parmesan, cutting off the mold and the area about an inch around it can be sufficient, Chapman says.

To help your cheeses last, Windsor says to keep them in a drawer in your fridge. Wrap them in a breathable material, like cheese paper or, in a pinch, waxed paper. If you use plastic, replace it every few days. And freeze bread you can't finish—when you're ready to eat, splash it with water, bake it, and enjoy.



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