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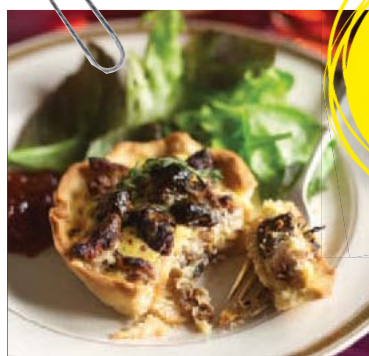
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Welcome

My how this year has flown! I can't believe Christmas is upon us once again. But don't get stressed, we've got plenty of ideas to help you sail through the festivities without a hitch. On page 104 you'll find our pick of the **best festive food** the high street stores and supermarkets have to offer this Christmas. They'll save you spending hours in the kitchen so you can spend more time with your family. And, if you're bored of the same old turkey dinner each year, we've also got some **clever twists on the**

traditional Christmas meal for you to try (p.100).

Decorating your home is a big part of the holiday season. This year try our **gorgeous winter berry-inspired scheme** to make your home feel really cosy (p.36). Or for a touch of glitz and glamour that you can take through with you into the New Year, check out our **opulent Midas Touch trend** on page 20. And if you've got time, try your hand at our

beautiful home-made decoration ideas on page 60. We've even done the leg-work for you and scoured the high street and internet to find **50 fantastic gift ideas for the whole family – all for under £50**. And don't forget

a subscription to Your Home makes a great present for home-lovers – **see our latest subs offer on page 86**.

If you've got time off over Christmas and are planning some DIY and decorating, then take a peek at our ideas for **glamorous bathrooms** (p.52), **rustic farmhouse kitchens** (p.56) and our **inspiring kitchen-diner makeovers** (p.24). Whatever you plan to do over the coming weeks, I hope you have a wonderful Christmas and a fantastic New Year. See you again in 2015!

Anna-Lisa



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Our Acting Deputy Editor Laura was inspired by the lush gold colour trend at the M&S Christmas preview. See how to use it in your own home on p.20.



Multimedia Assistant, Sophie found lots of festive design inspiration at Notonthehighstreet's recent launch. Find more decorating ideas on p.36.

Go digital...

Download our app version for your mobile, tablet or PC and you can take *Your Home* with you on the go. See page 86.



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Festive fun for the whole family

Swap the annual trip to your local Santa's grotto with something a lot more exciting this year and we're sure the kids will thank you for it. Hawkstone Park Follies in Shropshire will be taking visitors on the ultimate Santa Safari through the park's hills and woodland and up into the magical caverns, covered in twinkling fairy lights. Along the way you'll get to meet real reindeer, some of Santa's elves and then finally the man himself. Take a trip during the day to take in the breathtaking views as you scale the hills, or for a little extra money, book onto one of the twilight tours to really appreciate the magical woodland setting after dark. Tickets start at £16 for adults, £17 for kids and £8 for under 3s, with child tickets including a present from Santa. Trips will be running from 5th – 23rd December so visit www.hawkstoneparkfollies.co.uk to buy your tickets.



This month we love...

Get into the festive spirit with the best things to do, see and buy this month For stockists see page 118

Hidden Gem: Snow Home

With its unique homewares and quirky gifts, this store has been a firm favourite with the design lovers of York for over 13 years, and its easy to see why. Set up in 2001 by art graduate Angus McArthur, Snow Home is not just your usual gift shop. As well as going the extra mile to find well-designed, unusual items that don't come with a designer price tag, the store also operates a small design business and sells many of its own products in store and some even worldwide. Look out for smaller, hand-picked designers and manufacturers and



everything from lamp shades to novelty egg cups.

Everything is reasonably priced and definitely something you'd be proud to give as a present or have in your own home. To see for yourself visit the store at 42 Gillygate, York, YO31 7EQ.



Tea towels, from £12 each, www.nicolephillips.com



Serve in style

Christmas is a great excuse to spruce up your home and these festive tea towels from Nicole Phillips England will add more than a touch of yuletide cheer to your kitchen. Artist Nicole hand-paints the gorgeous designs which are then printed onto 100% cotton and made into tea towels right here in the UK. The festive designs include Mistletoe & Wine, Deck the Halls and new Figgy Pudding design, so treat yourself to one to make the post-turkey washing up much more fun. They're so pretty you could even give them as gifts for the domestic goddess or aspiring chef in your life, or stock up on the matching table runners, napkins and oven gloves to make this year's Christmas dinner your most stylish yet.



Nicole Phillips England is offering *Your Home* readers 10% discount on everything at www.nicolephillips.com to treat yourselves to an early Christmas present. Just enter the code **YOURHOME14** at the checkout before 31st December 2014 to redeem your discount.

GREAT IDEAS FOR...

Get the party started

'Tis the season to throw a party, so stock up on our favourite party accessories to make yours the best bash in town



▶ These paper cups look great, plus they'll save you some washing up later

Pack of 8 paper cups, £2.99, Ginger Ray

▶ Take some memorable snaps with these fun festive props

Christmas photo props, £12.50, Pipii



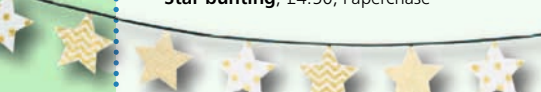
▶ Guests will love your signature punch even more served in this stylish bowl

Glass punch bowl, £38, Next



▶ Turn your house into a party palace with these glitzy garlands

Star bunting, £4.50, Paperchase



▶ Serve up canapés on this gorgeous festive platter

Platter, £15, Tesco

Have a crafty Christmas

There are so many great decorations available on the high street to make your home look the part this Christmas, but sometimes it's the home-made touches that can really add that extra bit of festive sparkle.

This month, why not combine a trip to a beautiful National Trust location with one of the Trust's creative workshops, where you can make and take home unique decorations, gifts and seasonal bakes? Locations from Devon to Yorkshire will be hosting wreath-making classes where you will use the local foliage to create a fresh, show-stopping door decoration, or have a go at making a traditional Christmas pudding straight out of the 1930s at Ickworth in Suffolk. There's also a felt workshop at Cliveden, a ceramic painting class at Eyam Hall in Derbyshire and create your very own star garland or decorative heart from willow at Cotehele in Cornwall. Prices vary depending on the duration and the type of course so visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk/events for more information.



Eat, drink and be merry



Christmas is a time to indulge, and what better way to treat yourself, or your loved ones, than with a hamper full of mouth-watering food and drink. Even if you're not a fan of traditional Christmas treats, at www.ihampers.co.uk you can choose from countless combinations to find the basket that's perfect for any taste or occasion. For chocolate lovers there's the Chocoholics hamper, £59.90, packed full of chocolate truffles, cookies, pudding and even wine. We're also wishing for this Love Christmas Basket, filled with Walkers all-butter shortbread, Coles brandy butter and an all important Christmas pudding. There are also gluten-free, diabetic and vegan gift boxes, so nobody has to miss out on the fun this Christmas.

Love Christmas basket, £26.90, www.ihampers.co.uk

Do something different

Just when we thought the site couldn't get any better, Notonthehighstreet.com has launched its new Experience gift packages, just in time to add them to your Christmas wish list. There are dozens of full and half-day classes and experiences to choose from, all of which are unusual, interesting and perfect for the person who has everything. We love the sound of the Swing Dance class for two where you'll get to learn the Lindy Hop and the Charleston in an energetic four-hour session. If you fancy something a little less tiring, jewellery experts Made by Ore will spend the day helping you cut, shape and solder your broken silver and gold jewellery into statement accessories. Once purchased, your voucher will be sent to your door, ready to redeem when you or your loved one want to book onto your chosen experience. Prices start from just £18, so visit www.notonthehighstreet.com/experiences to find your favourite.





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GET IN TOUCH

Your letters

We answer your questions and discover what you've been up to this month...

Wedded bliss

Q My brother got married in March, and when I asked if there was anything he would like for a wedding present my heart sank when he showed me an expensive patchwork stag head. It was much more than I had budgeted for, so I decided to make him one. A family friend had some antlers, so I re-built the head using papier mâché and the fabrics I used were offcuts from the bridesmaids' dresses and my brother's wedding kilt. My brother and sister-in-law were thrilled with the result.

Eleanor McCracken, Dumfries & Galloway

A *Your Home* says What a fantastic idea, Eleanor. We bet your brother and sister-in-law really appreciated all the effort you went to, especially taking the time to incorporate different fabrics used in their wedding. We can't wait to see what you make next.



Feeling inspired

Having moved into our home 18 months ago, I have been mulling over ideas to create my dream farmhouse kitchen ever since. I was delighted when I picked up my September issue of *Your Home* and saw the farmhouse Trend Alert feature – it couldn't have come at a better time! Now armed with great tips and ideas about colour, fabric and accessories, I feel both inspired and confident that I will be able to create a warm, welcoming place for my family and friends. I can't wait to get started.

Lisa Bowen, Peterborough

Your Home says Our Acting Deputy Editor Laura was thrilled that you found the Trend Alert so inspiring! It's great to hear that you'll be using some of Laura's tips to create your dream kitchen. Good luck!

A new look for a new home

Q We recently moved to Manchester from the Cotswolds and while redecorating our home here we took the opportunity to change our furniture. Our 1990s mock Georgian table and chairs were almost on their way to auction, but taking inspiration from *Your Home*, I decided to upcycle them. I first sanded them, then painted them in Neptune 'French Grey' paint and lime waxed the table top. I also reupholstered the chairs, all for under £95. We love it and it has given us the motivation to try other projects.

Nick Edwards, Manchester

A *Your Home* says We're so glad you didn't put this dining set up for auction, Nick. It just goes to show that with a little imagination and elbow grease, unloved furniture can be transformed into something you'll love for years to come. Well done!



YOUR HOME NEEDS YOU!

We love to hear what you've been up to, so send us your letters, tips and photos and you could win up to £120 of WallpaperDirect vouchers.



Laura ✕ Editorial Assistant

LETTER OF THE MONTH

I saw the Furniture Facelift in the June issue of *Your Home* and thought what a fantastic idea it was to make a bed into a bench! Our son had moved into his first home



so we decided to make it as a surprise for him and his girlfriend. We used my son's old single bed and I made a foam bench cushion using this quirky printed fabric. Thanks for all the ideas, we will keep reading to get more inspiration to upcycle more things for their house and get some space back in our loft too!

Shirley, via email

Your Home says Wow! Here at *Your Home* we love it when our readers have a go at making any of our projects, and this bench looks like it was a complete success, Shirley! We're sure your son is looking forward to your next idea and his next piece of beautiful furniture.

Shirley's letter won £120 of WallpaperDirect vouchers. Send us your views, thoughts and ideas and you could be next month's winner.

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Our Letter of the Month will win £120 of WallpaperDirect vouchers, plus every letter printed will receive a £20 WallpaperDirect voucher to be spent online. Call 01323 430886 or visit www.wallpaperdirect.com

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HOW TO... *organise your kitchen for Christmas*

Avoid any last-minute entertaining emergencies by getting your kitchen in order well before the guests start to arrive...

- ✓ A week or two before your guests arrive work out how many people you have coming and check that you have enough plates, bowls, glasses and cutlery, bearing in mind that you might not want to be washing up in between courses. Now is also a good time to check them over to make sure they are in good condition – nobody wants to eat off a chipped plate – and if anything is dusty or grubby give it a good clean to save doing it as you are dishing up.
- ✓ If you are roasting a whole turkey, simmering a ham joint or making a large batch of soup, make sure your existing pots, pans, tins and trays are the right size. You don't want to be squeezing a turkey into a too-small tin on Christmas morning, or mopping up spilt soup that's bubbled over in a tiny pan.
- ✓ The week before make sure your table linen is clean and ironed if needed. Check you have enough napkins, place mats and coasters while you are at it.
- ✓ There will inevitably be leftovers on Christmas Day, or when entertaining in the lead-up to the big day, so it's important you are able to store them properly to avoid waste. Empty out that cupboard jammed with mismatched plastic boxes, locate the lids and make sure they still fit tightly. Think about what might be left over and decide on whether you have enough, or need to purchase a couple of new items. Check your rolls of tin foil, clingfilm and greaseproof paper and stock up if needed. And don't forget to add freezer bags to your shopping list as an added back up!



Laura's choice...

'Freshen the air naturally around your home without nasty propellants and CFCs, with method's Air Refreshers, using pressurised air technology. Available

exclusively at Tesco, priced at £3.50, choose from fresh beach sage, fruity sweet tangerine, pretty wild poppy and relaxing French lavender, each releasing a natural and subtle scent without being over-powering and synthetic smelling.'



Q&A

My set of stainless steel cutlery has become tarnished, is there any way of giving it back its sparkle?

Stainless steel cutlery can over time develop streaks on the surface which is actually a build up of detergent that hasn't been rinsed away sufficiently. If you wash them in the dishwasher make sure you remove them as soon as possible when the wash has finished, and always give them a good rinse when washing by hand, ensuring you don't leave them to drain. To remove the stains try using a specific stainless steel cleaner, or use lemon juice to buff away the stain.

16-piece cutlery set, £15, Tesco



What to look out for **THIS MONTH**

▼ Use this large 1.6l mixing bowl for mixing up batters for your Christmas cakes and puddings, or for preparing the stuffing or side dishes on Christmas morning. The colourful base, available in a festive red, or stylish pastel mint, is heat resistant up to 220°C/448°F, and the graduation marks inside are helpful for measuring or for taking note of when ingredients have increased in size when whisking.

Mixing bowl 1.6l, £19.75, Brabantia

► For speedy marinades, sauces and dressings use the Mastrad Qwik whisk. With handy measurements running up the side, you can measure and whisk all in one go, then pop it in the fridge until needed.

Mastrad Qwik whisk, £20, John Lewis



Digital thermometer, £15.50; Poultry lifter, £10, both OXO



▲ Making sure the turkey is cooked through is a difficult task, especially when it's large enough to feed a very hungry crowd. Leave no room for doubt by using OXO's digital instant read thermometer to measure the internal cooking temperature. Getting the turkey out of the roasting tin can also be an awkward moment – make it easier with this poultry lifter, which will allow you to drain juices from the turkey with ease and lift it swiftly onto the carving board.

Great buy...

Surprise cakes and hidden centres are the latest craze in the baking world, and thanks to Nordic Ware creating this trick has become a whole lot easier. The Piñata cake pan, available for £19.99 from Lakeland, allows you to bake a round cake with a hollow inside, to fill with sweets for a dramatic surprise when you cut a slice out of the finished cake. The round shape makes the perfect festive figgy pudding, but this pan is not just for Christmas. Use it all year round to create apples or footballs for birthdays, or pumpkins and eyeballs for Hallowe'en.



We test... cleaning pastes

We tested a selection of cleaning pastes, here's what we found...

THINGS WE CONSIDERED

- Could it be used for a multitude of tasks?
- How well did it clean?
- Did it leave behind a residue?

ASTONISH PRO CLEANING PASTE, £3.99

With a pleasant smell and a good consistency, this paste worked well on a multitude of tasks around the home, including a greasy cooker hood and grime around taps. It contains essential oils of tea tree and eucalyptus, and left behind a slight coating which was effective in repelling water. The sponge included wasn't the best quality and didn't last very long, but could easily be replaced with another once it wears out.



7/10

DR. BECKMANN POWER CLEANER, £4.09

This tough, multi-purpose paste had a scent reminiscent of fresh laundry, and came with its own sponge. The consistency was quite firm, so it was a little tricky to get a decent amount on the sponge, but it did work well for a variety of cleaning tasks, and was especially effective on grubby grout and limescale around taps. It left behind a water-repellent finish, which was really handy for use around sinks and taps, and it could also be useful for outside jobs such as alloy wheels and muddy trainers.



7 1/10

DOKTOR POWER MULTI-PURPOSE CLEANER, £4.99, JML

This all-purpose cleaner made light work of everything we tried it on – from mucky oven doors to limescale-covered taps and a stained kitchen draining board. The product was solid in the container but once the wet sponge, which is included, was applied it soon softened up and created a good amount of cleaning foam. It had a fresh, pleasant citrus scent and didn't feel too harsh on our hands – and is environmentally friendly too, which is another bonus.



9 1/10

BIO-MEX, £9.99, LAKELAND

A little goes a long way with this cleaner so is well worth the price. It comes as a hard block which you use with the included wet sponge. It took a while to get a good amount on the sponge at first but soon started to foam. It worked well on tasks around the kitchen such as cleaning a greasy hob, and left a uPVC door gleaming white – although some elbow grease was needed for sticky marks. It had quite a strong citrus smell which was fresh, and left behind a white residue which wiped away easily.



8 1/10

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QUALITY FEATURES – RANGE OF 29 KITCHENS – 220 SHOWROOMS

Consumer NEWS

Stay on top of the latest issues and hot topics with our monthly round-up of news

Make savings in your local area



With Christmas and all the expense that surrounds it on the horizon, saving money at this time of year is always welcome. Amazon Local is a handy resource that can help you find great offers that are currently available in your area as well as nationwide. Existing Amazon customers can browse local deals using their existing account, or you can subscribe to be kept up-to-date on all the latest offers at www.amazonlocal.co.uk.

Offer categories include Health & Beauty, Shopping & Services, Entertainment & Travel and Restaurants, Bars & Pubs, and you can tailor your account so you only receive information on the areas that specifically interest you.



WHAT WOULD YOU SAVE IN A FIRE?

A new survey by specialist insurer, Ecclesiastical, asked what items would be saved in the event of their home being struck by a disaster, such as a fire or flood, assuming that family members and pets were safe. Interestingly the results showed a clear division between the sexes when it came to priorities, with 27% of women opting to save photographs, compared to only 11% of men. While men were more inclined to rescue more practical items, with 24% saving important documents and 22% salvaging technology, such as laptops and phones. Ecclesiastical's advice is to discuss what items are important to take with you in an emergency, and ideally create a list of all items to be given priority and assign responsibility for specific items to individuals. Also for insurance purposes, take photographs of valuable items and keep a copy of their valuation elsewhere, such as a relative's home.



Clear the clutter

According to a recent study by Music Magpie, clutter is taking over our homes. So much so that just under half claimed that the amount of clutter meant there wasn't enough space for the things they actually needed. As well as causing a lack of space, clutter can also have a detrimental effect on whether property will sell, as George Frank from Douglas & Gordon explains, 'Knick-knacks, overflowing drawers and piles of books may represent a life well lived, but they also make properties appear highly personalised and impede buyers from imagining themselves living there.' Not only will having a good clear out free up space and help you sell your home, but it can also make you money, when selling unwanted CDs, DVDs on websites such as Music Magpie.

SOCIAL LIFE

New furniture brand Heart of House, available at Argos, recently conducted a survey using social media to gain an insight into how we really use our homes in 2014. The results show technology is having a very real impact on the way we furnish our homes. With 38% saying they no longer used a TV cabinet, preferring instead to use wall-mounted brackets to house their modern flat screens. Desks are being rejected in favour of using laptops on cushions on our laps. While e-readers and tablets are threatening the bookshelf's place in our homes, with more of us favouring e-books over the real deal, therefore negating the need for somewhere to store bulky books. And with lack of space an increasingly common scenario in modern properties we're also seeing furniture being given multi-functional uses, such as the kitchen table doubling up as a home office.



Unexpected charges sneaking up on you?

If you've ever unintentionally slipped into an unauthorised overdraft you're likely to be familiar with the added, and often unexpected, expense this can incur. As part of their 'stop sneaky fees and charges' campaign Which? is calling on banks to bring some clarity on the cost of unauthorised overdrafts and for banks to allow customers to opt in or out of unauthorised overdrafts. This comes as their research reveals around 2.5 million people say they've used an unauthorised overdraft in the last year, with one in seven saying they've even considered taking a payday loan due to worry about overdraft charges. To find out more about the 'stop sneaky fees and charges campaign' and to pledge your support visit the website at www.which.co.uk/campaigns/insurance-bank-card-fees.

Consumer news... **IN FOCUS**

Whether you're saving up for a deposit on a house or car here's how to make your money go further

The best way to save up for a big purchase is to budget wisely and make sure you have the best savings account for all that spare cash. Take time to assess your finances and you'll soon be splashing out...

Make a budget

Sit down with a cuppa and go through all your bank statements and bills to see what you could cut back on:

- ✓ The first thing to check is whether you are spending more than you earn. You can't save up for something if you are already in debt and overspending, so check every outgoing in detail.
- ✓ Make a list of all the essentials such as mortgage or rent, bills, food and so on, then cancel anything you don't need or want.
- ✓ You may be able to save on some of the essentials by looking at alternative solutions. This could include switching your supermarket, reducing childcare costs and moving energy suppliers and phone tariffs.
- ✓ Compromises could include swapping Sky for Freeview, holidaying in the UK or at home for a year or two and no more takeaways or meals out for a while.
- ✓ Even things like cutting back on that daily latte, cycling to work and taking a packed lunch could save you hundreds of pounds over the year.

Q Is it a good idea to use my credit card to pay for the holiday of a lifetime?
Hannah Smith, Oxford

A Yes, if you know you can afford the monthly payments. A credit card enables you to spread the cost over a number of months and if you choose the right card, you won't have to pay any interest either. Visit a website such as www.moneysupermarket.com to compare current deals.

RAISING EXTRA CASH

Once you've made a budget of all your essential outgoings, consider ways to earn extra money:

- Have a good clear out and sell items such as clothes, books, DVDs and CDs online with eBay or Gumtree.
- Music Magpie will give you an instant price for your CDs. Simply enter the barcode via the website and then send by courier or post, for free – you'll get paid by bank transfer or cheque.
- Take unwanted items to a car boot sale or have a yard sale.



The piggybanking technique

Martin Lewis from Money Saving Expert has a tried-and-trusted technique to help you take control of your spending:

- ✓ **Select your main categories of spending.** You need to balance the books so work out how much you can spend on different areas of your life.
- ✓ **Use different bank accounts for these different purposes.** Put money into each one, spreading it around depending on what it's going to be used for. At the very least, there should be a main bank account and a separate one for bills. If you're self-employed, make sure you have a tax account too. It's also a good idea to have a separate account for emergencies and one for that big purchase.
- ✓ **Set up standing orders from your main account** to move the right amount of money into the other accounts every month. It's best to do this a couple of days after payday to ensure there are no payment problems.

Top tip

If you need help with serious debt to get you started, there are free non-profit agencies that you can turn to such as Citizens Advice, StepChange Debt Charity or National Debtline. The sooner you seek help, the better.

Savings accounts

Do your research to choose the best account for your money:

- A second current account is ideal for paying bills via direct debit. Make sure it doesn't require a minimum pay-in though.
- Other accounts should be savings accounts, where you can earn good interest, or a cash ISA with tax-free interest.

Extra ways to save up

Try more long-term ways to make extra cash:

- Ask for overtime at work.
- Take on a second job, utilising a skill you can share with others, such as special occasion cakes.
- Make money from a spare room with a lodger.
- Rent out the garage if you never use it.
- Offer your babysitting, pet-sitting or dog-walking services to family and friends.

Useful contacts

- For budgeting tools try www.adviceguide.org.uk and www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk
- Compare the latest savings accounts at www.moneysavingexpert.com
- Sell unwanted items via www.ebay.com, www.gumtree.com or www.musicmagpie.co.uk
- Find free debt advice at www.stepchange.org and www.nationaldebtline.org

Decorating

Add a touch of glamour to your home with metallics



Feature Laura McLeish



Say it with flowers

There's nothing quite like brightening up your home with fresh flowers, especially at Christmas time. This year, treat yourself to a subscription from flower delivery service, Bloom & Wild. Unlike other florists, Bloom & Wild carefully pack your flowers into a box that will easily fit through a standard letterbox, meaning you're free to go out and finish off your Christmas shopping, knowing they'll be waiting for you when you get back. Single bouquets start from £13.95 and three-month subscriptions start from £40, so visit www.bloomandwild.com to order yours.



Learn from the best

Sure to be at the top of every aspiring interior designer's Christmas list, Julia Brendel's interiors and craft workshops are a chance to learn a new skill and start making your dream home décor a reality. Luxury textile designer Julia runs the workshops in her home studio in Kent, teaching alongside other experts who have a wealth of experience and knowledge. Choose from half or full-day courses including lampshade making, Roman blind making and an interior design workshop where you'll learn the tricks of the trade and put together your very own design scheme for your dream master bedroom. Half-day courses cost £65 and full day courses cost £125, including lunch. Visit www.juliabrendel.com for more information.

Your Home readers can receive 10% discount on any of Julia's workshops. Simply visit www.juliabrendel.com or call 01795 599840 and quote the code JBLWR before 31st December 2014.

Reader
offer



Trend watch: *A neon Noël*

Shake up your Christmas décor this year with a trend that can't help but stand out from the crowd. We're talking tangerine orange, lime green and hot pink, all teamed with lots of glitter. Use whichever and however many colours you like, but be sure to choose bright shades which all complement each other. For maximum impact, choose plain and unfussy decorations such as matt baubles and colour-block crackers to really make this trend pop. You can add that all important Christmas sparkle with glittery stars, sequins and metallic ribbons on everything from your tree to your staircase. This is definitely a trend you can have fun with, so look out for quirky decorations and accessories to complete the look – Paperchase and Habitat have both got some really unique and eccentric bits, so be brave and embrace a bit of colour craziness this year.

6ft natural wood tree, £150; **pink flamingo**, £10; **silver tree star topper**, £2.50; **decorations**, from £2.50, all Paperchase

Make your Christmas scent-sational

Scented candles are the perfect addition to any interior. They provide a warm glow of light that makes everything seem extra cosy and fill the air with a gorgeous scent – just what you need to unwind over the festive period. We're hoping our stockings will be filled with these beautifully-packaged candles from The Country Candle Company's Winter Warmer collection. The range includes three indulgent scents: delectable Gingerbread, fresh Ice Hotel and warming Red Amber and Clove, all available in Vogue jars, £15.99, fragrance tins, £8.50 and reed diffusers, £14.99.

Candles and reed diffusers, from £8.50, www.thecountrycandlecompany.com



CHECK OUT OUR NEW DECORATING PAGES AT WWW.YOURHOMEMAGAZINE.CO.UK

TREND ALERT... Midas touch

Add hints of gold, copper and bronze

Feature Laura Higgins Background wallpaper Yasmin Cream Gold wallpaper, £79 per roll, Eijffinger at Wallpaperdirect.com



Whether you're in love with old Hollywood glamour, or fancy something sleeker and more contemporary, the one thing that you are sure to achieve with a metallic scheme is sheer decadence. You can take inspiration from the Art Deco era, lavish animal prints, or modern geometric design – it's the colour scheme that is key. Team jewel tones and deep darks with lustrous golds in antique and rose shades, as well as coppers and bronze. Black, charcoal, midnight blue and

rich purple all combine beautifully with these shimmering shades to really illuminate your décor.

Choose opulent textures and layer with bold prints and shapes. Go for plush materials such as velvet for a sumptuous feel, with clever lighting to really make the metallics glisten and bounce the light around the room...

Laura

Acting Deputy Editor



Have fun combining different textures and details

Gold bobble frame, £19, Littlewoods

Create a collection of decorative gold frames displaying gorgeous black and white photos

Decorative baroque frame, £12; Diamanté bronze frame, £6, both Tesco



Black and gold will create a chic scheme for your Christmas decs

Gold geometric stag head, £20; Gold and black candle holders, £8 each; Tortoiseshell tealight holder, £6; Gold and black crackers, £7 for 6; Giant gold baubles, £5 for three; 7ft Luxury Regency fir tree, £60; Leopard print glass bauble, £3.50; Black and gold glass jester decoration, £3.50; Gold sequin bow decoration, £1.50, all Tesco



These gorgeous bon bon jars will add interest

Tall mercury glass bon bon jar, £55; Small mercury glass bon bon jar, £29.50; both M&S

Choose faceted detail for a more contemporary look

Geo table lamp, £29, Very



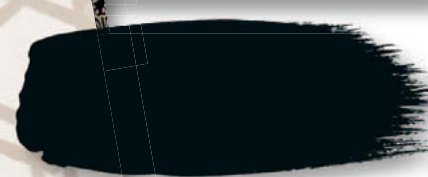
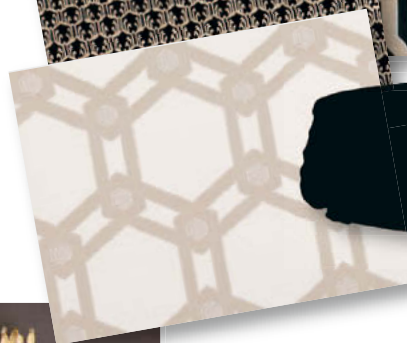


Choose eye-catching pieces to pep-up plain walls

Sunburst metal wall art, £95, Littlewoods

Soften this look by using dark grey, rather than black on the walls

Chartwell large sofa chenille in nutmeg, £799; Lantau round black side table, £39; Savoy mirror copper glass occasional table, £99; Soft shaggy black rug, £20; Mercury glass small gold filled candle, £5; Tortoiseshell-effect tealight holder, £4; Ceramic ribbed bronze vase, £12; Bronze and silver ombre metallic vase, £15; Worthington gold mirror, £80; Gold foil brown cushion, £10; Beaded cushion, £14; Tiger stripe cut velvet cushion, £14; Leopard tapestry cushion, £16, all Tesco Direct



Clockwise from top left: **Sumptuous Pashmina carpet**, £32.99 per sq m, Carpetright. **F0649/02 Palais in Charcoal** from Salon collection, £49 per m; **F0683/02 Vendome in Noir** from Salon collection, £41 per m, both Clarke & Clarke. **Jack Black (119) Absolute matt emulsion**, £35 per 2.5l, Little Greene. **W535/01 Claremont Lustre Wallpaper**, £43 per roll, Villa Nova. **F0677/03 Honore in Noir** from Salon collection, £41 per m, Clarke & Clarke

Key things to consider...

- Look out for wallpapers with a soft shimmer. They will add a subtle glow to your scheme as well as reflecting light which will make your room appear to be larger.
- If your room is on the small side avoid using a dark colour on all four walls – instead use as an accent colour in a wallpaper, or opt for a feature wall and combine with a wallpaper that has a subtle pattern.
- If you find black a little daunting use softer charcoal on the larger spaces, or soften it further by using a rich midnight blue or deep, opulent purple.





For a really glamorous look add a few Art Deco elements

Clara medium sofa, £1,715; embroidered cushions, from £45; Black mock crock storage boxes, £85 for set of three; Gold stripe bulb vase, £30; Speckled amber jar, £25; Marlene sideboard, £2,359; Striped monochrome vases: small, £45, large, £55; Logo shade table lamp, £125, all Biba Home at House of Fraser

Flickering candlelight will create a cosy atmosphere

Ombre hurricane case, £20, Bhs



Bring this trend to the dining table with a combination of gold and opulent deep jewel colours

Plates, from £3.99; baubles, £2.99, all Homesense



Clockwise from top left: **San Francisco Charcoal carpet**, £29.99 per sq m, Carpetright. **F0679/04 Maroc in Noir from Salon collection**, £45 per m, Clarke & Clarke. **2088/41 Heavenly Raven; 2088/02 Heavenly Corn**, both £60 per metre, both Villa Nova. **Scree (227) Absolute matt emulsion**, £35 per 2.5l, Little Greene. **Yasmin Cream Gold wallpaper**, £79 per roll, Eijffinger at Wallpaperdirect.com



This super-stylish chandelier will suit a sleek, modern scheme

Draping chain chandelier, £199, M&S

EXPERT TIPS

'Think old school Hollywood glamour, mixing black, copper and golds with striking graphics and rich textures for a subtle decadent look in your home this season. Layer a mixture of fabrics with metallic frames and vases to ensure that the look doesn't become too dark but remains moody and opulent.'

Steven Rowe, Head of Design at Tesco



Give your bathroom an instant update with some gold accessories

Cracked gold glass dispenser, £8; glass tumbler, £5; glass bin, £18, all George Home

Sequin detailing will give armchairs and sofas a glitzy look

Bronze sequin cushion, £18, Bhs



Animal prints lend themselves to this luxurious trend, but keep it subdued with subtle prints

Canton black double headboard, £199; Keswick three-drawer bedside chest, £149; Leopard/Python print double duvet set, £15; Tiger stripe cut velvet cushion, £14; Faux fur brown cushion, £12; Gold foil brown cushion, £10; Beaded cushion, £14; Ceramic ribbed bronze vase, £12; Tortoiseshell-effect tealight holder, £4; Canton ottoman, £129, all Tesco Direct



Metallic mirrors

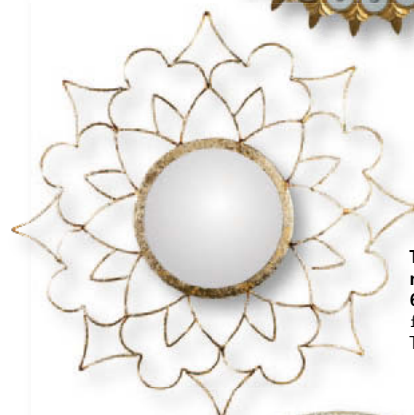
Be dazzled every time you look in the mirror



Trevose mirror 84cm, £125, Littlewoods



Trebbia large wall mirror 113cm, £345, Pierrot et Coco



Tangier mirror 64cm, £16.99, The Range

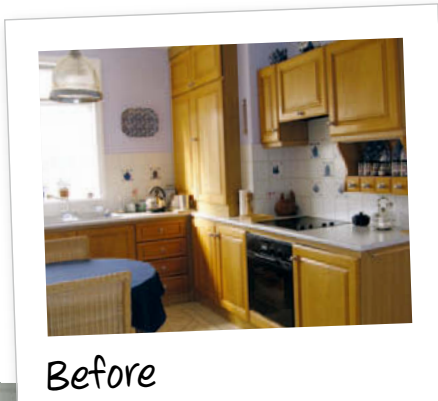


Marrakesh mirror 99cm, £279, Fishpools



Helios gilt sunburst mirror 91cm, £155, Pierrot et Coco

'We chose to revamp rather than replace'



Louise Hanson transformed her tired, dated kitchen-diner without any mess or fuss and for a fraction of the cost of buying new

When Louise Hanson, first viewed the three-bedroom house in North Wales, she shares with husband Pete, and son Ben, she was instantly drawn to the large kitchen-diner. 'The previous owner had installed it 20 years ago, but despite its age, the oak units were in great condition, plus the traditional layout and generous storage were perfect for a busy family – so it seemed a shame to rip it out, especially as we couldn't afford to fit a kitchen of similar quality,' explains Louise. However, just three years on, and the inherited kitchen was beginning to show signs of wear and tear. 'The cooker, sink and laminate worktop had definitely seen better days, and although the units remained pristine, I must admit I found the dark and outdated timber finish quite oppressive,' says Louise. The challenge, for the couple, was how to create a modern airy space on a strict budget.

STEP ONE Keen to retain the units and avoid the expense and disruption a new kitchen brings, Louise initially suggested they simply paint them. However, worried that their painting skills were not up to the job, the couple began researching alternatives and were delighted to discover a local company specialising in re-spraying units. 'After a few home visits, plus a myriad of samples, we settled on a colour combination of soft grey and off-white,' recalls Louise. And with all doors off-site for re-painting, the couple set about dismantling some unwanted cupboards above the hob. 'I found being totally surrounded by wall units quite claustrophobic, and I'm pleased to say their removal instantly helped open up the room,' says Louise, 'however it did result in some problematic damaged tiling!'

STEP TWO To further conserve funds the couple had wanted to keep both flooring and tiles, and while a quick scour of the garage resulted in a few replacement tiles,

there were not enough to make good the damaged area. Unsure as to the solution the couple turned their attention to replacing the hob, oven and sink, and cleverly sourced models that would simply slot into the existing spaces. Louise also took the opportunity to refresh the walls with a space-enhancing pale grey and begin sourcing worktops. 'I wanted to invest the money saved in a sleek granite surface, but Pete was concerned that any new worktop would mean more damage to the tiling, so when a friend suggested Granite Transformations it seemed the ideal compromise,' says Louise, 'as rather than remove the existing worktop they simply cover it, plus they also suggested a matching splashback for the hob area.' With the worktops on order, the remainder of the units were then sprayed in-situ and the doors re-hung. 'This took a few of days due to our choice of two colours, and the masking >



Total Cost
£6,534

Louise saved thousands by simply updating her kitchen units, while a calming colour palette ensures her now airy kitchen-diner is the ideal setting for family meals. Louise teamed her recycled table and chairs with a colourful quirky stool, that can be tucked neatly away to allow unhindered access to the oven

Good idea!

A coat of paint can instantly transform dated kitchen units – Louise opted for a professional spray-painted finish to ensure a high-quality, hard-wearing result.

Good idea!

An inexpensive painted chalkboard makes a great splashback – apply directly to smooth plaster or, like Louise, paint a sheet of MDF, cut-to-size, in order to hide unsightly surfaces or tired tiles.

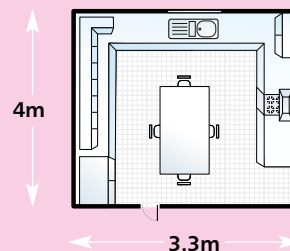


◁ required, but the finish is excellent and has proved very hard-wearing,' smiles Louise. The new engineered worktops and splashback also proved equally successful, and took just a day to complete, without any mess or damage. 'Everyone comments on how fantastic they look, and I love the fact that they are made from recycled materials,' says Louise.

STEP THREE An avid recycler, Louise then replaced some of the motif tiles on the remaining walls with plain tiles salvaged from the garage, while the rest were covered with a smart MDF blackboard. 'I got the idea when reading a restaurant menu board, and although

Pete was sceptical, he now uses it more than me,' laughs Louise. She also dug out an old dining table stowed in a shed, and a set of kitchen chairs, donated by her mother, was given a quick facelift and teamed with a retro stool. Finally a trip to the high street resulted in some useful open storage and shelving, while a made-to-measure blind added a welcome splash of colour and pattern. And now that it's complete, Louise cannot believe the difference – 'the room not only feels, bright and spacious, but off-setting expensive items against some serious cost-cutting, meant I got the kitchen I wanted without breaking the bank!' **YH**

ROOMPLAN



THE DETAILS

Kitchen re-spray	£1,200
Worktops & splashback	£3,700
Appliances	£688
Sink and tap	£638
Paint	£24.79
Blind	£132
Chalkboard	£22.29
Storage	£59.95
Stool	£69
TOTAL	£6,534.03

Shopping list

Kitchen units professionally re-sprayed in any RAL colour (colours used 9003 and 7042), prices start from £399, Revitalise. **Cristallino White worktop and splashback**, from £385 per sq m, Granite Transformations. **SEB600MFS built-in stainless steel oven**, £289; **SEH600ITC induction hob**, £399, both Stoves. **Java 210 double granite sink in Polar white**, £479; **Alba two lever chrome mixer tap**, £159, both Carron Phoenix. **Handy shelves**, from £9.98 each; **mdf sheet**, £9.29; **Rust-Oleum blackboard paint**, £13 per 750ml, all B&Q. **Pimlico roller blind in Emerge**, from £78 for a 61cm x 61cm blind, The Fabric Box. **Metal retro stool**, £69, An Angel At My Table. **Skovel clock**, £30, Ikea. **Metal storage unit**, £34.99, Homesense. Walls painted in: **Classical White matt emulsion**, £24.79 per 2.5l, Leyland Trade.

3 of the best... kitchen clocks

£12 from Asda

The Jones Teapot clock in duck egg is a cute addition to a busy family kitchen and will suit a traditional farmhouse-style down to a tee.

£24 from Ellie Ellie

This simple wall clock in cream has a stylish, retro look which would suit contemporary, and more traditional kitchens alike.

£35 from Cath Kidston

For a quirky choice the London kitchen clock is a fun design with its picture of Big Ben as well as a London black cab and an iconic red bus.



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KITCHEN MAKEOVER

Total Cost
£9,176



Removing an internal wall and swapping the kitchen and dining area around has transformed Myesha's home. The kitchen is now flooded with light and colour

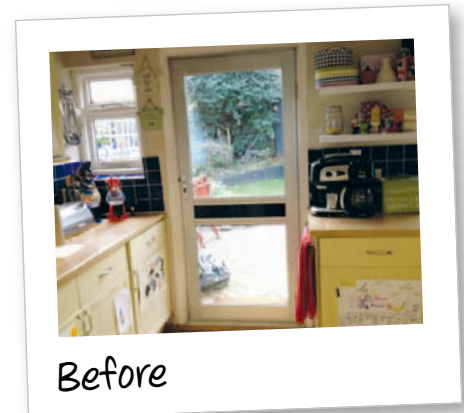
The sun shines in here all year round

Myesha swapped her kitchen and dining area around to make the most of the light and space

Myesha Abel, a fashion stylist, couldn't wait to get started on the kitchen in her three-bedroom Victorian house in South Woodford, East London. After moving in eight years ago, with her partner Pete, life took over and the dark and cramped kitchen was at the bottom of the list of jobs to get on with. As a working mum, with two children, Isaac, eight, and Amelia, five, time and money was tight so Myesha put up with her small kitchen. 'I had to have the light on during most of the daytime, but the time had come and we were ready for some kitchen DIY.'

STEP ONE It made sense to knock down the interior wall between the old kitchen and dining room to make it more open-plan. Myesha wanted to be able to open her house up to make a larger area to cook and eat with the family. It was important to add as much light as possible too. 'Making my new kitchen as bright and light as possible was number one on my list. I was sick of cooking without enough daylight.' With the wall removed and a bigger space to play with, Myesha and Pete decided to move the kitchen to the back of the room leaving space for the dining table nearest to the garden. 'We love the garden and spending time outside in the summer months, so we invested in some folding doors which really open up the space to the garden, and bring in plenty of natural light too. Myesha, loves the mid-century look and being a fan of Orla Kiely's retro prints, chose some of her wallpaper in a Mimosa yellow to give her kitchen the 'wow' factor.

STEP TWO Myesha and Pete had set their sights on white gloss units to add even more light. 'We went along to Howdens in Chingford to look at the different ranges and I immediately knew the integrated handle kitchen in gloss white would be perfect.' The helpful advisor, Andrew, spent time designing the layout and worked with Myesha to make the most out of the space. She wanted to incorporate some open shelving to display her vintage crockery, but she also asked for a whole bank of floor-to-ceiling units on the other side, to house the fridge-freezer,



Before

✦ Pete made use out of the opposite wall and built in a bank of units to house the appliances, giving the room a streamlined finish



✦ Myesha is thrilled with her vintage find on eBay. The G-Plan sideboard fits perfectly into the dining area adding to the retro feel, and stores all her vintage crockery

✦ The chrome tap adds a modern touch and is combined with a stainless steel, undermount sink to give the worktop a clean finish



Good idea!

Open shelving adds personality to your kitchen giving space for all your crockery to be displayed.

oven and the pull-out larder cupboards. The white gloss units were teamed with a walnut worktop and wooden shelves above to give the kitchen a more rustic, homely feel. As a builder, Pete was keen to do all the work himself, saving them hundreds of pounds, ▸

➔ White glossy, handleless kitchen units add a modern touch and the walnut worktop creates a warm and homely feel. The yellow painted walls brighten up the whole space and co-ordinate with the Orla Kiely wallpaper



★ The Howdens kitchen has been designed to meet Myesha's storage needs. Shallow and deep drawers keep all of her kitchen bits and bobs well organised

◁ and also it meant they could adjust the design to their needs. The kitchen walls were painted yellow to match up with the Orla Kiely wallpaper, continuing the colour scheme throughout the space and bringing out the warm tones in the wood.

STEP THREE Myesha searched online for a mid-century sideboard and found an original G Plan design on eBay for just £80. 'It was exactly what I was looking for and came from the seller's grandmother so it comes with a history which I love.' Myesha then bought a white table and a set

Good idea!
Carefully consider the layout of your kitchen and re-locate it to make the most of your space. Knocking down an internal wall has flooded this kitchen with light and choosing white glossy units has made it feel much brighter too.

of Eames-inspired chairs in different colours. A large mirror above the sideboard reflects all the light back into the room and low pendant lights mark out the dining area from the kitchen too. 'Swapping round the dining and kitchen area has worked really well. I love the yellow and wood together – it's so warm and sunny all year round and now I just can't stop cooking!' **YH**

3 of the best... retro-style tableware

£7.50 from Cotswold Trading

The cute collection of Magpie Birdy glass tumblers will give your table a 1950s feel, especially this blue tit design with mustard yellow and teal blue.

£8 from Berry Red

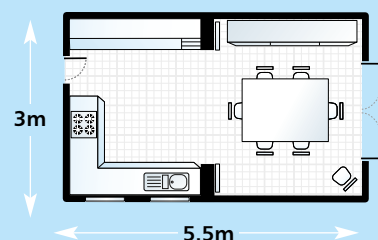
Orla Kiely's iconic prints are perfect for a mid-century modern scheme. This Giant Pear melamine side plate is family-friendly too.

£30 from Hunkydory Home

The festive Retro Fairy Lights bone china teapot is perfect for Christmas morning, with matching tea cups also available.



ROOMPLAN



THE DETAILS

Wallpaper and paint	£360
Units & worktop	£5,360
Sink & taps	£510
Worktop	£560
Appliances	£1,633
Table & chairs	£753
TOTAL	£9,176

Shopping list

Kinsei Metal teardrop pendant, £39.98; Dulux Kitchen+ matt paint in Honey Mustard, £24 for 2.5l, both B&Q. Linear Stem 110400 wallpaper from Orla Kiely House collection, £52 per roll, Harlequin. Gloss white integrated handle kitchen, £195 per 600mm base unit; Garda swan neck tap, £270; undermount sink, £240; Lamona wine cooler, £560, all Howdens. Apollo Modena Vertical radiator, £288, Inspired Heating. Neff 5 burner 70cm gas hob, £296.86; stainless steel back panel, £155; Neff 90cm chimney hood, £249.45; Neff electric double oven, £618.19; Neff microwave, £468.50, all Appliance World. Walnut worktop, £560, Worktop Express. Azure 24cm cast-iron casserole, £93; Heritage Pavilion Accent mug, £12.50, both Denby. 30L white pedal bin, £65, Brabantia. Pluto wall clock, £120, Newgate. Opula matt white jug kettle, £52.99; Opula 4-slice matt white toaster, £40, both Breville. Anika rectangular table, £399, (For similar try Says Who for John Lewis Why Wood dining extending table, £699); Pure Evoke Mio Buttercup print by Orla Kiely radio, £149.95, both John Lewis. Eames DSW style chair in Yellow, Teal, and Warm Grey, £59 each, all Cult Furniture. Offentlig tray, £8; Stockholm mirror, £60; Nyfors work lamp, £40; Stockholm green vase, £32; Stockholm serving walnut bowls, from £6, all Ikea. Retro clip-top bottle, £9.95; Retro tumblers, £4.95 each; Enamel style mugs, £5.95 each, all DRH Collection. Imprima Scallop embossed storage jars, from £11.99 each, Typhoon. Prestige Tri-fold doors, £2,299, Vufold. Similar cow hide rug, from £149, Cow Hide Rugs.

WHITE NORDIC WONDERLAND



**120 LED
Snowy Tree**

H.200cm
Code:543331

£59.99



**A White Jewelled Glitter
Droplet Bauble**
7.5 x 16cm · Code:815053 · **£1.59**

B White Beaded Acorn
7 x 10cm · Code:814934 · **£1.19**

C White Glitter Owl
10 x 9cm · Code:811116 · **£1.19**

D Ice White Glitter Bauble
Dia.8cm · Code:814935 · **£1.19**

**'I'M DREAMING
OF A WHITE
CHRISTMAS,
JUST LIKE
THE ONES
I USED
TO KNOW!'**

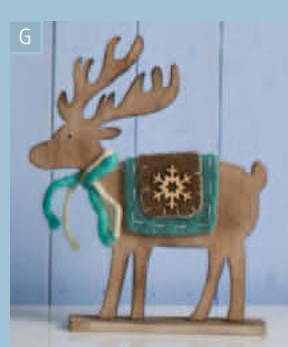


**OUR GLASS BAUBLES
ARE HANDMADE
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E Ice Blue Frosted Bauble
Dia.8cm · Code:814915 · **£1.19**

F Hanging Ice Blue Deer
Dia.8cm · Code:796274 · **£1.19**
Also available as Stag/Bird

**G Standing Reindeer
with Fabric Cover**
23 x 29.5cm
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Total Cost
£9,961



We've tripled the size of our kitchen

Anna Wlodarczyk-Lebioda decided drastic action was necessary to create the kitchen of her dreams

Anna Wlodarczyk-Lebioda, 32, wanted to find a house in Kingston, with her husband Tomasz, 35, and their two sons, Fryderyk, three, and Ludwik, two. Keen DIY-ers, Anna and Tomasz were keen to put their own stamp on a house, as long as the location was right. After months of looking Anna finally found what she was looking for. 'My husband owns his own loft conversion and home extension business so we were up for

a bit of a building project and this house was perfect for us, says Anna. The old kitchen was tiny but Anna and Tomasz could instantly see the potential and discussed how they could maximise the space making a more practical home for them and their sons. They agreed that extending the back of the house to create an open-plan kitchen diner was the best idea and Anna got to work thinking about a new look for their kitchen.



Before

STEP ONE Building work started immediately after Anna and Tomasz bought their house. 'It wasn't just the kitchen, we made alterations on every floor. We had to move out for three months

Good idea!

If you have the space, choose a central island to give your kitchen double the storage space and lots more work surface space. It offers a more sociable layout allowing you to cook and watch the children too.

✦ Anna's house was extended back into the garden, the full width of the house, giving her three times the space for an open-plan kitchen, which is perfect for her young family

✦ Being able to cook while watching her two boys play and eat at the table makes all the difference to Anna, who couldn't even squeeze a tiny table into her old kitchen

because we had a loft extension too and the dust and dirt everywhere was too much. The house was full of tradesmen and I was six months pregnant at the time so I was pleased to get out of the way.' Tomasz drew up some plans of the extension so they could start thinking about the kitchen's design. 'This was my opportunity to design a kitchen from scratch – I was so excited. We wanted a central island to extend our work surfaces and to increase the storage options.' Once they decided on a run of units on one side with a central island, they were able to think about colours and materials. Tomasz had built a kitchen or two before so he suggested he build the main kitchen from low-cost carcasses then choose the doors separately, giving it a designer look but for less. 'I wanted a practical door colour so I wouldn't be slaving away the whole time cleaning up after the two boys,' Anna explains. Anna and Tomasz wanted to have something in between modern and traditional, so in the end chose the Shaker-style doors in grey and teamed them with a modern white quartz worktop.

STEP TWO Fortunately Tomasz had some leftover flooring from an old job, which he had kept in storage for a few years. 'A while back, a good client was replacing his old floor with porcelain tiles and offered his old wooden flooring for free to Tomasz, which he then had to re-sand and re-varnish. It was a real saving and was perfect for the kitchen.' The kitchen was really taking shape as new bi-folding doors went in to fill the kitchen with light. Anna couldn't wait for the summer months so that she could fold back the doors onto the garden – great for the boys in warmer weather. Anna positioned her old table and chairs in the kitchen. 'It's made a huge difference to the way we live. I can now cook in the kitchen and watch the boys play at the table. Our old kitchen didn't have ►

✦ Anna asked Tomasz to locate the sink and taps in the central island so she could do the washing up while watching the boys. Anna found this stylish tap on eBay and loves its sculptural shape

✦ Tomasz made sure there was enough storage space – a far cry from their old kitchen. It's easy to keep the kitchen tidy and organised now there is a place for everything



Good idea!

Dark grey doors make a practical choice for a family with small children with sticky hands. Combine with a white gloss worktop to give the kitchen a fresh, modern feel.





Anna chose a black glass extractor hood and induction hob to give her kitchen the 'wow' factor. Mixing the traditional-style doors with modern appliances adds interest and style

Adding a red splash of colour brings the grey and white colour scheme to life and puts Anna in the festive mood, coming up to Christmas. Anna is thrilled there is now plenty of space for large family gatherings

Good idea!

Opt for a feature extractor hood in a contrasting colour to give your kitchen the 'wow' factor and an eye-catching focal point. Anna was able to search online for the best deals.

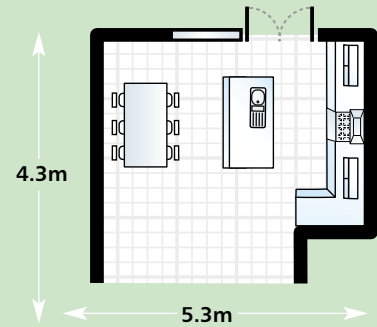
space even for a tiny table.' Anna chose grey roller blinds which make the kitchen cosier as well as offering some privacy.

STEP THREE Anna wanted to add a splash of colour to the grey and white kitchen and chose red to bring the whole scheme to life. 'I found a lovely red and white spotty tablecloth which is wipeable, that is really practical with young children. This kitchen is totally unrecognisable now. Having the extension has made the world of difference.



I'm so lucky Tomasz was able to do all the work so we saved hundreds of pounds. This kitchen really is the heart of our home now.'

ROOMPLAN



THE DETAILS

Paint	£40.99
Kitchen units & doors	£4,590
Sink & Taps	£330
Worktop	£2,850
Appliances	£2,150
TOTAL	£9,960.99

Shopping list

Cologne Shaker-style doors in Dakar finish, from £24.78 for a 570mm x 595mm door, Homestyle. Kitchen carcasses, from £48.99 for a 600mm base unit, Screwfix. Dulux Ultra white matt emulsion, £40.99 per 5l, Homebase. AEG black glass cooker hood, £640; Neff induction hob, £840; Franke sink, £250; AEG single oven, £670, all Molesey Refrigeration Centre. White Gloss QuarStone worktops, £2,850 (bought in sale, now discontinued. Similar available from Worktops London, from £3,500), Worktops London. Monobloc tap, £80, eBay. Dusk Grey roller blinds, £150, Blinds4UK. Colours red kettle, £34.99; Colours red two-slice toaster, £29.99, both Russell Hobbs. Allextion side plates, £1.74 each; Allextion dinner plates, £1.99 each; Allextion bowls, £1.74 each; clip storage jars, £2.49; red saucepan, £6.99; red colander, £3.99; red spotty cushion covers, £4.99, all Dunelm. Lialotta red spotty cloth, £7 per m; Bedarande grey wine glasses, £2.20 each; Iris tea towels, £2.75 for two, all Ikea. Alton wall clock, £35, Jones Clocks. Grey felt place mats, £6 for two; grey felt coasters, £3 for four; red and white bowls, £1.50 each, all Tesco. White window storage canisters, £8.25; Platinum storage canisters, £8.50, both Brabantia.

3 of the best... red kitchen accessories

£3 from Tesco

Enjoy your morning cuppa in this cheery red dipped mug – cute enough to leave a collection on display even when it's not in use.

£19.95 from La Cafetière

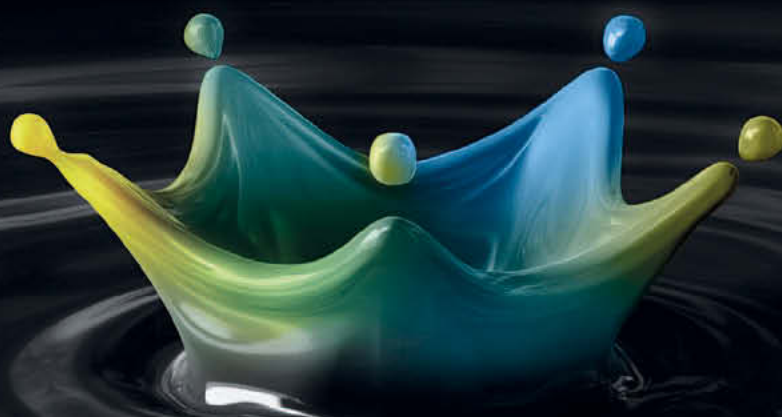
Show off your sophisticated side with this Classic Espresso three-cup stove-top pot. Also available in six and nine cup sizes – the perfect wake-up call.

£29.95 from Jangneus

Serve canapés or drinks from this stylish Scandinavian tray. The Red Dala tray measures 38cmDia and is made in Sweden from birch wood.



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Cosy up in time for Christmas

Dress your home ready for the festive season with a natural, rustic theme mixed with warm berry tones



Comfort and joy

It's that time of year again and so we've found some festive ideas to warm up your living room. Layer warm and soft textures in earthy and berry colours to bring some rustic charm this year. Give your room some cosy country charm using fir cones, woodland animal decorations and a touch of tartan. Transform the mantelpiece with a stunning seasonal flower arrangement, colourful bunting and fun stockings to create a festive focal point. Cosy up all the seating with fluffy sheepskin throws and squishy cushions featuring cute woodland creatures.

Highland woodland fir Christmas tree, 7ft, £150, John Lewis. **Bear cushion**, £12; **check cushion**, £16; **squirrel companion set**, £35; **Christmas bunting**, £10; **snowflake decoration**, £6 for nine; **wooden floor lamp**, £120; **moose stocking**, £10; **felt hearts**, £10 for three; **knitted red throw**, £35; **Versatile check Stirling charcoal and red drum**, £90; **reindeer cuddly toy**, £10, all Next. **Natural fox**, £19.99; **red baubles**, £6.99 for three; **white ceramic decorations**, £4.99, all Wyevale. **Warm grey sheepskin rugs** (used on chairs), £64.95 each, the Swedish Wooden Horse Company. **Flower arrangements**, iFlorist. **Wool check tub chair in Red Kite**, £149.99; **red star mini stocking**, £2.49; **tweed cushion** (on red chair), £12.99; **Woodland Retreat felt owl decorations**, £1.99 each; **tartan star and heart decorations**, £4.99 for eight; **wooden lantern with metal ring top**, £27.99; **natural chunky jute rug**, £99.99, all Dunelm. **Gold star tree topper**, **brown wrap**, **ribbons**, **tags**, **blank red cards**, **decorations**, from a selection at Hobbycraft. **Hessian ribbon**, £3.50; **large tags**, £4 for eight; **Christmas paper bags**, £3.50 for eight, both Talking Tables. **Bark heart candle holders**, from £6, Sainsbury's. **Irving Stripe pencil pleat ready-made curtains**, £57.50 per pair; **Olivia ivory overmantle mirror**, £210, both Laura Ashley

Winter warmer

Layer seating with sumptuous textures. Put your feet up and sink into a luxurious sheepskin, woolly throws and cushions. Adorn your walls with Christmas cards attached to ribbon, to add a further splash of colour. What better way to enjoy cold, winter evenings, than by sitting back and enjoying mince pies by the warm glow of a roaring log fire with plenty of flickering festive candles around the hearth.

Warm grey sheepskin rugs (used on chairs), £64.95 each, the Swedish Wooden Horse Company. **Versatile check Stirling charcoal and red drum**, £90; **wooden floor lamp**, £120; **moose stocking**, £10; **knitted red throw**, £35; **check cushion**, £16, all Next. **Wrap and decorations**, from a selection at Hobbycraft



It's a wrap

Spend an evening by the fire, making your presents look really special this year. Stick to natural brown and berry-coloured wrapping paper to continue the festive theme. Add a doily to create pattern and finish off with a contrasting ribbons and tags. Go to town and adorn your parcels with festive touches such as cinnamon sticks and woodland-inspired motifs. A sprig of eucalyptus or fir and a cinnamon stick tucked into the ribbon will fill the room with festive aromas.

Squirrel bowl, £10.99; **hanging acorns** (in the bowl), £4.99, both Dunelm. **Wrap and ribbon**, from a selection at Hobbycraft. **Tags and paper bags**, from a selection at Talking Tables



Polylinen table cloth, £15.99; polylinen napkins, £6.99 for four; fir cone and berry garland, £9.99, all Dunelm. Harrison Check dinner set, £35 for a 12-piece set; wine goblets, £16 for four; Christmas rustic crackers, £12 for six, all Next. Hanging wreath, £9.99; red cake stand, £14.99, both Wyevale. Gold glitter reindeer, £7; Gold stag canapé picks (in mince pies), £8.50 for 12, both Talking Tables. Mini buckets, mini pegs, reindeer decorations, white tree, from a selection at Hobbycraft

The first Noël

Bring the Christmas spirit into your home and get crafty with some simple découpage. Apply Christmas-inspired paper to papier mâché letters of your choice and fix with glue to give your hallway the 'wow' factor.

Découpage papier mâché letters, découpage tissue, glue, berry garland, glass tealights, from a selection at Hobbycraft. Squirrel decoration, £19.99, Wyevale



Buckets of joy

Add a touch of fun to a plain window in minutes, with some string and mini wooden pegs, holding hanging mini buckets filled with surprise treats, such as mini crackers, chocolates and small festive motifs.

Mini buckets, ribbons, string, mini pegs, decorations, all from a selection at Hobbycraft. Saucer crackers, £7 for eight, Talking Tables



Come dine with me

For a warm and vibrant festive feel at your Christmas meal, cover your table with plenty of berry colours mixed with natural hues. A natural-coloured tablecloth looks stylish decorated with fir cone and berry garlands, tea lights, gold glittery woodland animals and a shop-stopping white painted table-top tree displaying berry-coloured baubles for a dramatic centrepiece.

A deer idea

Personalise each place setting with a pine cone place name. Make your guests feel extra-special with a surprise treat such as

some chocolate coins inside a miniature box wrapped with gingham ribbon and a festive felt reindeer decoration. Fill old jam jars with cranberries, a cinnamon stick and a tealight, then decorate with ribbon to make your table glow.

Candle holders, glass jars, tealights, cinnamon sticks, mini boxes, flags, felt reindeer decorations, ribbon, from a selection at Hobbycraft. Mini tags, £3 for 10, Talking Tables

Lit rustic table tree, £20; Stirling check runner, £40, both Next. Letters framed plaque, £6.99, Dunelm. Advent calendar, £20; berry garland and ribbon, from a selection, both Hobbycraft. Natural squirrel, £19.99; heart wreath, £9.99, both Wyevale. Waiting For Santa felt purse and letter kit, £5.50, Talking Tables

Deck the halls

How many sleeps until Christmas? Display an Advent calendar up the stairs for the ultimate countdown with 24 surprise-filled miniature houses, for all the family to join in. Transform your hallway into a festive entrance for your guests by threading berry garlands through the bannisters. Gather pine cones, scented candles and a mini lit tree to add a further splash of colour. A tartan runner will brighten up the floor.



50 gifts under £50

We've taken the hassle out of this year's gift shopping and chosen some of our favourite buys

£10 AND UNDER

► Who wouldn't love this cute jam jar set?

Strawberry jam jar set, £8.50, Debenhams



► Brighten up a nature lover's garden with a pretty bird bath

Cast-iron bird bath, £10, National Trust



► This pair of Scottie dog egg cups will brighten up breakfast time

Egg cup set, £8, Bhs



Perfect garden gift

► Give man's best friend a real treat with this festive wreath

Bonnie dog wreath, £10, Bhs



► Who could resist these tasty fellows, coated with vanilla icing and desiccated coconut?

Mini yeti gingerbread men, £2.50 for 110g, M&S



► Ensure a friend or relative has enough biscuits to go with all that Christmas cheese

Biscuits for cheese tin, £8, M&S



► This scrummy wreath is made from luxurious milk chocolate studded with cookies and caramelised florentine squares

Small festive wreath, £7.50, Hotel Chocolat

Great for teens



► Snap happy friends can take clever photos with their iPhone by attaching one of these special lenses

Snap macro lens, £5; Snap fisheye lens, £5, both Debenhams



► The perfect idea for a feline friend's stocking

Mice cat toy, £4, Bhs



► This quirky pasta gadget measures the perfect amount for a child, woman, man and horse (or family of four)

I could eat a horse pasta measurer, £8, Habitat



► This scarf and leg warmers set will make any pup feel part of the festivities

Stripey scarf and leg warmers, £10, Pets at Home

► Ensure your pooch doesn't miss out on the festive feast with these Christmas-inspired treats, which contain plenty of tasty and nutritious ingredients

Three Bird feast for dogs, £2.49 per 400g tin; fabulously festive Christmas biscuits for dogs, £2.99 per 100g, both Lily's Kitchen



► Get family members playing a tune with this fantastic stocking filler

Harmonica, £6, Debenhams

Tempting sweet treat



► Hope and Greenwood's splendid sweets will go down a treat

Christmas pail of sea salt caramel treats, £9.99, Hope and Greenwood

For a pampered pooch



► Small and big kids alike can test their throwing skills with a boomerang

Traditional wooden boomerang, £4.95, Dotcomgiftshop



► The perfect stocking filler for little ones with plenty of energy

Wooden frog skipping rope, £6, M&S

► Followers of Nordic style will love these quirky salt and pepper shakers

Moose salt and pepper pots, £6, Next

£25 AND UNDER



▲ Anyone can make their own dairy delights with these fab kits

Boska cheese, mozzarella and butter making kits, £17.95 each, CuckooLand

► Ensure the man in your life has perfectly-folded shirts with this quirky board

Gentleman's hardware short folding board, £19.95, Wild & Wolf



► This teapot bird feeder would look gorgeous in a pretty cottage garden

Teapot bird feeder, £12.99, The Chelsea Gardener



◀ Sewing essentials can be kept neat and tidy in these pretty stacking tins

Sewing tins, £12, Next



► Anyone who enjoys the odd gin and tonic can make their own with this fab gift set

Infuse your own winter gin kit, £20, M&S



Great for book worms

► This stylish e-reader cover is available in a range of classic book cover designs, including Sherlock Holmes and The Great Gatsby

Classic book cover for Kindle and Kobo, £25, Swanky Maison



► These gorgeous tins will bring a sense of organisation to someone's potting shed

Sophie Conran gardener's gubbins pots, £19.95, Burdon & Ball

► Keen cooks can knock up tasty tagines and other north African dishes with this handy measure, which comes in a lovely tin and also includes a recipe book

Moroccan measure, £14.99, Tala



► Great for music on the go, this small but powerful Bluetooth speaker has a four-hour rechargeable battery

Gear 4 espresso portable wireless speaker £25, Tesco



► This gorgeous jar is the perfect gift for a home lover

Bell jar, £15, Bhs

Perfect for music fans



▼ This wooden rolling pin can be personalised with any name up to ten characters, making it a great gift for any keen cook

Personalised rolling pin, £13, Littlewoods



▼ Get the New Year's Eve party started with this drinks dispenser

Bar cocktail dispenser, £20, Bhs



Perfect for party animals



▲ Little ones can take part in their very own Bake Off with this smart wooden mixer

Wooden food mixer, £25, M&S



▲ Kids and adults alike will have great fun with a domino set

Ridley's Kaleidoscope tumble down domino set, £14.95, Wild & Wolf

► Those that sew or knit can keep all their materials together in this handy bag

Owl sewing bag, £18, Bhs



A great idea for crafters

► Encourage children to explore the great outdoors with this handy case which includes a scrapbook, pencil, compass, magnifying glass and whistle

Nature explorer's kit, £19.99, The Oak Room



► Anyone can make their own fuzzy penguins with this felting craft kit

Feltin' penguins, £15, Habitat



▼ These baby socks are a super-cute buy

Trumpette socks, £19.95, Wild & Wolf



A treat for technology geeks

► This clever projector can create a home cinema using only a smartphone

Smartphone projector, £15, Habitat



► This kit includes truffle-flavoured oil, honey and salt

Indulge in Italian truffles kit, £15, M&S



£50 AND UNDER

▼ This digital radio is an affordable yet stylish buy

Spectrum DAB/FM digital radio in Azure, £34.95, John Lewis



► Anyone can proudly display their musical hero on the wall with one of these fabulous prints

Bowie screen print in bright red, £35; Amy Winehouse screen print in bright jade, £35, both Bold & Noble



Great for music lovers

► The ultimate in tea time luxury, these beautifully iced biscuits are a real treat

Reindeer biscuit tin, £39.50, Biscuiteers

► Fans of the woodland trend will love this quirky squirrel lamp

Squirrel table lamp, £35, Next



► Anyone who loves citrus flavours would be delighted with this gift, which includes lemon tagliolini egg pasta, lemon risotto, baba al limoncello, lemon oil and lemon torrone

Festa dei Limoni gift set, £29.95, Carluccio's



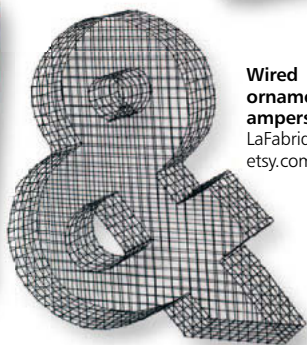
► This fish-shaped basket includes plenty of tasty treats for a fussy feline

Cat treat hamper, £30, Bhs

For fans of Italian cookery

► This easy-to-use gadget means that anyone can make tempting churros at home

Swan winter warmer churro maker, £39.99, available at Very



Wired ornamental ampersand, £32, LaFabriqueallettres.etsy.com

► Those who like to make a design statement will be thrilled with this striking ampersand ornament

Suitable for diabetics

Hamper for diabetics, £39.95, House of Bath



► Treat a green-fingered friend to a stunning camellia

Camellia, £39, Trees Direct



► There's no need for anyone to miss out on something sweet with this hamper, which includes no added sugar fruit cake, sugarless sweets, Thorntons no added sugar vanilla fudge, sugar-free shortbread biscuits and more



► The ideal gift for a whole family to share, this giant chocolate santa is sure to raise a smile

Lindt santa, £39.95, available at Waitrose



► This kit includes a selection of flour, semolina, pasta rolling pins and ravioli stamps – perfect for a pasta connoisseur

Pasta making starter kit, £27.50, Sous Chef

► Give someone a fiery treat with a fresh wasabi gift box

Build your own wasabi gift box, from £27.50, The Wasabi Company





DARK NIGHTS



Keep your home safe and secure during the dark nights

The clocks have gone back and the nights are getting darker. With statistics showing a 20% increase in burglaries at this time of year it's more important than ever to protect your home and loved ones.

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**Cross over
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simply screw or glue

Re Fix
aligns to old holes



Screw Fix
to new holes



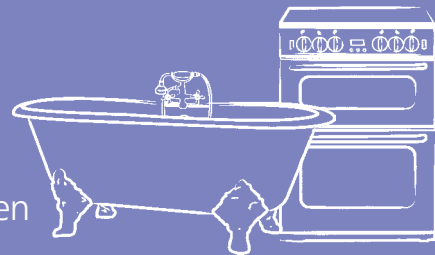
Glue Fix
to most surfaces



16 Fully co-ordinated ranges of bathroom accessories

Kitchens & BATHROOMS

Add some rustic charm to your kitchen



Mini trend: Larders

Our love for uncluttered décor means the traditional larder, the ultimate in hideaway storage, is fast returning to our kitchens as a must-have piece of furniture. They're ideal for storing everything from jars of baking ingredients to bottles of wine and with multiple compartments for even the smallest of condiments, they're an organisational dream. There are lots of different styles on the market, with many companies giving you the option to have a larder that's tucked away in one of your built-in cupboards, but it's the traditional farmhouse larder that we've fallen back in love with. This one from M&S is perfect for updating or adding extra storage to your existing kitchen and as it's free-standing, it's ideal for rental properties and can easily be taken with you if you move house. You'll wonder what you ever did without one.

Padstow two-door larder unit, H209cm x W128cm x D64cm, £1,599, M&S

Feature Laura McLeish

George-ous gadgets

The hunt for truly affordable kitchen electricals is finally over thanks to the launch of George Home's first ever collection of gadgets and kitchen must-haves. As well as stylish basics such as toasters and microwaves, there's also a 700W whole fruit juicer – perfect for making fresh orange juice for weekend breakfasts and a steal at only £39. We're also big fans of the polka dot pyramid kettle, £25, that will add a splash of retro charm to your afternoon cuppa. Or if a milky hot chocolate or latte is more your thing, pick up a milk frother for just £2 and enjoy barista-worthy hot drinks without stepping foot in a coffee shop. We're already queuing up to buy the whole lot!

Four-slice toaster, £19; **Pyramid kettle**, £25, both George Home



Create your own sanctuary

With your house full of family and friends over Christmas, it's important that it stays smelling fresh. This gorgeous home fragrance set from Sanctuary

Spa is perfect for use in your cloakroom or bathroom. The two reed diffusers come with 10 reeds and will look great on your window sills. Use the room mist to add the final touch shortly before your guests arrive, then, once they've all gone home, light the scented candles and indulge in a bubble bath.

Sanctuary Spa Home Sweet Home fragrance set, £18, Boots



Getting personal

This Christmas give your overnight guests an experience to rival The Ritz with personalised towels that can double as a thoughtful present that they can take home with them. The new personalisation service from Soak & Sleep allows you to add a name or initials, up to 12 characters, to their Egyptian cotton towels or fluffy bathrobes. Choose from seven fonts and colours for the perfect gift that will add a bit of boutique glamour to their morning shower. Priced from £4.95, the new service means you can say goodbye to boring towels, and presents.



Robe, from £29.50; **towel**, from £10.50, both www.soakandsleep.com



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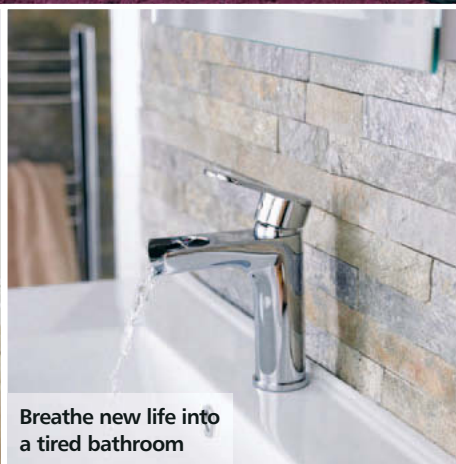
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Just moving a door meant

Andrea Buckingham turned her cramped bathroom into one that feels quite spacious



Insider info

WHO LIVES HERE?

Andrea Buckingham, who works for an estate agent, lives in a 1900s end-of-terrace three-bedroom house in Stratford-upon-Avon with her sons, Rory, 24 and Jamie, 21.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT THE ROOM?

'I love the light in here – it's a really sunny room. And on winter evenings I love lighting the candles and relaxing in the bath with a glass of wine. I'd always wanted a bath underneath a window so when I lie in it I can see the sky. Because of the shutters I can see out but people can't see in.'

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP TIPS?

'It feels much cleaner and fresher in the bathroom when it's not full of clutter – so I keep the surfaces free for things I like looking at instead.'

WHAT WAS WRONG WITH THE OLD ROOM?

The bathroom was very cramped and the badly designed layout meant that the bath took up too much space leaving no room for a much-desired shower.

Andrea Buckingham bought her end-of-terrace 1900s three-bedroom house in February 2012 for herself and sons Rory and Jamie, plus cats Atticus and Darcy. It was the spacious hallway and landing and large double bedrooms that sold the house to her – 'It certainly wasn't the bathroom which was quite the opposite, being very cramped and badly designed,' she says. 'It measures only 1.8m by 2.3m and a full-size bath took up the right-hand wall facing the WC and basin. There was lino on the floor and the walls were tiled from floor-to-ceiling in stark white like a public convenience.'

However many other rooms needed attention too so Andrea employed a builder, Mark Webster, to work on the whole house. He gutted the bathroom and put double-glazing

into the existing window frame and added a couple of downlighters. Then he suggested moving the door as far to the left as possible as this created a far more useable space and meant the family could now have a shower installed as well as a bath. New tiled flooring was laid and the builder made a false wall on the left-hand side to hide the pipework. The walls were then partly tiled and partly painted.

Andrea redesigned the layout so that the new bath now runs below the window. The new shower enclosure is in the right-hand corner and the new WC and basin are in the same places as before. Andrea used the same wall tiles, but trimmed down to a more attractive size, to line the bath panel, and the soft honey-beige tones she chose for this room make it far more inviting than the previous chilly white.

BIJOU BATH

The bath measures 1.7m long and fits snugly along the end wall and under the window. Andrea had some of the wall tiles cut down to cover the bath panel.

HIDDEN HANDIWORK

Builder Mark made a false wall along the left-hand wall behind which is concealed all the pipework for the sanitaryware.



DO SOME DIY!

Andrea transformed the very elaborate mirror, which was in an unattractive orange pine, from an antiques barn by sanding it down and painting it using a tester pot of Dulux Ivory Lace to tone in with the walls.



Before

I doubled the space

COMBINE TEXTURE

By choosing big beautiful tiles in soft beige tones, edging them with pretty patterned mosaics and choosing a warm-toned wall paint, Andrea has changed the whole feeling in the bathroom to one much more soothing.

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

The door doesn't have to be central. By moving it to the left and redesigning the layout Andrea created room for a shower.



CURVED CORNERS

By choosing a quadrant enclosure which fits into the corner behind the door Andrea was able to get more space inside the shower without it impinging too much on the bathroom. The shower head too can be removed to be hand-held for hair washing.

DOUBLING UP

Andrea chose an electric heated towel rail which doubles up as a radiator and can be switched off in summer.

SHOPPING LIST

Gardenia Paint Mixing Bathroom+ paint, £27.99 per 2.5l; Ivory Lace matt emulsion, £1.99 per tester pot, both Dulux. S20 close couple WC and cistern, £210; for similar basin try Nest wall-hung 60cm wash basin, £145, both VitrA. Wash bath 1700mm, £519; Atlas 900 quadrant shower, £599; Basics 900mm x 900mm quadrant tray, £99, all Bathstore.com. Focus E basin mixer, £112; for similar bath mixer try Focus E single lever bath mixer, £144; Raindance E120 hand shower, £105; Ecostat Comfort thermostatic control, £186, all Hansgrohe. Axis MD062 heated towel rail, from £138, Vogue UK. Travertine matt beige wall tiles 25cm x 40cm, £13.95 per sq m; Metropolis Tabacco floor tiles 34cm x 34cm, £18.95 per sq m; Harlequin Brick Mosaic 30.5cm x 30.5cm, £25.66 per sheet; Trim Chrome Square Edge, £16.69, all Stratford Tile Warehouse. Mirror, £85, Barn Antiques Centre. Wooden shutters, £350, for similar try Tuiss shutters, from £99 per sq m. Wooden duck, bought in France. Wooden candlesticks, £10, from a craft fair.

TOTAL COST: £3,003.98



UPDATE YOUR BATHROOM WITH a touch of glamour

Transform your bathroom into an elegant retreat with some of our favourite ideas

Although the bathroom is, first and foremost, a practical space, there's no reason why it can't be luxurious too. Why not be inspired by days gone by and create a luxurious retreat with hints of vintage glamour? Introduce shimmering materials, statement tiles and pretty accessories for a hotel-chic scheme that will look a million dollars. Read on for our best buys...



▲ Display your favourite accessories and ornaments on a surface or shelf

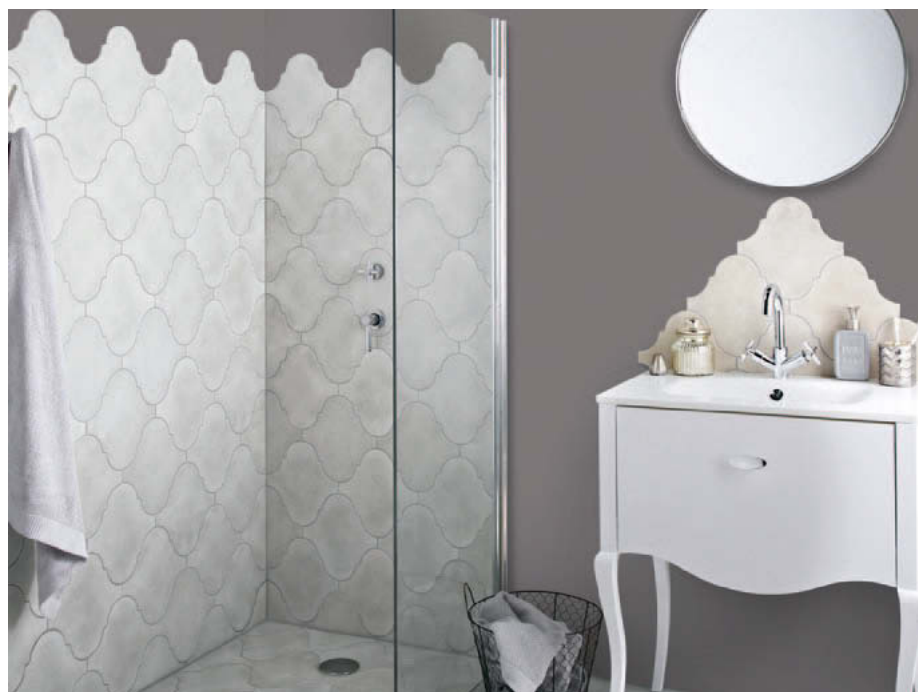
Faded grandeur hand towels, £20 for two; vanity mirror, £25; damask glass tumbler, £12; soap dispenser, £16; mercury bottle vase, £25, all House of Fraser



◀ Group together a selection of vintage-style bottles for a charming display

Eau de toilette bottles, from £7.95 each, Dotcomgiftshop

Butterfly shower curtain, £8; clear crystal droplets pendant light shade, £25; ribbed vase, £15; towels, from £6 each; quilt-effect soap dispenser, £5; mirror, £8, all the Heirloom collection from George Home



◀ Consider a colour scheme of white with pale blue for an oh-so-pretty look

▲ These porcelain tiles may be a little pricey, but they're perfect for a show-stopping splashback

Parthian tiles in white and cream, £59.76 per sq m, Topps Tiles

BATHROOM IDEAS

A classic roll-top or slipper bath will make a statement and stand the test of time

Ansel free-standing bath with Aker chrome feet, £610; F03 furniture, from £425 for a base unit with drawer, both Bohen



▲ Keep lotions, potions and trinkets neat and tidy with shimmering glass storage bottles and jars

Small vintage glass storage jar, £6; decorative bottles, from £4 each; two-drawer jewellery box, £20, all by Sainsbury's from Sainsbury's



Savon de Marseille soaps, from £2.95 each, Live Laugh Love

We love this stunning mirror – it's perfect for hanging above a basin

by Sainsbury's mirror with gold trim, £25, Sainsbury's

Inspired by Laura Ashley's best-selling wallpapers and fabrics, these stunning tiles are ideal for a glamorous backdrop

Josette tiles in duck egg, 30cm x 50cm, £35.94 per sq m, the Laura Ashley collection at House of British Ceramic Tile

◀ Choose patterned vinyl tiles for warmth and luxury underfoot

Parquet luxury vinyl flooring, £42.95 per sq m, designed by Neisha Crosland for Harvey Maria



Aspirante electric shower in riviera sand, from £199, Triton

▲ If your shower needs replacing, consider a sleek and sophisticated design to suit your newly-updated bathroom scheme

It's great having space we

Removing a wall has turned Paula Melis' poky kitchen into a spacious, airy kitchen-diner



Insider info

WHO LIVES HERE?

Paula Melis, 42, who works for a charity, her husband Bill, 42, a teaching assistant, and their children Ruby, 10, Leo, seven and Anna, four. They bought this 1930s four-bedroom semi in Hove eight years ago.

WHAT WAS YOUR BEST BUY?

'It was cheaper to buy two pieces of oak and have them glued together than buy one piece in a thicker slab!'

WHAT'S WORKED REALLY WELL?

'I really like Farrow & Ball paint but my painter said as it's chalk-based it would be too absorbent in the kitchen and mark easily. Instead he had the colour I wanted mixed in Johnstone's kitchen paint.'

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP TIPS?

'Earthstone, like Corian, can be cut into any shape and sealed so the joins are invisible, but it's a fraction of the price. It meant I could still have the Belfast sink I wanted because you can't use laminate, and the acrylics and stone were both too expensive.'

WHAT WAS WRONG WITH THE OLD ROOM?

The layout was impractical and made the kitchen cramped with little space for all of the appliances the family needed.

CONSIDER PRACTICAL NEEDS

Paula wanted a clear, long run of worktop for preparing food so the appliances are all on the opposite side of the room. The existing plumbing and electrics were here too so it was also a sensible financial decision.



Paula Melis couldn't wait to move into the spacious 1930s house she had bought with then boyfriend Bill in 2006, as it was their first home with one another, and she had been living in a two-bedroom flat with her daughter Ruby. Although the cramped galley kitchen was far from ideal the couple had a plan.

'We knew we could knock down the adjoining wall to the dining room and create a big open-plan space,' she explains. 'I just had to live with the kitchen as it was until we'd saved up to do the work!' It wasn't until the Melis' son Leo and daughter Anna came along a few years later that Paula knew enough was enough. 'My three kids wanted to be with me while I was cooking but with the hob and the oven on opposite sides of the kitchen, I was worried about tripping over them – there just wasn't enough space for us all.'

The small room also meant Paula didn't have

enough storage or full-sized appliances. 'We were bursting at the seams,' she continues. 'I had an under-counter fridge but the freezer was outside in our garden room, and the slimline dishwasher was really frustrating.'

Paula began planning the new kitchen just before the building work started to remove the wall, put in the new doors and the new skylights in February 2013. The open-plan space was designed by architects Cityzen. She looked for a cabinet colour that would make the space feel bright and airy. 'The Burford Grey kitchen from Howdens Joinery was exactly the neutral colour I wanted so I could add colour with accessories,' explains Paula. Top of her wish list was a breakfast bar to bring the family together. 'It's brilliant because I can cook on one side while the kids sit on the other,' she says. 'I love that we can be in the same room now without getting on top of one another!'



Before

can enjoy together

with plenty of room for all the family



BE THRIFTY

The Neff extractor fan was recycled from the old kitchen proving a good-quality brand can last the distance. The white tiles were a budget buy from Topps Tiles but look expensive because of the grey grout finish.

CREATE ZONES

The breakfast bar is ideal for the family of five as Paula can cook and still be part of the activity in the rest of the kitchen-diner. The white Earthstone work surface delineates the food preparation area from where the children sit at the oak worktop.



CHOOSE LIGHTING CAREFULLY

Paula made sure she had good task lighting over the work area of the breakfast bar. She ordered pendants in a variety of different shapes and sizes online and hung them in-situ before choosing which style worked best.



CHOOSE PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

Paula picked a Karndean vinyl floor over wood because she wanted a warm surface that would be easy to sweep and mop but wouldn't scratch or mark.



MAKE IT WORK

Earthstone is a 6mm layer of solid acrylic on chipboard but is much cheaper than Corian and can be routed into curves or to fit around a sink.

SHOPPING LIST

Burford Grey kitchen units with Shaker-style door and brushed steel-effect square bar handles, £4,000; Oak worktop in oak block, £800 per 3m, both Howdens. Earthstone solid surface worktop in Arctic white, £532 per 3m, B&Q. Metro white brick-effect wall tiles, £24.50 per sq m, Topps Tiles. Steel Belfast sink pack, £383, Wickes. Bristan Artisan Monobloc sink mixer chrome, £192.30, Plumbase. Hotpoint Duel Fuel range cooker, £995, Carters Direct. LG Silver American Fridge, £849; Bosch 14-place freestanding dishwasher, £395; 90cm wide extractor, for similar try Neff D69B21N0GB, £264, all Appliances Online. Kitchen and bathroom emulsion mixed in Clunch, £47 per 5l, Johnstone's. Karndean wood-effect luxury vinyl flooring in Aged Kauri from Van Gogh range, £34.99 per sq m, Ocean Flooring. Bar stool, for similar try Style bar stool, £39.99 each, Atlantic Shopping. Pendant lights, for similar try Chrome Cone Pendant, £32.64 each, Mail Order Lighting. Ken Eardley hand ceramic spotty bowl, £75, Yellow House Art. Linear Leaf mug, £7 each, M&S. Breville cream kettle, £40, Argos. Storage Jar 1L Poppy Meadow in brown; Storage Jar 1L Abacus in Brown; Storage Jar 1L Linear Stem in dark grey, £25 each, all Orla Kiely. Joseph Joseph record worktop saver, £15, John Lewis. Orla Kiely tin canister in Abacas Flowers, £25 for three; Kitchen garden box, £6, both Bert's Homestore.

TOTAL COST: £9,993



Give your kitchen some **RUSTIC, COUNTRY STYLE**

Take inspiration from a classic farmhouse kitchen to ensure that the heart of your home is a room to be proud of

It's a hard task to ensure that your kitchen is super-stylish, as well as being the most hard-working room in the house. More often than not, it's used for busy family breakfasts as well as laid-back suppers, so if you can create a space that's warm and welcoming as well as highly functional, you'll have the ideal mix. A rustic, farmhouse feel is an ideal style to try, as it's relaxed, friendly and easy to achieve. Incorporate natural materials, colours and textures, gathering accessories along the way. Read on for some of our favourite buys to help you get the look.

Feature Lisa Hibberd



◀ This set of old-fashioned scales is stylish enough to be left out on your work surface

Retro scales in red and white, £23.49, Typhoon Housewares



Farmstead dipped red colander, £17.99; red dotty mug, £1.99; red dotty side plate, £1.99; farm fresh jug, £8.99, all Dunelm



Mix warm wood tones with dark blue and hints of copper for a colour scheme that will stand the test of time

Frank Hudson refectory bench, £550; dining table, £1,500; Sitting Firm for John Lewis Melbury armchair, £599; Davey Factory copper ceiling light, £385; Neptune Suffolk 4ft glazed rack dresser, £1,950; Neptune Suffolk dining chair in honed slate, £180, all John Lewis

◀ Dunelm offers a great range of affordable accessories to suit this style. Red is a good choice if you want to add a splash of colour

▶ Ensure your cakes are baked to perfection with a set of vintage-style measures

Set of three measuring cups, £18.99; set of four measuring spoons, £12.99, both from the Bake My Day collection by Mason Cash

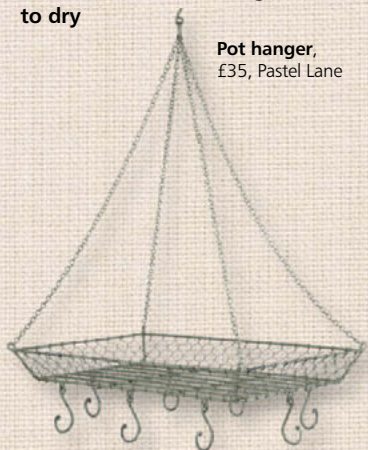




◀ Update your chairs – we love this classic ladder design

Peressini Casa Venezia dining chair, from around £96 each, Wayfair

▼ This rustic hanging rack is an ideal way to keep pots and pans tidy and within easy reach. You could also use it to hang herbs to dry



Pot hanger, £35, Pastel Lane



▲ Choose traditional accessories such as blue striped Cornishware and traditional scales to enhance the farmhouse look

Este Macleod pears with jug framed print, £100; Kitchen Craft traditional balance kitchen scale, £65; ICTC olivewood bowl, £55; Cornishware utensil jar, £28; Le Creuset honey pot and dipper, £19; Sophie Conran for Portmeirion plates, from £12.50; Kilner jars, from £2.50 each, all John Lewis

▼ This stunning kitchen from Ikea proves that you don't have to spend a fortune to achieve a farmhouse look

Metod/Krokorp kitchen, from around £42 for a 600mm base unit plus door; Stenstorp kitchen island, £200; Fintorp rails, from £7 each, all Ikea



◀ Replace a pendant light fitting with this charming red design

Red galley pendant, £12.99, Dunelm

▶ Add a touch of farmhouse chic with these animal-themed hooks

Dog and cow ceramic hooks, £4.99 each, Dunelm



▶ A round table is a sociable choice for kitchens, and this pedestal design is a great buy

Cotswolds ivory round table and chairs, £399.99, Dunelm

▼ Store fruit and vegetables in these hessian baskets

Kitchen storage baskets, £10 for three, Next



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Make it easy!

MAKE, DO & CRAFT

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GIRLS' GUIDE TO DIY

ASK THE EXPERTS

YOUR CHECKLIST



The winter weather is drawing in and we're getting ready for the festive season to really begin – from glittering decorations to make at home, to Christmas-themed home décor and more.

Convert plain drawers into a retro storage cabinet



Get ready for Christmas with our must-read December checklist



Sparkling decorations to make your home twinkle



Stitch a colourful stocking Advent calendar



Stay warm this winter with our guide to stove maintenance



Make, do & craft



Christmas will soon be here, so now is the perfect time to sit down and get to work on some Christmas crafts – such as these bright and beautiful decorations

Sparkly wreath

Adorn your home with this glamorous wreath and add a little shine to Christmas time.

SHOPPING LIST

- 20cm polystyrene wreath, £2, Hobbycraft
- 3m blue 5cm wide stretch sequin trim
- sequin pins
- silver and green sequin trim, 1m of each
- purple individual sequins
- 50cm blue silk
- scissors
- pins
- sewing machine and thread

1 First, cover your wreath. Cut the stretch sequin trim into 15cm lengths, then wrap them over the front of the wreath blank, using sequin pins to secure them into position. We overlapped each of ours slightly to ensure a neat finish.

2 Add your embellishments. We wrapped lengths of silver and green around the wreath, then added individual purple sequins sporadically all over the wreath, using sequin pins to secure them all.

3 Stitch a bow. To do this, cut a 20cm square from blue silk fabric. Fold it in half, right sides facing, and stitch along both side edges and three quarters of the bottom edge, leaving 5cm open. Turn out through the gap, press, then hand stitch closed. Make two ribbon tails by cutting four 6cm x 15cm strips and stitching them right sides together in pairs, then turning out through the top – we also stitched diagonally across the bottom of ours. Finally, cut a 5cm x 10cm length of silk, and press the long edges over to the wrong side by 1cm. Wrap this around the middle of the bow to gather it, and hand stitch into position. Use pins to fix the ribbon tails and bow onto the front of the wreath.

Top tip

As our wreath was going to be hung on a mirror, we added a piece of felt to the back of it to cover any mess.



Prancing reindeer card, £5, the V&A



Sequin baubles

This shiny decorations will add a touch of glamour to your tree.

SHOPPING LIST

- polystyrene balls, £2.99 per pack of 36, Baker Ross
- purple spray paint
- sequin pins
- iridescent blue seed beads
- blue, green and purple sequins
- glitter ribbon, from a selection at Create & Craft
- scissors
- mini ribbon bow

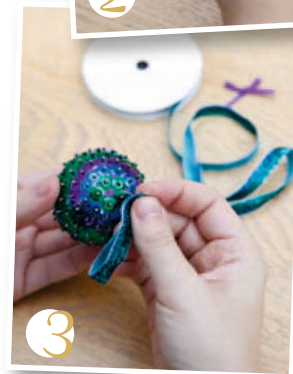
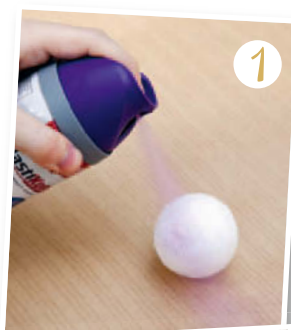
1 Begin by prepping the polystyrene balls. Place them onto a sheet of newspaper or brown paper and spray with purple paint – you will need to do one side, let it dry, then turn over and repeat on the other side. Leave to dry thoroughly.

2 Add the sequin design, starting at the base of the bauble and working your way to the top. Load up a sequin pin with two tiny seed beads, then add a sequin, inserting the pin through the central hole. Push the pin firmly into the polystyrene ball. Repeat, covering the ball, until only the very top is left.

3 When there is only a small gap left at the top of the ball, cut a 20cm length of glitter ribbon, and fold it in half. Push a sequin pin through the middle of a mini bow embellishment, then push this through the ribbon ends, making sure to go through both. Push the pin into the top of the ball to finish – add another couple of pins to make sure it's really secure.

Top tip

For a more subtle finish, try making this bauble using only one bead on each sequin – or even none at all.



Striped stocking

Make this sophisticated stocking using scraps of fabric and sequin strands.

SHOPPING LIST

- a selection of fabric offcuts – at least 30cm square of each
- scissors
- pins
- sewing machine
- thread
- pencil
- 1m blue cotton fabric
- sewing needle
- hot glue gun
- purple and stranded sequins, 60cm of each
- glitter ribbon



1 Start by cutting and stitching together strips of fabric to make one big patchwork sheet. We cut ours into 12cm wide strips and machine stitched together, then pressed flat. With the wrong side facing you, draw a stocking shape out onto your strips, making it slightly larger than you'd like your finished stocking to be on all sides. Cut it out.

2 Lay the striped stocking onto a piece of blue cotton and cut it out three times – one of these will be the back of the outer stocking, and the other two will be the lining. Pin the two lining pieces right sides together and stitch around the edge with a 1.5cm seam allowance, leaving the top edge open and a 10cm seam gap in the bottom of the foot. Place the third blue cotton piece right sides together with the striped stocking piece, and stitch together around the edge, leaving the top edge open.

3 Slide the outer stocking inside the lining stocking, with right sides facing and the back and front seams aligned. Pin, then machine stitch all around the top edge of the stocking to join the two together. Pull the stocking right sides out through the hole in the bottom of the lining, and hand stitch it closed. Finally, use a hot glue gun to stick strips of sequin trim along each of the stripe seam lines. Fold the top of the stocking over to make a cuff, then hand stitch a loop of ribbon to the top edge to allow for hanging.



Star decoration, £25 for a set of two, The Contemporary Home



Furniture facelift...

This month we created a stylish storage unit using wooden Ikea boxes

Many of us have these wooden Moppe storage boxes from Ikea at home; they're inexpensive and handy for keeping clutter tidied away. We decided to update ours by incorporating several of the boxes together. A pull-out tray is a useful addition, perfect to rest a cup of tea or to contain paper as you work. Smart chrome handles with library card windows look great and help organise the contents so everything is close to hand and quickly found.

You will need

- ✓ six sets of Moppe wooden drawers, £9 each, IKEA
- ✓ PVA glue
- ✓ hammer
- ✓ panel pins
- ✓ pencil
- ✓ two MDF side panels, 730mm x 192mm, 10mm thick
- ✓ two MDF top and bottom panels, 588mm x 192mm, 10mm thick
- ✓ one MDF back panel, 750mm x 588mm, 10mm thick
- ✓ two 20mm deep temporary spacers
- ✓ drill
- ✓ screws
- ✓ screwdriver
- ✓ pilot
- ✓ drill bit
- ✓ four small pine tulip feet with bolt, 120mm high, £9.20 per pack of four, eBay
- ✓ one MDF tray base, 175mm x 563mm x 8mm thick
- ✓ two 8mm x 563mm battens for the front and back sides of the tray base
- ✓ two 8mm x 159mm battens for the two sides of the tray base
- ✓ paint brush
- ✓ Annie Sloan Burgundy chalk paint, £18.95 per 1L tin
- ✓ soft cloth
- ✓ Annie Sloan soft wax, £7.99 per 500ml tin
- ✓ silver drawer handle cup pull label frame card holders, £19.99 per pack of 20, eBay
- ✓ card
- ✓ scissors

2



3



7



8



1 Remove the drawers from the wooden box frames and place to one side. Sit two of the frames side-by-side, right way up. Place a second pair on their ends on top, one at each edge with a gap in the middle; this will create vertical storage. Add the remaining two box frames side by side on top, exactly as the first pair. This arrangement will form the base of the cabinet. The overall measurement of the boxes arranged like this is 567mm wide x 688mm tall.

2 Glue and nail the outer frame pieces together using PVA glue and panel pins. The MDF is fairly thin so take care not to split it. Drawing a pencil guide showing the depth of the wood beneath at each edge can help.

3 Glue and panel pin the back piece onto the rest of the frame, this will strengthen the structure and make it square. Leave the frame to dry.

4 Glue the bottom two wooden box frames inside the base of the frame – the fit should be quite tight. Next, glue the two vertical boxes inside, on top of the bottom two. Lay the two 20cm battens on top of them – these will act as temporary spacers and will be removed and

discarded later. Finally, glue the top two boxes into position at the top of the frame, then leave to dry.

5 Add a few screws, worked through the wooden boxes and into the frame beyond, to secure the boxes into place. This is particularly important for the top two boxes – if they fall or move down, the pull-out tray will become too tight to pull open.

6 Turn the unit upside down. Drill a pilot hole at each corner of the base and then screw the feet into place.

7 Make the pull-out tray. Lay the MDF base down onto a work surface, then glue and pin the front, back and two sides into place around the edges of it.

8 Lastly, remove the temporary spacer battens. Paint the entire unit – including the feet, tray and drawers – with red chalk paint, then leave to dry. Use a soft brush or cloth to add a coat of wax over the paint. Screw the label plates onto the back of each drawer; we recommend using the back because it does not have a cut-out finger hole. Place the tray and drawers into the cabinet at the top and bottom, then cut a card label for each drawer plate and slip into place.



Before

Top tip

These wooden drawer units are really versatile – you can custom-make the unit to whatever size you wish.



Sew simple

Give yourself a little treat every day with this fun stocking Advent calendar

Made from the offcuts of larger projects, this cute Advent calendar is cheap and easy to make – and looks fantastic! Whether you hang it along your stairs as we have, above a mantel or across the wall it will add a touch of colour and a daily gift to your Christmas countdown.

1 Download and print the December Advent template from www.yourhomemagazine.co.uk or send a stamped SAE to Your Home December Advent Template, Hubert Burda Media UK, The Tower, Phoenix Square, Colchester, Essex, CO4 9HU. Cut the template out.

2 Use the template to cut 25 stocking shapes from your fabric offcuts – then flip it over so that the shape is reversed and cut 25 more. Pin these together in pairs (right sides facing) and machine stitch around the outside of the shape with a 5mm seam allowance, leaving the top edge open. Turn them right sides out and press.

3 Repeat step 2 using cotton fabric, to cut 50 lining pieces. Once again pin the shapes into pairs (right sides facing) and stitch around the outside of the shape, once again leaving the top edge open, and also leaving a 3cm gap in the seam at the bottom of the foot. Turn right sides out, and press.

4 With right sides facing, slide the lining stocking over the outer stocking, aligning the seams and top edge. Hand stitch around the top edge, working through both layers, then turn right sides out through the gap in the bottom of the lining seam. Stitch the gap closed, then press.



You will need

- fabric offcuts – we used 25 pieces roughly 30cm square
- pencil
- scissors
- pins
- sewing machine
- iron
- 1m cotton fabric (for linings)
- embroidery needle and thread
- one sheet self-adhesive felt, £3.99 per pack of 18, Baker Ross
- jumbo pompom trim, £1.70 per m, Frumble
- 25 wooden clothes pegs
- washi tape



5 With each of the stockings now created, begin to decorate them all. Thread a needle with two strands of embroidery thread and work a blanket stitch around the top edge of each stocking, tying off on the inside, concealing the knot as best as you can.

6 Using a pencil, draw the outline of the numbers 1-25 out onto the right side of a sheet of self-adhesive felt. Use a pair of scissors or a craft knife to carefully cut them out. Stick each number onto one of the stockings, positioning them around 2cm down from the top edge.

7 Measure the area in which you'd like to hang your Advent calendar, and cut a length of jumbo pompom trim to fit. Securely hang the trim however you like – we chose to loop ours along a banister but you could also hang it from the ceiling, over a mantelpiece or around the edge of a room.

8 Decorate 25 plain wooden clothes pegs with a selection of colourful washi tapes. Once your trim is securely hung, use the pegs to clip your stockings into place – then fill with sweets or other mini gifts to finish.

Top tip

For a more permanent fix, you could stitch your stockings into place along the trim.

Cosy Skandi Collection house tea light holder, £3.99; large house tea light holder, £5.99, both Dunelm



Girls' Guide to



Give your kitchen a weekend facelift, just in time for any Christmas entertaining, with some fresh new tiles

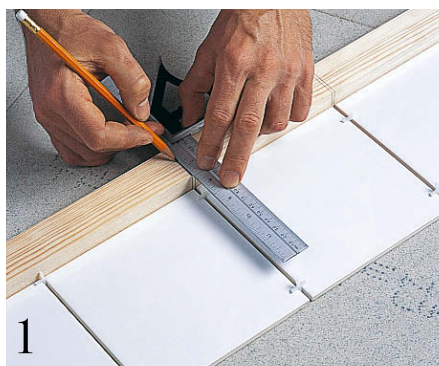


Top tip

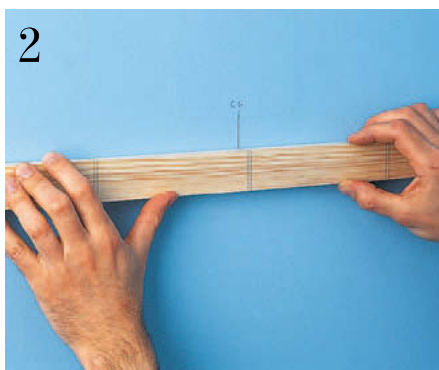
If you are tiling adjacent walls, you need to make sure your grout lines match when they meet in the corner. To ensure this is the case, draw a baseline round all the walls you are tiling.

The key to a professional finish when tiling is plenty of planning and measuring before you actually get to placing the tiles on the walls.

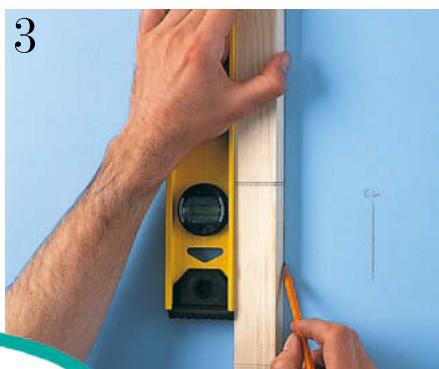
1 To establish the area you need to cover in square metres, simply measure the height and width of the area and multiply. Then add on around 5% to allow for any breakages and mistakes. Once you have your tiles, it's a good idea to make a measuring rod. They're very simple to make, just take a length of wooden batten and place on a flat surface, lay out a row of your chosen tiles directly above this, complete with tile spacers in between. Mark on the batten the position of each tile and the spacers.



2 As a rule it's best to begin tiling from the centre of the wall, so that any cut tiles appear at the edges in equal sizes. To do this measure the width of the wall, then mark the centre point. Take the measuring rod and place it so that one of the tile-edge marks lines up with this line. Then, still using the measuring rod, count how many full tiles will fit in. Once you get to the edge you can see whether you will need to cut any tiles to fit. If you can see that you're going to end up with tiles that are less than half a tile wide you may want to readjust, as narrow slivers of tiles are hard to cut, so go back and move the starting mark accordingly.



3 Also to ensure you have even-sized tiles at the top and bottom of your walls the same method as above applies. To work this out, draw a vertical line from the centre line up, using a spirit level to ensure it's straight. Then as before use the measuring rod to establish how many whole tiles you'll require, and whether the cut tiles will be sufficiently thick at the edges, and if not readjust the line for the starting tile. If you are part tiling your wall, rather than tiling right up to the ceiling, the top row of horizontal tiles will look best if they are whole, and the bottom row can be cut tiles. If necessary move the top row higher so that you're not left with a row of very thin tiles at the base.



4 Once you've established the starting point for the tiles you can set about getting them on the wall. To ensure you have straight edges use battens as a frame to tile within. Set up so the bottom right hand corner of the frame is where your first tile is to sit. The frame will also help support the tiles while they're drying as it will stop them sliding down the wall.

5 Starting from the corner of your frame apply tile adhesive to the wall, then spread evenly with a notched spreader. Place the starting tile in position pressing the edges against the frame and against the wall.

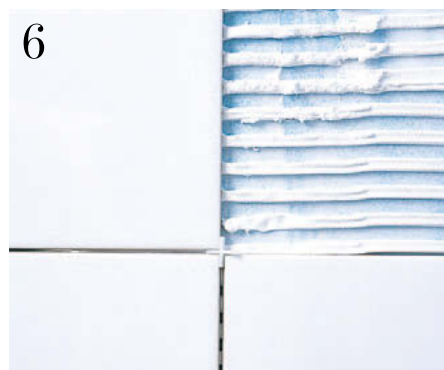
6 Next add a tile above and one to the side, pressing into the wall to help them adhere. Insert a spacer between the tiles and push in, so they can be grouted over without being visible.

7 Continue in this way, applying adhesive to small sections of wall as you go to avoid it drying out. Work your way along until you get to the edges. Wipe off any adhesive before it dries.

8 When you get to the edges, it's likely you'll need to cut tiles to fit. As walls are rarely completely straight it's best to measure the space for each individual tile and cut accordingly. After cutting check the fit, if slightly too large you can make slight tweaks with a tile file.

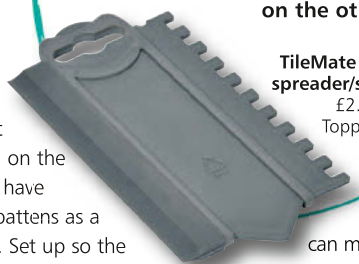
9 Apply adhesive direct to the back of the tile, rather than to the wall, then press into place. If you're also tiling the adjacent wall take care when cutting the edge tiles to ensure the grout lines are level. Once all the tiles have been laid, allow the adhesive to dry, the amount of time this takes will vary dependent on the product you are using.

10 Finally take a small amount of grout and press into the gaps. With a grout spreader, use long upward strokes to work it into the joints. Wipe tiles with a damp sponge, taking care not to remove any from the joints. Once the grout has completely dried, polish off with a clean cloth.



Tool box treat

Cover two tasks with one simple tool with this clever dual purpose design, that has a notched edge for fast adhesive application on one side and a squeegee for grouting on the other.



TileMate combi spreader/squeegee,
£2.99,
Topps Tiles

Trick of the trade

The experts at Topps Tiles share their handy hints for using coloured grout:

- A darker grout is ideal for areas of the home that see food spills, such as kitchen splash backs. Darker colours offer lower maintenance compared to their white counterparts that can show stains more easily.
- Using lighter coloured grouts with white tiles gives the illusion of seamless tiling and can open up the space, while darker grout when matched with a lighter tile creates a bold, geometric look that highlights the finished edge.
- Coloured grout can be applied in exactly the same way as lighter grout, but take extra care to wipe off any excess as this can dry and stain the glaze on lighter tiles.
- When considering which grout to use for your bathroom, using a darker colour can be more forgiving by reducing the appearance of mould residue when compared to the traditional white finish.

Topps Tiles has coloured grout sample sticks in store so you can match with tile samples.

ASK THE EXPERTS

We answer some of your DIY and maintenance questions, with a little help from the experts

Q My wooden worktops are looking past their best but I don't have the budget to replace them at the moment – is there a product available that will spruce them up?

Mr D Quinn, Ayrshire



A Wendy Miranda, Lakeland's Customer Ambassador, has this recommendation....

This high-quality oil moisturises unvarnished wood around the home, leaving it looking nourished and refreshed, as well as enhancing the natural grain of the wood. It's perfectly safe for use on food contact areas such as worktops, chopping boards and utensils. Simply spray evenly onto the surface, leave for ten minutes and then wipe away the excess. Lemon Love is priced at £6.99 per 500ml, available from Lakeland.



Q We've recently had an extension built, and I'm struggling with décor ideas for our modern playroom-cum-snug. Do you have any suggestions for a quirky wall decoration that would work in this sort of space?

Rachael, London

A Your Home says... Wall stickers are a great way to add interest to any room, and they're quick and easy to apply. This quirky design by Bumoon is perfect for a playroom, but would also work in a more grown-up space. It features a selection of different bird designs in a cartoon style, and will add a touch of fun to any wall.

Variety is the spice of life wall stickers, £62.50, Butterfly Occasions



Q I've just moved into a rented house and the bathroom is in good condition but very plain. I'm not allowed to drill holes in the walls, but I'd like to add some bits and pieces to brighten up the room – do you have any suggestions?

Jessie, by email

A Your Home says... It can be tricky to update rented accommodation without causing damage, but help is at hand with the clever range of Command bathroom hooks from 3M. They're designed especially for use in the bathroom as they have water-resistant strips which will stick firmly even in a humid environment. You can use them to hang towels, bathing essentials or even pretty ornaments to enhance your bathroom, and then if and when you need to remove them, they will come away from the wall cleanly without leaving any damage.

Command metal satin bathroom hook, £6.99 each; Command large towel hook, £4.99 each, both 3M



Q I had a wood-burning stove installed in my house last winter – what maintenance checks do I need to carry out to keep it in good working order?
Mrs F Cartright, Lancashire



A *Matt Kisler, product manager for Dimplex, gives his expert advice...* The rules on maintenance are less strict than those for gas appliances as there is no legal requirement for annual

maintenance. However, some maintenance is necessary and there are simple guidelines you can follow, which cover two main areas – sweeping the chimney, and visual checks on the condition of the stove.

A chimney should be swept by a qualified chimney sweep a minimum of once a year, even if the stove is used only occasionally. Sweeping is necessary to ensure free passage of the dangerous combustion gasses from the stove by removing blockages such as birds' nests and soot. Regular sweeping also removes creosote, which can cause chimney fires. According to the National Association of Chimney Sweeps (www.nacs.org.uk), chimneys should be swept at the start of the season, then once every quarter while the stove is in use, if burning wood, and once during the season if burning smokeless fuels.

At the start of the season, it's also worth checking the consumable items on your stove – such as the rope seal around the door, and the bricks. The rope seal needs to maintain an airtight seal, however, this will compress through use. Your stove manufacturer will be able to advise what length and diameter of replacement rope you'll need and you can purchase rope, and a special fire-resistant adhesive, from most stove shops. Also check the brick lining. A hairline fracture, for example, is not a problem – but if you notice that a crack in a brick has started to widen, that's the time to replace it. Simply lift the baffle plate, remove and replace.

At the end of the season, the stove should be shut down, ensuring that all the ash is removed from the stove, and the chimney flue ways and baffle plate are brushed clean. Close the door and put the air control in the open position. This allows air to circulate around the stove and prevents corrosion and condensation so it's in top condition when you next come to light a fire.



Bellingham SSE DEFRA-exempt stove, around £949.99, Dimplex



Q There have been a number of burglaries in my neighbourhood recently, and I'm concerned that this could happen to me. What can I do to help make my

home more secure?

Mrs E Robson, Sunderland

A *Ray McGrady, MASCO UK Window Group Marketing Director at Safechoice, says...* Now that the nights have drawn in, we need to be mindful that burglars often strike under the cover of darkness. Research shows that in the UK, burglars strike every 40 seconds. Families with children are likely victims and 56% of burglaries happen at night. You are six times more likely to be burgled without both window locks and double locks or deadlocks on outside doors. 73% of burglars use doors to enter a property and in 3% of cases the door is left unlocked.

These top tips should be second nature to us all, but here's a quick reminder...

- Remember to lock all doors and windows, even if you're just nipping out for a few minutes.
- Fit a burglar alarm and ensure it is visible to potential thieves.
- Keep valuables and all house and car keys out of sight.
- Fit outside security lighting.
- Join your local Neighbourhood Watch scheme.
- When recycling, fold up any packaging that offers a clue to what your home contains.



● Take care what personal information you share on social media, such as telling everyone when you are going on holiday.

● Make your home look occupied while you are out or away on holiday by using lights on timers and asking a trusted neighbour or family member to pop in and check everything is okay.

As well as the above tips, for those who want built-in security, Safechoice has developed an SAC bolt system for all its windows and uses a secure Yale system for doors for added safety and security. Safechoice also works closely with the police under the 'Secured by Design' scheme to ensure protection and peace of mind.

SafeChoice doors are all fitted with 10-point locking systems and also offer a futuristic 'Keyfree' locking system option with a remote control keyfob and built in door handle key pad, which allows you to unlock your door by entering your own personal code. So, if your doors and windows are due for replacement, don't forget to consider security as well.

If you have a DIY or maintenance question, write to Ask the Experts, Your Home, Hubert Burda Media UK, The Tower, Phoenix Square, Colchester, Essex CO4 9HU or email asktheexperts@yhmag.co.uk

Your December checklist

Discover seasonal tasks for your home and garden

✓ IF YOU DO ONE THING THIS MONTH...

Christmas seems to come around quicker each year. Before you've had time to pack away the Hallowe'en decorations, friends and family are knocking at the door with their presents and overnight bags in tow. Get your home guest-ready and make sure everybody has a comfortable Christmas with our handy tips.

- When it comes to making sure your guests have a pleasant stay, the first thing to check is the bedding. According to a recent poll by The Fine Bedding Company, 89% of people give their guests their unwanted master bedroom duvet and pillows to use, and 77% of people think their guest bedding is over ten years old. If your spare bedding has seen better days, it needn't cost the earth to replace it. Most supermarkets now sell duvets and pillows at really reasonable prices, so pick one up with your next food shop.
- If your visitors are lucky enough to have their own room when they come to stay, invest in a room fragrance to provide a fresh scent when they turn in for the night. It's also a nice idea to provide a spare toothbrush and a few toiletries you've collected from hotels in case they've forgotten anything and if you really want to go the extra mile, a few thoughtfully chosen books or a radio will help them unwind at the end of the day or keep them occupied if they're early risers. You could also provide any tech-savvy guests with your wireless internet passcode so that they're able to surf the net if they fancy a bit of time away from the festive chaos.
- For those of your guests who'll be sleeping in the living room or bunking up with other family members, worry not – you can still make their stay a pleasurable one. If you have a cloakroom, make this your guest's private bathroom for the duration of their stay. They can leave their toiletries in there and needn't worry that they're taking up anybody else's allotted bathroom time. Also make sure that they can open any windows or alter the heating in the room they'll be sleeping in if they need to.
- Lastly, if you really want to know if your friends and family will get a good night's rest, there's no better way of finding out than by catching forty winks in your guest accommodation. This way you'll be able to see if there's anything missing that would make their stay extra special.

Visit www.finebedding.co.uk to find your perfect guest bedding.



Top Tip

Provide extra blankets and pillows so your guests can get super cosy.

✓ A neat idea

Perfect for use on the 'kids table' at any festive gathering, this tablecloth from Doodle by Stitch will keep the little ones entertained in between courses. Let them loose with the wash-out coloured markers and after dinner, watch their doodles disappear in a 40 degree wash, ready for your little artists to start again. It comes with ten Doodle markers and is big enough to cover a large dining table.

Doodle Christmas tablecloth, 310cm x 150cm, £40, www.doodlebystitch.com

✓ Essential buy for December

If you're looking for something quirky to hang in your home to replace the traditional wreath, this adorable reindeer could be just the thing. Loved for its collection of decorative felted animal heads, Armstrong Ward has brought back this lovely red-nosed reindeer version to brighten up the house in time for Christmas. Hand-crafted and available in grey, cream or chocolate brown, he's pretty much impossible to resist.

Grey felt reindeer head, £45, www.armstrongward.co.uk





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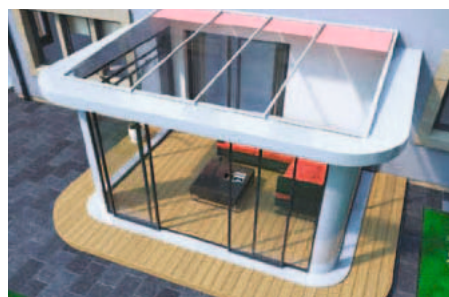
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VISTA

Reader homes

Find some great ideas for your home with four fabulous houses to inspire you



92 Yvonne Cook has used her love of all things vintage to create a unique look in her home at Christmas

Show off your hard work in *Your Home*

Have you just finished decorating your home? If so we'd love to see your photos and, who knows, your house may be featured in a future issue. Please send photos to Kate Harding, Your Home, Hubert Burda Media UK, The Tower, Phoenix Square, Colchester, CO4 9HU



74 Andrea and Duncan have used colour to achieve a vibrant family home that makes a real impact



88

Helen and Mark's rural home is a wonderfully cosy retreat

80

Victoria and Nigel have created the ideal space for hosting Christmas dinner



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Colour is king in our cosy home

Andrea and Duncan have lovingly transformed a neglected cottage into a vibrant family home

Home, family and work have changed hugely since 2001 when Andrea was racing about London as a marketing manager and dividing her working week between London and Bristol. 'Both my family and my husband, Duncan, lived locally to

Neston and I was commuting along the M4 way too often. We love the area and are family folk at heart, so it felt natural to move back here,' she explains.

Duncan's work as a civil engineer took him out and about across the region so he



➔ The couple hacked away the 1970s brick surround and dark painted timber and cleaned the exposed stone that was in situ to create a simple open fire. Andrea's father made the simple mantle and shelf at the side, which is where Frank's toys are neatly stored

Good idea!

Candles are a great way to add a cosy feel to your living room over the festive season. Opt for varying sizes that will create a warm glow when lit.

Walls painted in Dulux Jungle Fever create a warm backdrop for classic brown leather Chesterfield sofas. One was a gift from a friend and the other is shop bought. 'This is very much a winter room, Christmas morning is so cosy with the log burner going and Frank tearing through his gifts. It's a far cry from the day when we could see the sky from the living room when we were installing the attic bathroom,' says Andrea

was on the look out for the perfect property. 'We registered with a few agents and Duncan focused our search on Neston because it is such a pretty village. And luck was on our side as we were able to buy this cottage before it came on the open market. We were first time buyers so the seller saw us as a good bet,' explains Andrea.

When the couple first saw the cottage they were immediately struck by its potential. 'It was in a sorry state. The gardens were unkempt and the inside was a hotchpotch of terrible DIY and orange pine from the 70s, but we knew we could make it our home,' says Andrea.

The original cottage was built around 150 years ago and was considerably smaller than it is today – with just two rooms downstairs and one bathroom. To make the property work for them, the couple decided to apply for planning permission to extend the rear of the house and create a dining room onto the garden and also extend upwards into the loft space. This would create a large family bathroom and leave them with two bedrooms and a walk-in-wardrobe space on the first floor. 'Obtaining planning permission was our only hiccup. One of our neighbours objected to our plans, but we got there eventually and we are all friends now!' says Andrea. While the planning matter wrangled on Andrea, Duncan and Andrea's dad, David, pressed on with internal works. 'We used tradesmen for electrics and plumbing, but if we could do it ourselves, we did,' explains Andrea. ➤

COME ON IN...



THE HOME

A 19th-century, three-bedroom cottage in Wiltshire.

WHO LIVES HERE?

Andrea Breach and Duncan Priddle with son, Frank, three. Andrea runs her own interiors shop and café, Mipo (www.mipo.co.uk), which showcases the work of local artisans. Duncan is a civil engineer.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT FROM THE EXPERIENCE?

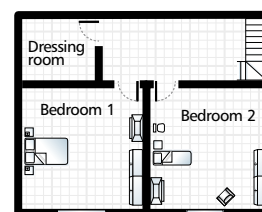
'Be patient and adaptable. Building works and renovations will always take longer than you think, and you cannot rush. So be prepared to wait and to change your plans as your project progresses.'

WHAT'S YOUR BEST PIECE OF ADVICE?

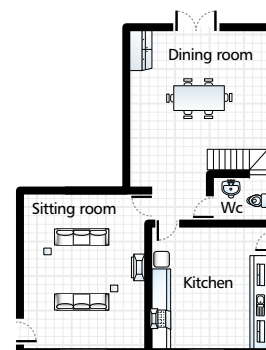
'We lived here with plain white walls for about a year and only added the colourful walls once we knew how the cottage worked for us and which rooms were brightest. Colour does not always make small spaces smaller so be bold and have fun.'



TOP FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

For stockists see page 118



▲ The colourful kitchen is warm and inviting, with walls painted in the cheery pink, Rock Candy by Dulux. 'We were hand-printing reindeers onto Mipo bags for Christmas and Duncan commented that the colour would look good in the kitchen, so on the walls it went. I love it,' says Andrea. The colour works perfectly with the kitchen cabinets, from a builder's merchant, which were given a smart set of handmade ash doors

◁ The couple were on a tight budget and stretched it as far as they could, recycling all the natural materials and stone work and putting them back into the building where possible, then they scoured trade centres and reclamation yards for whatever else they needed. Andrea's father came in very handy with this frugal approach. 'He had what we called 'magic buckets', because whatever we needed, be it a door handle or an iron bolt, Dad would have it in one of his buckets that he had filled up with bits and bobs over the years,' recalls Andrea.

David brought more than 'magic buckets' to their renovation. He also brought a lifetime's experience in restoring old houses and cabinet building. 'My father was a master craftsman and it is his work that makes this cottage special. He hand-crafted the window seats, and the exposed beams, and made space for a downstairs toilet. His work gives our cottage a bespoke finish that belies our meagre budget,' Andrea explains.

Finally, after one year of weekends and



‘The run up to Christmas is the busiest time for our shop, so Christmas Day is the first time we draw breath as a family. It’s a special day.’

evenings spent working at the cottage the couple were ready to move in. ‘We agreed that as long as it was liveable we would move in on the day of the Diamond Jubilee,’ says Andrea. So with a working kitchen, and bathroom, but concrete floors and bare plaster walls the couple unpacked their limited belongings. ‘It was our first home so we had a sofa, a bed, a table, four chairs and a wardrobe and we were thrilled to bits,’ recalls Andrea.

And, as if moving to a tumbling down cottage was not challenging enough, Andrea decided to give up her job as well. ‘People thought I was mad to give up a ▷



The bench, made by Andrea’s father, is a handy space to feature Christmas cards and another colourful bauble display

‘We are a clutter-free family usually, but when it comes to Christmas it’s baubles a-go-go! Duncan and I made the bauble chandeliers, it took us about four evenings of non-stop tying and threading,’ laughs Andrea. The walls are painted with Dulux Ruby Fountain and make for a festive feel to the dining room. The Elm dining table was made by Andrea’s father and the red aluminium chairs from Mipo help to add a modern industrial feel

Good idea!

For a cheerful display hang baubles of all different shapes, sizes and colours on to differing lengths of colourful skinny ribbon.





▲ Pale grey walls in a south-facing bedroom with an unusual vaulted ceiling create a calming place to sleep. The bed was one of the few pieces that Andrea owned before they bought the cottage. She had it made by a timber merchant in Yorkshire. The heart image is handmade by Debbie Coutts and is available from Mipo as is the throw

► Frank sleeps in a cheerful bedroom complete with its own mini Christmas tree. 'Frank loves to play on the floor in his room, so we gave him a soft carpet to make it nice and comfy for him,' she says. The room is filled with pieces that have a story to tell and Andrea's talented father made both the bed and the linen box for Frank

'I like the bedroom because even though the room is small it feels light and airy.'

◁ company car and expense account, but I wanted a venture that I could put my heart into. Having trained in graphic design I decided I wanted to go back to a more creative life,' says Andrea. And so, without any previous experience, she decided to open Mipo, a shop and café with a commitment to profiting the work of local artisans at its heart. 'The run up to Christmas is the busiest time for our shop, so Christmas Day is the first time we draw breath as a family. It's a special day,' says Andrea.

Over the years the couple have added to their furniture collection in a thrifty and discerning style. 'I buy for my home and Mipo in the same way. I buy things that I love, or are beautiful and useful. Provenance is also important, I like to know the maker or the piece has to have a history,' she says.

The couple have added to their family too

with the birth of Frank, now three. 'Frank's arrival combined with village life has made us much more sociable. The village looks out for him and all the children that live here, so we have an open house and cherish the friendships and kindness of our neighbours,' says Andrea.

Frank's arrival also meant that the cottage changed too. 'We used what is now Frank's room, as a dressing room and home office for Mipo. So we moved our clothes into the box room, bought an antique linen press and somehow managed to fit all the shop paperwork into it. The press lives in the dining room so that I'm near Frank when I work from home.'

13 years on, Andrea, Duncan and Frank are very settled in their cottage and have no plans to move. 'I don't want more and I certainly don't want different and our cottage was crafted with my father's love. It is our forever home.' **YH**



5 IDEAS TO STEAL

➔ The attic bathroom was a new addition to the house and gives the family wonderful views over the countryside. 'We love the view. When you stand at the sink to brush your teeth you can see for miles over the Neston Estate. The landscape changes with the seasons, it's fabulous,' says Andrea. And light is kept to a maximum with glass blocks as a shower wall



Good idea!

Don't forget to decorate kids' bedrooms at Christmas, something as simple as a small Christmas tree will make an impact.



SHOW SOME HEART

Give walls a new dimension with a piece of textured wall art.

3D heart canvas, £50, ArtyHarty

FINISHING TOUCHES

For a Scandi festive feel a classic wooden reindeer is ideal to cheer up any corner of your home.

Reindeer ornament, £4, Tesco



MODERN METAL

Andrea shows how contemporary red metal chairs can work even in a more traditional setting.

Red Xavier Pauchard Tolix-style dining chair, £54.99, Lakeland Furniture

GROUP MEETING

Grouping together inexpensive baubles is a quick, effective and affordable way to add a festive flourish.

Mixed baubles, £1 for pack of 10, Poundland



GREEN ROOM

An earthy shade of green is a great way to create a cosy feel without being overbearing.

Garden Absolute matt emulsion, £35 per 2.5L, Little Greene



Our home is the ideal space for Christmas

Victoria and Nigel have created the perfect home for large family gatherings



When Victoria and Nigel Cook were courting as teenagers they often walked hand-in-hand past a ramshackle old farm steading near Shotley Bridge in Country Durham. And now, having recently celebrated their 23rd wedding anniversary, they're living in that very same spot. 'We always thought it would make a lovely home,' says Victoria. 'And here we are 30 years later!'

The farmsteading was converted into four properties 13 years ago, and the Cooks bought one of the houses directly from friends a few years later in 2005. 'It wasn't

officially up for sale, but our friends knew we were looking to move,' says Victoria. 'We wanted to be in the catchment area for schools in Northumberland. However, we couldn't find anything we liked in Hexham or Corbridge, and had missed out on a barn we hoped to convert when it sold for a high price after sealed bids.' Having resigned themselves to staying put, their friends suggested they come and take a look at their 150-year-old converted pig shed. 'We saw it on the Tuesday, absolutely loved it and had an offer accepted on the Friday,' recalls Victoria.

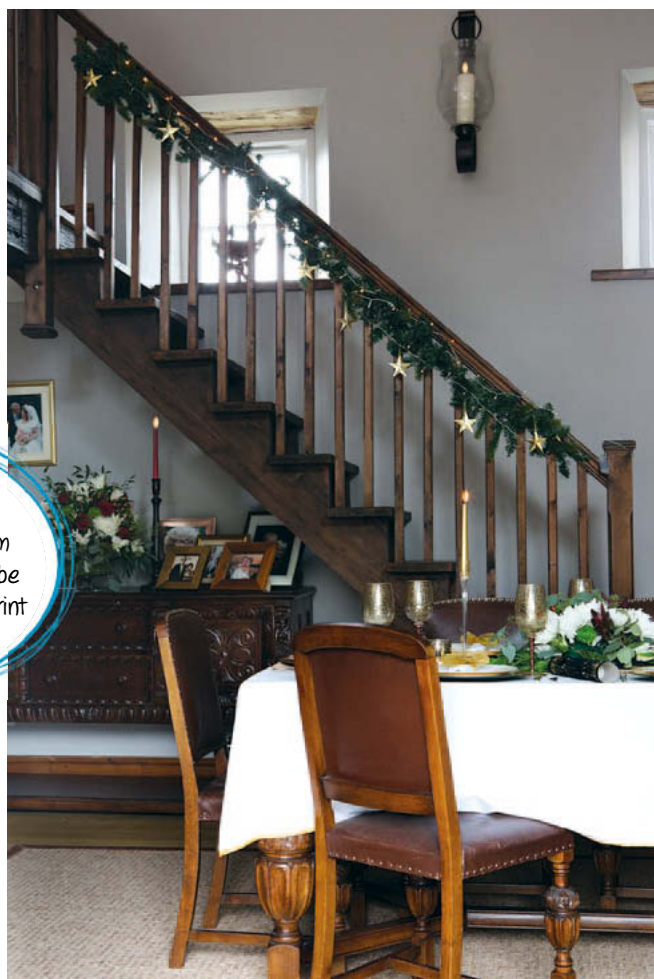
◀ With its lofty proportions, cosy wood burner and antique furniture, Victoria and Nigel's dining room lends itself perfectly to Christmas dinner. They've recently re-painted the walls in Dove Tale by Farrow & Ball and chose the decadent Orchid wallpaper print from Cole & Son for the alcoves

Good idea!

When wallpapering a room with dramatic proportions be brave and opt for a large print for maximum impact.

It was the dining room that swung the sale for the couple. 'We thought we'd seen the whole house then they showed us the dining room and our jaws dropped – we just had to have it,' says Victoria. Although they still hadn't sold their home in nearby Ebchester village, the Cooks were keen to press ahead with the move. 'There were a difficult couple of months when we were paying two mortgages, but after Christmas we had lots of viewings and it soon sold,' admits Victoria.

Although initially they didn't want to change a thing, the Cooks have decorated each room over the years as well as replacing the kitchen and bathroom. However, their favourite room is still the dramatic double



▲ The stairs lead to a mezzanine floor above the dining room which features an en suite shower room, so dinner party guests can stay the night. Victoria loves decorating the dining room for Christmas in traditional white, gold and red, and has adorned her antique furniture with festive floral displays from Cosmic Flower Shop

height dining room, which looks amazing at Christmas time. Although their antique table seats six, the couple normally bring in an additional table so they can seat between 14 and 18 guests. 'Nigel's made a wooden top for one of the outside tables, so it's level with the existing table when we bring it inside,' explains Victoria.

Last year the couple revamped the room, which used to have a red feature chimney breast, by painting the walls grey and decorating the alcoves with a large patterned wallpaper. They also had the flooring re-sanded and oiled, as it was badly marked and scratched. 'It was a bit of a challenge because of the scale of the room,' says Victoria. 'When you're sent a small ▶

◀ A wood-burning stove brings some cosiness to the full-height dining room and with woodland on the doorstep, gathering firewood isn't a problem. 'The wood burners were already here, and they were one of the character features that made us want to buy the house,' says Victoria



COME ON IN...



THE HOME

A 150-year-old, four-bedroom converted pig shed in Shotley Bridge, County Durham.

WHO LIVES HERE?

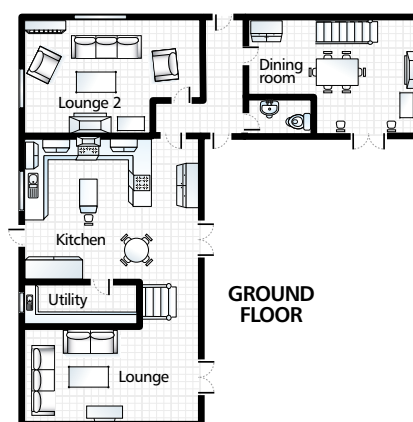
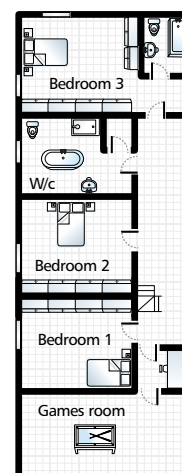
Victoria, 44, and husband Nigel Cook, 46, with their two children, Jack, 20, and Ellen, 17, plus dog Alfie. Victoria is a teaching assistant and Nigel runs a haulage company.

WHAT'S THE BEST THING ABOUT LIVING HERE?

'It feels very rural and tranquil with no street lights, but it's just a 10-15 minute walk into the village where there's a pub, restaurant, bakery and other shops.'

ANY DIY DISASTERS?

'When we first painted the lounge, I chose a sage green suede-effect paint, but it looked awful. I painted over it the next day, but it took ages to cover the grain effect.'



For stockists see page 118

REAL HOME

♥ Victoria had the dresser made by Bridgewater Interiors to tie in with the new kitchen. It houses her collection of pretty crockery from the likes of Nicholas Moss, Pip Studio, Cath Kidston and Emma Bridgewater, mixed in with wedding presents and vintage finds. 'I think I need to stop buying crockery now as there's no more room!' she says



◁ wallpaper sample of a big print, it's difficult to visualise how it will look on the walls. In addition to this, as the ceiling is so high we needed a scaffolding tower for the decorating work. However, it was definitely worth it. Being such a unique room, you need to do it justice so I'm really pleased with how it's turned out.' It's now a much better setting for the couple's treasured dining table and sideboard which were inherited from Nigel's grandfather. He bought them from a local furniture store after they had been crafted specially for the boardroom of a Newcastle shipbuilder, who cancelled the order. The look has been continued through to the mezzanine floor, which is perfect for guests staying over after dinner parties.

Another room which comes into its own at Christmas is the red living room. In here the couple painted over the terracotta and cream walls, opting for a red chimney breast and floral wallpaper in the alcoves. They also ripped up the carpet and replaced it with reclaimed parquet flooring, as carpet wasn't practical with a dog. 'Nigel had stored some furniture for a friend and they gave us the flooring for free in return,' explains Victoria. 'It was black and filthy, but looks amazing now we've cleaned it up, especially with the wooden beams and log burner that were already here.'

Although Victoria loved the farmhouse

With its cosy wood burner and red feature wall, the living room comes into its own at Christmas. 'I tend to go for traditional red, green and white decorations to suit the age of the house,' says Victoria, who's added cranberry cushions and a tartan checked throw, both from Laura Ashley



'I like it to feel cosy and comfortable so people feel welcome when they come into my house.'



♥ Victoria loves the hand-painted oak kitchen that was installed by Bridgewater Interiors. It fits in perfectly with the existing cream Aga, which is ideal for making mince pies at Christmas. She's teamed this with pretty pastels and farmhouse-style accessories, such as the striped jug and Country Show tea towels from Laura Ashley

Good idea!

Instead of tiled splashbacks, that can collect dirt in the grouting, opt for wood panelling. It can be painted the same colour as the kitchen for a rustic country feel.



► The two arched windows in the living room let in plenty of light and hint at the building's agricultural past. They've been dressed with striped curtains from Next, while a rustic bookcase from Dyvels Home in Corbridge fits perfectly in the corner. Victoria's Barker & Stonehouse sofa is adorned with cosy cushions with a homespun crafty feel from Laura Ashley, Kirstie Allsopp Home Living and John Lewis

kitchen when she first moved in, she felt it needed an island unit as it's the centre of the home where everyone congregates. Since it's their forever home, they opted to invest in a completely new kitchen in 2010, choosing bespoke units and worktops from Bridgewater Interiors plus Travertine flooring from The Tile Shed. 'The previous kitchen had over-wide benches so we weren't sure whether there was room for an island unit, but Bridgewater were really clever with the layout,' says Victoria. ▷



Victoria has opted for purple accents in the master bedroom including a Swansbrook duvet cover and Anastasia amethyst throw from Laura Ashley teamed with purple cushions from John Lewis. The bed includes handy storage underneath, which is essential as there's no loft in the home



‘The house was originally designed as a bungalow, then the first floor was added into the eaves. Without any loft space we now store Christmas decorations in the shed!’

Jack's bedroom has been kept understated with a simple leather bed, duvet and throw from Next along with a Matalan knitted cushion and duck egg blue Newick Tweed cushion from Laura Ashley



The master bedroom is spacious with an en suite shower room, but was rather dark when the Cooks first moved in. ‘Because we only had the two small, low windows, we added a roof light and now it's much brighter,’ says Victoria. An unusual ledge around the room displays treasured family photos and typography picked up on weekends away





▲ As the Cooks aren't overlooked by neighbours, they were able to install a bath in the centre of the room by the window to enjoy the rural views while bathing. The calming neutral colour scheme is complemented with simple white sculpted blossom towels from Laura Ashley

Good idea!

In rooms with sloping ceilings consider adding a wooden ledge where the ceiling and wall meets. This creates a platform to display your favourite items and makes a feature of the space.

◁ The mixture of cream and aqua oak painted units with curved edges provides the perfect backdrop for Victoria's collection of colourful crockery, while vintage metal signs, bunting and a spotty blind finish off the look perfectly.

Finally Victoria set about creating her dream bathroom as the existing layout didn't make the best use of the space. 'I had always wanted a bath in the middle of the room to enjoy the rural views,' she says. 'So we changed the layout starting with a free-standing bath from Bathstore and added a walk-in shower where the bath used to be, as well as moving the WC to



▲ With fittings from Bathstore plus splashback tiling and flooring from The Tile Shed, the couple's new bathroom is now the serene retreat they wanted

another wall. We also added a roof light in the sloping ceiling and re-painted the blue walls in more neutral shades.'

The only thing Victoria would change now is to transform the first floor spare room from a dumping ground into a gym to work off those mince pies! 'I can't ever imagine moving,' she says. 'So it looks like it will be Christmas at the Cooks' for the foreseeable future.'

YH

5 IDEAS TO STEAL



YEAR ROUND APPEAL

Mix traditional and contemporary with a metallic deer head, which suits any age of house

Aluminium deer, £24.99, Dobbies

GOING FOR GOLD

Add some decadence to your Christmas table with a gold table runner.

Gold sequin-embroidered table runner, £14.99, H&M



BATHE IN STYLE

Go for an angular free-standing bath for a modern look with clean lines

Apollo roll-top bath, £499, Victoria Plumb



HOMESPUN COMFORT

Make your guests feel at home with a charming linen heart cushion for a relaxed country vibe

Oatmeal heart cushion by Karen Hilton Designs, £18, Swanky Maison

SIGN OF THE TIMES

Signs and lettering are dotted around Victoria's home adding to the homely feel

Dream It Wall Sign, £8, House Envy





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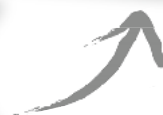
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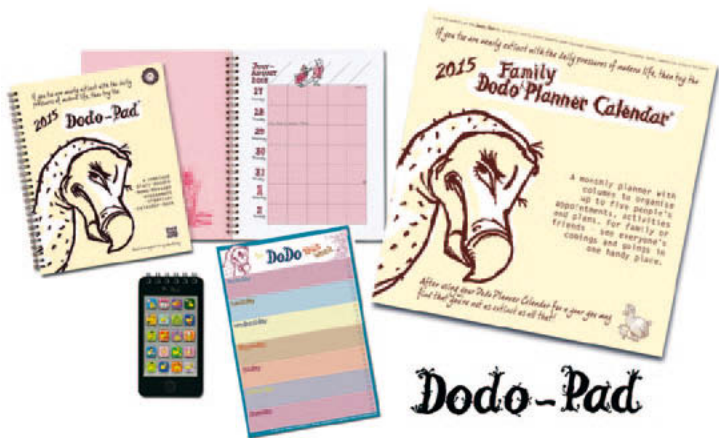
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The chunky oak coffee table from Simply Dutch, is made from church pews and is Helen's favourite piece of furniture. The sofas, from Rodgers of York, are layered with cushions from Robert & Ruby along with red and tartan Neptune throws from Aberford Interiors for an ultra cosy look



Our home is a real family affair

Helen and Mark Nicholson have created a compact country home from a former cow shelter

Christmas dinner is literally a homegrown affair for Helen and Mark Nicholson, who both come from farming backgrounds. 'Our parents arrive bearing gifts of meat, fresh fruit, vegetables and home baking,' says Helen. 'Mark's family are dairy farmers and my family runs an arable farm, tea room and farm shop, so the table groans with fresh produce.'

But with Christmas being one of the busiest times of the year for both families, Helen likes to get organised well in advance so that the festivities run like clockwork. 'The house really comes into its own at Christmas,' says

Helen. 'It's one of the few times of the year when we use every bit of the house. We start off in the kitchen where we all gather round the big table for dinner, and then we light the fire and head for the living room. It can be blowing a gale outside, but we are always warm and cosy in here.'

The square stone-built house features just two main rooms downstairs – a spacious kitchen with high open beams, and the living room with its traditional stone-built fireplace. It was built eight years ago from a former field shelter belonging to Mark's parents, who live in the main farmhouse two fields away. They



had always planned to convert the simple stone building into a two-bedroom home for their retirement. But when Mark left college and moved back to the family farm to work, it was agreed that Mark and Helen should convert it and live in it themselves with the aim of doing a house-swap when Mark's parents retire and he takes over the farm. 'It was a joint venture because we wanted to create a home which would suit everyone's needs over time. Fortunately we all share similar tastes, so it was very easy to work out the design and style of the house,' says Helen. 'We all wanted to create a straightforward, practical country home with a traditional farmhouse kitchen.'

Mark did a lot of the work himself and the



▲ Curtains from Dunelm frame the window, which was fitted into the original barn opening. The area between the sofa and kitchen is used as Mark's home office space

MAKE YOUR OWN FESTIVE BUNTING

1 Draw a triangle on a piece of cardboard to create a template. Using a selection of your favourite fabric remnants, pin the template to the fabric and cut around it with fabric scissors. Thick fabric is best to prevent it curling at the edges. Alternatively, cut slightly wider than the template to create sufficient overlap for a hem. Repeat until you have a sufficient number of triangles.

2 Space the triangles evenly along a strip of binding tape, fold the shortest edge over the tape and pin in place. Sew the flags with a straight stitch.

3 Leave enough tape at either end for hanging and display with pride.

▼ The rustic kitchen includes oak units from Ripon Interiors and a farmhouse table and chairs bought on eBay. The Voyage Game Birds range curtains are from Robert & Ruby. The floor tiles, from Prices Paving, are practical for Helen and Mark's country lifestyle

conversion took just seven months. The barn had already been re-roofed so the earth floor was laid with under-floor heating and concrete to create the main living room, and a new floor was built above for two bedrooms and a family bathroom. The building was then extended in reclaimed stone and slate to include a dining kitchen, utility and cloakroom. 'The original building only had one large arched opening so we had to create all the doors and windows,' says Helen. 'Fortunately we had no issues with planning because we were converting the barn for our own use and we were keeping its original style.' ▽

Good idea!

Take cuttings of holly, fir and laurel and mix with large pine cones to decorate oak beams and the tops of cupboards to create some seasonal style in the kitchen.



COME ON IN...

THE HOME

A 250-year-old, two-bedroom, stone barn near Ripon, North Yorkshire.

WHO LIVES HERE?

Helen, 30, and Mark, 29, Nicholson. Helen owns Robert & Ruby (www.robertandruby.co.uk), a shop selling gifts and home accessories. Mark is a feed nutritionist and dairy farmer.

WHAT'S THE BEST THING ABOUT YOUR HOUSE?

'The house is cosy and practical and the location is beautiful, set on a hillside in the Yorkshire Dales.'

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE ROOM?

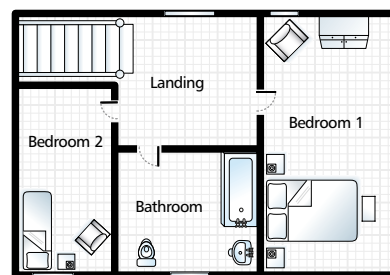
'The kitchen is really comfortable and homely and where we live most of the time.'

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE ITEM?

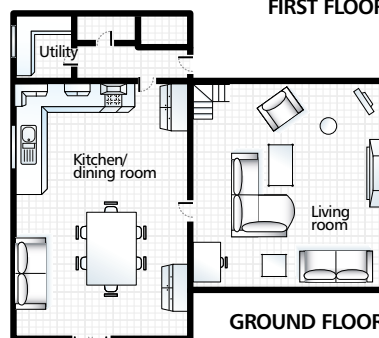
'The rustic coffee table in the living room, which is made from church pews.'

WHERE DO YOU LIKE TO SHOP?

'Most of my soft furnishings and many of the Christmas decorations come from my own shop, Robert & Ruby, but I also like James Brindley of Harrogate for decorative pieces and Rodgers of York for furniture.'



FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

For stockists see page 118

'It can be blowing a gale outside, but we are always warm and cosy in here.'

◁ Helen and Mark lived with his parents until their new home was ready to move into. Then they added their own stamp to the spacious rooms, choosing furniture which was neutral and rustic in style.

The fireplace in the living room is built from stone reclaimed from a demolished farm wall and was fitted with an open multi-fuel grate. Helen and Mark chose a large corner sofa which brings the seating closer to the fire and separates it from the rest of the room, which also serves as Mark's office. 'We considered building a wall in here to make two smaller rooms, but left it open with a view to changing it further down the line,' explains Helen. 'With a house this size you try to make use of every inch of space.'

Living in the country means Helen and Mark spend a lot of time outdoors, often walking their rough haired Jack Russell, Ruby, across the fields, so the house had to be practical and walker-friendly. Many of the fixtures and fittings are oak and the kitchen floor is tiled for easy cleaning. 'We kept the décor cream throughout to offset all the



▲ The top of the original barn opening lets natural light into the bedroom to supplement the roof lights. The latch door and beam over the door frame reflect the barn's rural past



▲ The larger of the two bedrooms features oak beams and a raised ceiling. All the furniture is from Kitchings Furniture shop in Bedale and Helen chose bedding and throws from Debenhams in soft browns to reflect the natural, rustic look of the house

Good idea!

Using fabric remnants is an affordable way to upholster furniture, as Helen has shown with the matching fabric covered headboard and chair in the guest room.

◀ 'The guest bedroom is a work in progress,' says Helen, who covered the bedhead and old armchair in fabric remnants and added bedding from Dunelm. The cushions are from Robert & Ruby and the curtains were made to match the furniture with fabric from CB Furnishings



➔ The understated bathroom is fitted with sanitaryware from Ripon Interiors and tiles from Prices Paving in Snape. The small shelf unit, from Helen's mum, is ideal for holding baskets containing toiletries and towels

natural wood and stone,' says Helen. 'These old barns can be quite dark and oppressive if you're not careful, so we have kept the walls light and the rooms open to avoid this.'

The house is full of natural character, including the big 'A'-frame beams in the kitchen open to the apex of the extension, and the different levels between the two main rooms, which reflects the property's hillside location. And there is a country theme to the furniture and accessories – Helen likes fabrics which reflect Mark's love of outdoor pursuits, and natural textures such as tweed and wool. 'I often find things I like at country shows, but I also bring home things from my shop,' says Helen. 'It's in a converted barn on my parents' farm near Helmsley and is heavily influenced by the countryside, so there is quite a big overlap between things I buy for the shop and things I choose for our own home.'

Helen decorates in a traditional red theme at Christmas, hanging bunting and stockings across the fireplace, covering the beams and cupboard tops with natural foliage and making



every room look cosy with layers of throws and cushions. 'I start planning Christmas a long time before the day,' says Helen. 'I like to be organised. Luckily all the fresh food comes from the two farms so I know I'm not going to run out of essentials, but I don't start to relax until the last plate of turkey is served up and we can all sit down and enjoy the start of a big family Christmas at home.' YH



FRAME YOUR FIRE

Like Helen, dress your fireplace for Christmas with some suitably festive bunting.

Hessian tree print bunting, £8.99, Ginger Ray

FARMHOUSE CHIC

Enjoy your Christmas dinner in comfort with a classic dining chair with rush seat.

Jak cream dining chair, £60, Habitat



FAKE IT

If you're not lucky enough to have a supply of free greenery on your doorstep opt for a good replica.

Holly and berry lit garland, £55, Laura Ashley

GET INTO THE GROOVE

To continue the rustic look in your bathroom opt for a tongue and groove bath panel

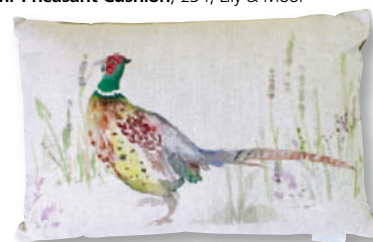
EASipanel tongue and groove, £9.29 per 516mm x 915mm panel, EASipanel



PHEASANT STYLE

Pheasant motifs are a hot trend for winter, and a great way to give your home a cosy rustic feel.

Mr Pheasant Cushion, £34, Lily & Moor



Our home is filled with treasures that we love

Yvonne Cook has created a small haven of vintage style in Weston Super Mare



Yvonne Cook's home looks well established and authentically Victorian, but the truth is that the interior is much younger than its appearance would suggest. 'We wanted a Victorian property, but everything was out of our price range, so compromises had to be made. The house is Victorian, but the interior had been modernized, with all traces of its heritage removed in the process,' explains Yvonne. 'However, I fell for it straight away because I knew that with some effort we could have the period home that we so desperately wanted.'

The appeal of the house was definitely apparent from the beginning, as Yvonne could barely contain her excitement when she was looking around the property for the first time. 'I was practically putting in an offer on the spot, but thankfully Mark, my

husband, was more pragmatic and kept me quiet,' she recalls. Once home Mark put in a considered offer that was accepted and in October 2006 the family moved in.

As the house had been modernized in the 1980s, it was very much in keeping with the fashion of the time, with an avocado bathroom suite, brown carpets, period fireplaces that had been replaced with brick surrounds with spaces for ornaments and bedrooms that were chock-full of useful, but overbearing fitted wardrobes. Yvonne's instinct was to rush in and get rid of it all as soon as possible, but this wasn't practical as the family had budget constraints. 'We didn't really have any money, so we had to prioritise our needs and do the work ourselves. We also scoured the internet >





The pretty kitchen is full of character and charm, thanks to open shelving displaying vintage crockery, brightly coloured tins and jars filled with old fashioned sweets and biscuits. The cooker splashback has a pretty piece of floral wallpaper behind it to create a charming backdrop

◀ The dining table was one of Yvonne's bargain eBay finds costing only £10. And Yvonne spotted the church pew in a garden and made the owner an offer. 'Over the years, the pew had acquired a lovely patina from being outside which I really liked. It is now one of my favourite pieces in our home.' Yvonne creates a truly vintage Christmas table with antique plates and glassware. Even her Christmas cake is topped with decorations from the 1950s

▶ Walls painted in a homely sage green and a reclaimed cast-iron radiator offer a warm welcome to the Cook home. The Victorian glass-fronted cabinet is a much-loved and useful possession and was a gift from Mark for Yvonne's birthday



COME ON IN...



THE HOME

A three-bedroom, Victorian end of terrace house in Weston Super Mare, North Somerset.

WHO LIVES HERE?

Yvonne and Mark Cook with their children, Jack, 10, and Billy, nine. Yvonne runs Vintage Von (www.vintagevon.co.uk), a vintage homeware store and Mark runs Snippers, a 140-year-old family barber shop.

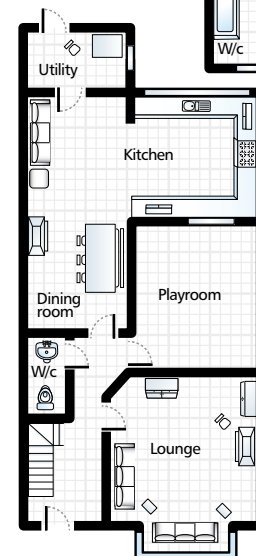
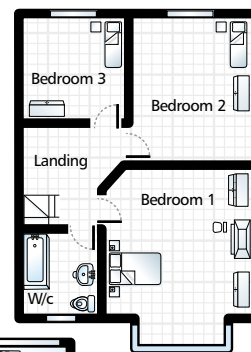
WHAT'S YOUR TOP TIP?

'Go with your instinct when you see a piece. If you like it, and it is within your budget then buy it. Do not worry about whether it matches or where it will go, just take it home and enjoy what you have bought.'

WHAT'S THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE YOU CAN OFFER?

'When you're renovating your home, take your time, and be patient. The same goes for dressing the interior, buy what you love and enjoy it.'

FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

For stockists see page 118



‘Look for quality in a piece. Older furniture was built to last and the joints in the frames and the stitching will reflect the workmanship.’

◁ and reclamation yards for bargains,’ Yvonne explains.

As Jack and Billy were toddlers when the family moved in, and the potty training years were starting, a modern and convenient bathroom was the first priority for the home. ‘Mark ripped out the avocado suite replacing it with simple white sanitaryware that I found online, we recycled the floorboards to make the bath panel, and then we installed a downstairs toilet, to save carting the boys upstairs,’ says Yvonne.

Next to go were the chocolate brown carpets. ‘They were old and made the living room dark, so they had to go. Once lifted we found that the original boards were handsome, but terribly draughty, so I made a huge and quite costly mistake,’ admits

Yvonne. ‘I put down pale carpets, and had a log burner put in. It was a disaster with two toddlers, the carpets were filthy all the time and they only lasted 18 months!’

By 2010 the family had saved up enough money to start renovating again and the extra time had afforded them the chance to think carefully about what would be the best use of their space and money. After some careful consideration the first project was to extend the back of the house to create a large kitchen dining room. ‘We wanted to create as useful a space as possible, but didn’t want to lose too much of the garden as the boys needed space to play outside,’ explains Yvonne. ‘Our extension was just big enough to need planning permission which slowed things down a bit,’ says Yvonne.





✦ Fresh pink, floral Laura Ashley wallpaper gives the living room a nostalgic feel, while the tawny grey sofa dressed with Laura Ashley bird print cushions keeps the look fresh

Good idea!

Yvonne groups her treasured pictures together for greater impact and creates a story-like quality to her display.

✦ Yvonne spotted the corner cabinet in a haberdashery store that was closing down and made an offer to buy it. Mark cut it out of the store and re-fitted it in their home. It looks like it has always been there, especially now that it is filled with vintage treasures



However, Mark and his father, Alan, were able to get building work underway, just as the winter took hold. 'Mark was driving the JCB to dig out the foundations of the extension, and then they would both cart tonnes of soil and bricks out to the front, which they painstakingly sorted through to see if they could re-use later. Then to make it harder, it started snowing. They worked so hard in such terrible weather. I am so grateful to them,' she says.

The extension took seven months in total with Mark working on the project at weekends and in the evenings, while Yvonne sourced the fittings for the interior. 'The oak flooring was a reclamation yard bargain, and the base units are from Ikea and I added vintage handles to them. ▷

✦ The open wall space between the office and the kitchen extension marks what was the back door of the house. The walls have since been painted in the elegant shade of French Grey from Little Greene



✦ Mark installed the tongue and groove paneling so that Billy could have a shelf for his toy cars. Yvonne then painted the walls in a blue to match the colour that appears in Billy's favourite super hero comics. The Laura Ashley bed is dressed in reindeer bedding that was a bargain buy from Primark

‘At the heart of our home is my love of all things vintage and antique.’

◁ I hung vintage plate racks and open cabinets on the walls to give the room an authentic and interesting feel and I like to have things I need to hand,’ says Yvonne.

Vintage accessories are a recurring theme in the Cook home. ‘My childhood was very modest and my mum would recycle and make do, only buying things that she needed or loved and the habit has stayed with me,’ explains Yvonne. ‘I spent many hours of my childhood rummaging in jumble sales and flea markets and the joy of seeking out great finds is still a joy.’ As a result every piece and

accessory has a story in the Cooks’ home. ‘At the heart of our home is my love of all things vintage and antique. I love the quality of older furniture and I am fascinated by the stories behind older pieces, and I love the thrill of finding unusual things.’

And Yvonne’s home not only reflects her passions, but also opened up a new way of life for her. ‘When people visited they would ask where I found this or that and would buy bits from me so my passion for vintage homewares became a way of making money,’ she explains. By autumn 2012 the house was



✦ Yvonne groups together things in her typically creative style. ‘I try to do this in the shop too, so that people can see the beauty in much loved items.’

Good idea!

Put vintage crates to good use all over the home, as bedside tables, magazine racks, and as coffee tables. They are so versatile and look great.

✦ A chequered linoleum floor and a simple corner cabinet create a classic Victorian feel. Mark cleverly created the bath panel out of some old floorboards and the corner cabinet was donated by Yvonne's sister

✦ Yvonne loves the light and spacious bedroom. The fireplace is the perfect size and colour for the room and the vintage Stockman mannequin gives the room a focal point and height

over-flowing with vintage finds and after much discussion with Mark she decided to open a shop. 'It was scary and exciting, but I had to try and I'm so pleased that I did. I love sourcing pieces and creating room sets. And it's great when I can see that people really enjoy visualising how you can use vintage furniture and accessories in a modern setting,' says Yvonne. 'Christmas is my favourite time of year. Now that I have my shop Vintage Von, I can let my passion for nostalgia run wild when I am dressing the windows and making vintage displays and then I get to do it all again at home,' says Yvonne.

The house itself is not quite finished, Mark and Yvonne would like to convert the loft into an office space, but it is already a much loved and happy home. 'The house is the sum of all our efforts, it reminds me what we can do as family and I am proud of what we have achieved together.' **YH**

5 IDEAS TO STEAL



PARTY TIME

Give your home a vintage festive feel with classic red honeycomb paper balls and bells.

Red and white honeycomb ball decorations, £6.99 for pack of three, Hunkydory Home

PAPER FLOWERS

Floral wallpaper needn't mean a return to chintz if you opt for a more contemporary take on it.

Bella by Arthouse in cassi pink/teal, £10.99 per roll, Wallpaper Direct



ADVERTISE YOUR TASTE

Add a quirky vintage feel to your walls by hanging a variety of metal advertising signs.

Richard Smith Catalogue of Seeds tin sign, £17.99, AllPosters.co.uk



IN THE DOG HOUSE

If like Yvonne you have a love for quirky dog-themed accessories, the Stanley range at Cath Kidston is a must-see.

Stanley salt and pepper shakers, £16, Cath Kidston



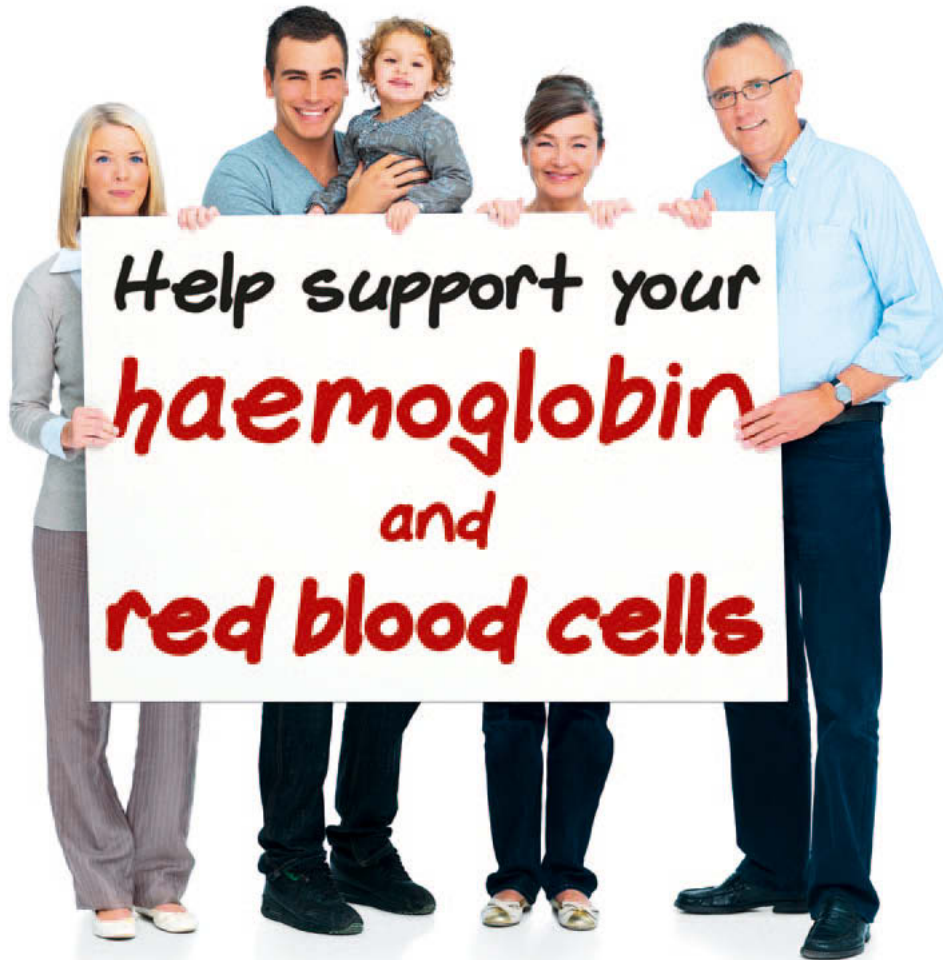
STOP AT RED

Like Yvonne, be bold with your lighting and opt for a red light shade for a warm glow.

Red 365+ Brasa pendant, £37, Ikea



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* (IRI value data: 52 w/e 2 Nov, 13).



Food & Drink

Celebrate Christmas with a festive feast



3 ways with... oranges

- For a topping for buttered toast, take the **zest from 3 oranges**, then remove the pith and slice the oranges thinly. Place in a pan with **180g clear honey** and a **pinch of cinnamon**, to taste. Over a medium heat, bring to the boil then simmer for 10-12 minutes, stirring regularly. Use straight away or keep in a sealed jar in the fridge for a couple of weeks.
- Make a sticky glaze for your Boxing Day ham – 30 minutes before the end of cooking paint on a glaze made from **orange juice, mustard** and **dark soft brown sugar**.
- Carefully cut off the peel from **4 oranges**, then slice into strips. Place in a pan of cold water, bring to the boil for 2 minutes, then drain. Repeat 3 more times to remove the bitterness. Dissolve **400g caster sugar** in **400ml water**, over a gentle heat, with **1 split vanilla pod** and **2 star anise**. Add the peel and simmer for 1-3 hours, until translucent. Drain and dry out in a very low oven on greaseproof paper for an hour, turn off the heat and leave in the oven overnight. Scatter with **caster sugar** and the candied peel is ready to eat. Dip in **dark chocolate** for an extra treat.

This month we love...

The Makers & Merchants range, not just for the artisan produce and great-quality ingredients, but also for the gorgeous, vintage-inspired packaging, in red and white. There are chocolate, biscuits and sweets, as well as pickles, olives, marmalades and dressings. Plus, we can't wait to crack open the mulling syrups for cider and wine, now that Christmas is approaching. Some of the range is now available from House of Fraser.



If you do one thing this month...

Raise a glass to Christmas with this year's Christmas Ale from Shepherd Neame. Available on draught during December, and as 500ml bottles from www.shepherdneame.co.uk/shop, this winter beer is perfect with Christmas pudding with its warming, spiced fruit flavours.

Try me...

Now available in the UK through John Lewis, Coole Swan is a delicious Irish cream liqueur, using a blend of single malt Irish whiskey, white Belgian chocolate and fresh dairy cream. Poured over ice, it's delicious with a warm mince pie, or for sipping on its own after dinner. You could even pour it over ice cream. Priced from £22 for 750ml.



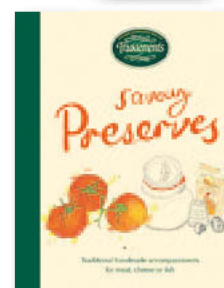
Eat me...

Popping into a Carluccio's store just before Christmas is always a treat, with the luxurious gold foil packaging and rich colours inspired by Italy. It's a fantastic place to stock up on after-dinner treats and gifts for hosts, but with so much to choose from it can be tricky to make a decision. If it helps, we love the Clemente in Camicia, £16.95, candied clementine segments coated in dark chocolate – like a grown-up, very indulgent chocolate orange – it's divine.



Buy me...

Whether you want to make a batch of preserves to go with the season's cheese, meat and fish, or are thinking about making your own gifts this Christmas, the book you need by your side is Tracklements Savoury Preserves, £16.99, Pavilion Books. There are 100 recipes, so whether you want to make a pickle, chutney, sauce or mustard, or a fruit cheese, jelly or butter, there's plenty to choose from.



CHECK OUT WWW.YOURHOMEMAGAZINE.CO.UK/FOOD FOR MORE TASTY RECIPES

Feature Laura Higgins Main image iStock

Christmas lunch *revamped*

Ring the changes by adding a few new flavours to your traditional Christmas lunch

Parma ham, sausage, almond and fig loaf

PREPARATION TIME 25 MINUTES

COOKING TIME 40-45 MINUTES SERVES 10

YOU WILL NEED

✓12 slices Parma ham ✓50g butter
✓1 onion, finely chopped ✓500g sausage meat
✓100g unsalted almonds, roughly chopped
✓75g dried figs, chopped ✓12 sage leaves, chopped
✓handful parsley leaves, chopped
✓75g cooked chestnuts, roughly chopped
✓1 large egg, beaten

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4. Grease a loaf tin, approximately 22cm x 11cm, with olive oil. Line the tin with the Parma ham, making sure the slices hang over the edge.
- Melt the butter in a frying pan over a medium heat and fry the onion until soft, but not brown. Remove from the heat and cool slightly.
- Place the sausage meat in a large bowl and season with salt and pepper. Add the cooked onion, almonds, figs, sage, parsley and chestnuts. Add the egg and mix everything together thoroughly.
- Press the mixture into the tin and cover the top with the overhanging Parma ham. Roast in the oven for 40-45 minutes or until cooked through.
- Remove from the oven and allow to rest for 15 minutes before turning the loaf out.



Roasted turkey crown

PREPARATION TIME 10 MINUTES

COOKING TIME 35 MINUTES PER 1KG,
PLUS 25 MINUTES SERVES 10

YOU WILL NEED

✓5kg Golden Turkey breast crown ✓50g butter
✓10 rashers streaky bacon ✓bunch of thyme

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6. Rub the butter all over the turkey crown and season well with salt and pepper. Lay the bacon over the crown, covering it completely. Place the crown in a roasting tin with the thyme and place in the centre of the oven.
- Cook for 25 minutes, until the bacon is well cooked. Remove the bacon and set aside. Baste the crown with the juices, cover with buttered foil and return to the oven.

Turn the oven down to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4 and cook for 35 minutes per 1kg, until the juices run clear. Remove the foil 30 minutes before the end of cooking.

- Replace the bacon rashers back on the turkey 5 minutes before the end of the cooking time and serve with the slices of turkey, alternatively keep the bacon warm and serve with the turkey. Let the crown rest in a warm place for 30 minutes before carving.

Recipes courtesy of Golden Turkeys



California prune and goat's cheese tarts

PREPARATION TIME 20 MINUTES

COOKING TIME 30 MINUTES SERVES 6

YOU WILL NEED

✓500g pack short crust pastry ✓75g walnuts, roughly chopped ✓125g California prunes, roughly chopped ✓3 tsp freshly chopped thyme leaves, plus 6 stalks for garnish ✓200g semi-soft goat's cheese, crumbled ✓150ml double cream ✓2 eggs

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6.
- Divide the pastry into 6 portions then roll out each one and use to line 6 x 10cm round loose bottom flan tins. Trim, then line with parchment paper and baking beans and bake in the oven for about 15 minutes until the pastry edges are pale golden. Remove the beans and paper and put the tart cases to one side.
- Mix together the walnuts, California prunes, thyme leaves and goat's cheese and season well with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper. Divide the mixture between the tart cases.
- Lightly whisk the cream and eggs together then pour carefully over the tarts. Add a pinch of freshly ground black pepper to each one and put in the oven to bake for about 15 minutes or until golden and set.
- Remove and leave for 5 minutes before serving. Serve topped with a thyme leaf, a lightly dressed salad and a generous spoonful of tangy chutney.

Recipe courtesy of California Prunes

Butternut bells

PREPARATION TIME 15 MINUTES

COOKING TIME 1 HOUR 20 MINUTES SERVES 4-6

YOU WILL NEED

✓2-3 small butternut squash **For the filling** ✓1 red onion, finely chopped ✓1 tbsp olive oil ✓4 cloves garlic, crushed ✓100g walnuts, roughly chopped ✓3 tomatoes, roughly chopped ✓15g raisins ✓20g dried apricots, roughly chopped ✓300g tinned Puy lentils, drained and rinsed ✓100g pine nuts ✓2 tbsp lemon juice ✓½ tsp smoked paprika ✓½ tsp vegan stock powder mixed with 100ml boiling water ✓1 tsp sage, roughly chopped **For the garnish** ✓1 raw beetroot, peeled and cut into very small cubes ✓1 tsp fresh parsley, roughly chopped ✓1 tsp fresh sage, roughly chopped ✓½ tsp smoked paprika

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4.
- Individually wrap the butternut squash in foil and bake them in the oven for around 50 minutes, or until soft. Set aside and allow to cool down.
- While the butternut squash are cooling, start to make the filling. Gently fry the onion in the oil for 5 minutes, then add all the other ingredients for the filling and simmer for 15 minutes. Season to taste



with salt and pepper. Once finished, set aside.

- Once the squash are cool, cut them in half and scoop out the seeds along with a little of the flesh.

- Add the filling mixture to the squash and bake for

a further 10 minutes. To serve, garnish with beetroot, herbs and paprika.

Recipe courtesy of The Vegetarian Society





Spicy chilli-cinnamon sweet potatoes

PREPARATION TIME 10 MINUTES

COOKING TIME 35 MINUTES SERVES 4

YOU WILL NEED

✓3 large sweet potatoes ✓2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil ✓1 tsp ground cinnamon ✓2 finely chopped Fragata Piri Piri Hot Peppers

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat oven to 230°C/455°F/Gas Mark 8.
- Cut the potatoes into chunks, roughly about 2.5cm in size. Put the potatoes, olive oil, cinnamon and Fragata Piri Piri Hot Peppers into a large food bag. Seal and shake to evenly distribute the spices.
- Pour the contents of the bag onto a baking sheet and spread evenly. Add salt to taste, and cook for 15 minutes. Turn the potatoes, then return them to the oven for a further 15-20 minutes.

Recipe courtesy of Fragata



Parmesan and olive Brussels sprouts

PREPARATION TIME 10 MINUTES

COOKING TIME 11 MINUTES SERVES 4

YOU WILL NEED

✓675g Brussels sprouts ✓1 tsp salt ✓4 tbsp melted butter ✓4 tbsp grated Parmesan cheese ✓4 tbsp dried breadcrumbs ✓3 tbsp finely chopped Fragata pitted green olives ✓¼ tsp crushed Fragata garlic cloves ✓¼ tsp ground black pepper ✓¼ tsp seasoned salt

DIRECTIONS

- Trim the Brussels sprouts. Cut an X about 3mm deep in the stem of each sprout.
- Add the sprouts to a saucepan and cover with water. Add 1 tsp salt and bring to the boil. Cover and simmer for around 6 minutes until tender, then drain.
- Transfer the sprouts into a small casserole dish, drizzle 2 tablespoons of melted butter over the top and stir until evenly coated.
- In a separate bowl, mix together the Parmesan cheese, breadcrumbs, olives, garlic, pepper, seasoned salt and remaining butter. Pour the mixture over the sprouts, and heat under the grill for around 5 minutes, or until the crumb mixture is lightly browned.

Recipe courtesy of Fragata



Chantenay en papillote

PREPARATION TIME 10 MINUTES

COOKING TIME 20-40 MINUTES SERVES 4

YOU WILL NEED

✓400g Chantenay carrots ✓extra virgin olive oil or a little melted butter ✓3-4 tbsp Marsala or other sweet fortified wine such as sherry or Madeira ✓2 tbsp chopped tarragon

DIRECTIONS

■ Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6.

■ Grease a large piece of aluminium foil with extra virgin olive oil or butter. Pile up the carrots on the foil, season and add a little more oil or butter.

■ Fold up the foil like a parcel, leaving the top open. Pour in the wine and tarragon then loosely close the parcel leaving plenty of space to allow the air to circulate. Bake in the oven for about 20-40 minutes depending on the size of the pieces of carrot. Shake the parcel after about 10-15 minutes.

Recipe courtesy of Chantenay Carrots



Craisins and cherry cheesecake

PREPARATION TIME 35 MINUTES COOKING TIME 45 MINUTES SERVES 12

YOU WILL NEED

✓85g melted butter, plus extra for greasing ✓140g digestive biscuits, crushed ✓1 tbsp sugar ✓3 x 300g packs soft full-fat cream cheese at room temperature ✓250g caster sugar ✓3 tbsp plain flour ✓2 tsp vanilla extract ✓3 large eggs, plus 1 extra yolk, beaten ✓200ml carton soured cream ✓100g Ocean Spray® Craisins® Dried Cranberries ✓100g chocolate chips **For the sauce** ✓450g frozen mixed berries ✓125ml Ocean Spray® Cranberry Classic® juice drink ✓4 tbsp sugar ✓1 tbsp fresh lemon juice

DIRECTIONS

■ Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4. Line the base of a 23cm springform cake tin with parchment paper. Grease the base well with butter.

■ Mix the melted butter and biscuit crumbs well and press into the bottom of the tin. Bake in the centre of the oven for 10 minutes to set. Then set aside to cool.

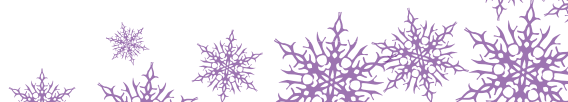
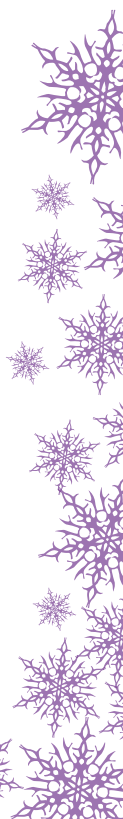
■ For the filling, increase the temperature to 230°C/455°F/Gas Mark 8. Beat in a large bowl the cream cheese, sugar, flour and a pinch of salt. Add the vanilla and whisk in the eggs and yolk a little at a time. Pour in the soured cream and gently mix until light. Finally stir in Ocean Spray® Craisins® Dried Cranberries and chocolate chips.

■ Grease the sides of the tin and pour the filling in evenly. Bake for 10 minutes, then reduce the heat back to 110°C/225°F/Gas Mark ¼, and continue to bake for 25 minutes until there is just a slight wobble in the centre. Turn off heat and allow to cool in the oven with the door slightly open for 1 hour. Don't worry if the top cracks.

■ To make the sauce, tip all the ingredients into a saucepan and heat for 15 minutes or so, until thickened. Leave to cool.

■ To serve, release the cheesecake from the tin by running a knife around the sides and transfer onto a plate. Top with as much sauce as you wish. Any remaining sauce can accompany each serving.

Recipe courtesy of Ocean Spray



Festive food for every occasion

Here's our pick of the food and drink essentials you need to enjoy the perfect fuss-free Christmas



Feature Laura Higgins

Incredibly moreish, enjoy with warm crusty bread

Chosen by You baking Camembert with chorizo, £3, Asda



▲ A winning flavour combination encased in buttery pastry

Taste the Difference handcrafted blackcurrant and cassis mince pies, £3.50, Sainsbury's

▼ Treat yourself, or a loved one, to a posh box of chocs

Christmas Sleekster, £24; Portly Penguins, £7.50, both Hotel Chocolat

For in front of the fire



▲ Raisins, brandy, cinnamon, ginger and orange zest – Christmas in a glass

Christmas cake liqueur, £9.99, M&S

It's party time!

▼ Up-market canapés for a sophisticated do

Finest frozen Mascarpone and Parmesan canapés, £3 for 130g, Tesco



▲ No-effort desserts are always a blessing for the hostess

Finest Crackling praline cheesecake crackers, £8 for six, Tesco

► An award-winning gin, at a pleasing price

Oliver Cromwell London Dry Gin, £10.19, Aldi



► If you can't indulge at Christmas when can you?

Peat and heather Scottish smoked salmon, £4.99 for 100g, Waitrose



The big day has arrived!

◀ Whip up Bloody Marys in a flash, just add vodka

Del Monte Tomato Spicy Mary, £1.99, available from Sainsbury's



▲ Perfect toasted and slathered in butter

Panettone Tradizionale, £16.95, Carluccio's

Crispy bacon with a very festive feeling



Christmas tree smoked bacon, £2.99 for 200g, Morrisons

The ultimate
Christmas
lunch

Succulent, stuffed and easy to
carve, what more could you need?

Turkey crown with figgie pudding
stuffing, £22 per kg, Waitrose



▲ Pull out all the stops with a glittering,
star-studded Christmas pud

Extra Special mulled port, orange and cherry
Christmas pudding, £5, Asda

► Pastry parcels filled
with veggie flavours

Mushroom,
cranberry and
goat's cheese
parcels, £5.99
for two,
Waitrose



► Spoon
over
warm pudding
or mince pies

De Klok Original
Advokaat custard,
£11.99 for 50cl,
Adnams



◀ A light red to
match all elements
of a Christmas lunch

The Exquisite Collection
Fleurie, £6.49, Aldi



► Save time
with prep-free
sprouts

Taste the
Difference
Brussels sprouts
with smoked
bacon lardons
and herb butter,
£3.50, Sainsbury's



Have a
relaxed
Boxing Day

▼ Bursting with cranberry, port and orange flavours

Cranberry topped slicing pie, £8 per 1.3kg, Morrisons



◀ Topped with orange and malt whisky compote, orange slices and cranberries

Butcher's Choice orange and malt whisky honey-cured gammon, £10; Taste the Difference piccalilli, £1.80, both Sainsbury's



Layers of chocolate caramel mousse, chocolate biscuit, salted caramel and nougat mousse!

Heston Ultimate chocolate bar, £9.99, Waitrose



▲ A buttery, creamy blue that everyone will enjoy

Cote Hill Blue, £29 per kg, Paxton & Whitfield

◀ Cherry compote, cinnamon and dark chocolate notes

The Naked Grouse whisky, £25, Sainsbury's



◀ Perfect with hard cheese, cured meats and smoked salmon

Sweet Cucumber Pickle, £5.95, Paxton & Whitfield



The kids
will love

◀ Vanilla sponge for non-fruitcake eaters

Reggie the Robin cake, £13, Waitrose

▼ Cute van, filled with even cuter chocolate santas

Santa van, £4.95, Carluccio's



▲ Load with melted butter and jam

Chosen by You snowmen and Christmas tree crumpets, £1 for four, Asda

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Home IMPROVEMENT

Turn the page to find out how to make the most of original features



ADD WARMTH WITH A STOVE

Even if you don't want the hassle of a wood-burning stove, you can still achieve a warm, cosy atmosphere in your living room with an electric model. This stylish design from Dimplex features OptiFlame technology, creating the illusion of flames for a realistic glow, and can also be used independently of heat, throughout the year. It has a choice of two heat settings, and comes in a smart white cast-iron-effect finish.

Courcheval Optiflame electric stove, around £229.99, Dimplex

Improve radiator efficiency

The design of a traditional radiator means that around 80% of the heat generated rises, so it's often absorbed into curtains or lost in the ceiling. Radfan's clever low power fan unit improves efficiency by redirecting hot air horizontally into the room, at a much more useful height.

Automatic thermostatic operation keeps running costs to less than £2 per year, and it could reduce your heating bills by up to 5%, making a saving of up to £100 per year for the average household. Radfan classic costs from £49.99 and is available from Amazon and www.radfan.com.



Feature Lisa Hibberd

Create your own amazing space

If you're a fan of our regular columnist George Clarke, you'll be pleased to know that he has a new book to inspire you. More Amazing Spaces includes projects from series two and three of the television programme, showing how unexpected small spaces can be transformed into fantastic workable living areas. Examples include Bertie Blue, an ambulance camper van, and a unique converted double-decker coach. There are stunning photographs throughout, plus plenty of advice and style tips from architect George. The new

series of George Clarke's Amazing Spaces is now showing on Channel 4.

George Clarke's More Amazing Spaces by George Clarke with Jane Field-Lewis, published by Quadrille, costs £20, but Your Home readers can buy a copy at the special price of £15, with free p&p. To order, please call direct on 01256 302699 quoting reference BH4. Offer ends 30th November 2014.



Reader offer

DON'T OVERDO IT

Although many of us are keen to take on DIY tasks at home, a survey by the makers of Deep Heat has revealed that many people are putting themselves at risk of injury. 68% of people surveyed said that they or their partner had hurt themselves during DIY or decorating, while 38% admitted that they ached after overdoing it. So take note of Deep Heat's new DIY motto – Don't Injure Yourself – and, if you do suffer from aches and pains afterwards, try one of Deep Heat's rubs and sprays to help ease the discomfort.



FOR MORE EXPERT ADVICE AND CASE STUDIES GO TO WWW.YOURHOMEMAGAZINE.CO.UK



Timber beams can make rooms look dark, so in the kitchen go for pale painted units which complement the original structure while keeping the area light and bright

Make the most of original features

Add character to your home with our guide to period details

1 16TH AND 17TH CENTURY

This period encompasses the Tudor, Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. Tudor houses were timber-framed, and many were constructed with jetties overhanging the ground floor, creating extra space. Ceilings were beamed, fireplaces big and rooms often panelled in wood, making them cosy rather than light-filled. Towards the end of the 16th Century, glass windows were introduced, and staircases started to take the place of ladders. Elizabethan and Jacobean houses are characterised by tall chimneys and ornate exterior detailing. The smartest houses had patterned glass windows, while diamond-shaped, leaded panes and exposed beams were commonplace.

Homeowners tend to fall into two camps: those who prefer the convenience of a new-build, and those who love the character, quirks and features of a period property. Older houses are costlier to run and require more maintenance, but for many people, such drawbacks are a small price to pay for the opportunity to live in a home with a history. If you're

lucky, all the features will be intact, but damaged or missing ones can usually be restored or reinstated. For the best results, don't rush the work, be prepared to employ skilled craftsmen for specialist jobs, use reclaimed materials or authentic reproductions, and do your research so you know which features are appropriate for your home's age and style.

Feature Andrea Dean

Swapping modern radiators for cast-iron, period-style models is an easy way to add character to an older home. The Ashdown is inspired by 19th-century schoolhouse designs, from www.iconicradiators.co.uk



Victorian terraced houses, found the length and breadth of Britain, are highly desirable and easy to adapt to contemporary lifestyles while preserving original features. This one, in Tooting, south London, is for sale through www.kfh.co.uk





Show off tall windows in a Georgian, Victorian or Edwardian home with elegant, adjustable shutters

A sweeping staircase and original floorboards are two of an older home's greatest assets. Strip down, sand and paint or varnish the wooden surfaces, then protect the stairs and floor with hard-wearing runners, which also help to absorb sound

Image www.kersaintcobb.co.uk



2 GEORGIAN

Classic, symmetrical facades, high ceilings, large sash windows with shutters and elegantly proportioned rooms mean that Georgian houses, built between 1700 and 1837, are highly sought after and never go out of fashion. Other characteristics include fanlights above panelled front doors, columns, decorative cornices and other mouldings, and fire surrounds ranging from elaborate marble in the drawing room to more simple designs in the bedrooms. Various companies specialise in sash window restoration, and if they are beyond repair, they can be replaced with new, energy-efficient timber replicas. It's possible to find original Georgian fireplaces, though high quality reproductions cost around one third of the price of a period piece.

3 VICTORIAN

Much of the UK's housing stock was built while Queen Victoria was on the throne, from 1837 to 1901. Styles include Gothic and Italianate, but the most common type is the Victorian terrace, found in varying sizes in towns and villages throughout the country. Rooms were originally small, leading off a narrow passageway, and often cluttered and decorated in dark paints or wallpapers. Features included sash bay windows, tiled hallways, timber floors, dado and picture rails. As mains water pressure improved, bathrooms came in in the 1870s, and roll-top baths – both antique and reproduction – remain popular. Nowadays, many owners remove internal walls to create an open-plan living/dining rooms, and choose pale rather than traditional colours to maximise light.

4 EDWARDIAN

The Edwardian era only lasted until World War One, yet was a time of great change. Houses were typically red brick, and mock timber gables, pebbledash and hanging tiles were among the external touches inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement. Internally, homes now included an upstairs bathroom and separate WC as standard. Rooms were larger and more ornate in design than in Victorian houses, with features such as casement windows, stained glass panels, parquet flooring and fireplaces that were tiled or incorporated shelving or mirrors. There was also less clutter and a tendency towards lighter shades.

TURN OVER FOR MORE ADVICE ►



Perfect for an Edwardian home, the Edgware bathroom features a roll-top bath, pedestal basin and authentically reproduced brassware, from www.bettaliving.co.uk



This floral Norcombe wallpaper, in Welkin colourway, would work well in an alcove or chimney breast in a 1930s room, from Little Greene

If you find dark wooden, period furniture too heavy, lighter mid-century modern styles suit most styles of room. This Skandi range is from Dunelm



5 1920S AND 1930S

The interwar years saw the rise of the suburb and the emergence of large-scale house builders who built new estates of affordable, mainly semi-detached houses in areas where land was cheaper. These were far plainer in design than their Victorian counterparts, but relatively spacious, with wide halls and front and back gardens. Houses in the more affluent avenues and crescents had garages – ripe for conversion by future owners into extra rooms – plus bay windows and mock Tudor detailing. The Arts and Crafts movement was still influential but the most striking architecture was Modernist or Art Deco. The stark white rendered homes – reminiscent of ocean liners – had curved metal-framed windows, stepped fireplaces and crisp, clean interiors.

6 LISTED BUILDINGS

Most homes built before 1840 are listed, meaning that they are of exceptional architectural or historic special interest. A listing protects a building from detrimental alterations, and listed buildings consent – obtained from the local planning department – will be needed before any internal or external changes can be made. If granted, it's likely to be subject to certain stringent conditions – for example owners may be required to use particular materials or colours, or to fit secondary glazing (which can be removed and doesn't alter the original windows) rather than double glazing. If you live in a conservation area, what you can do to the outside of your property may be restricted.

Expert advice

Owen Pacey, founder of Renaissance London, offers his tips on how to make sure you get period features right...

- Always try to match architectural pieces to the period of a property you live in.
- Try to make a house more alluring to live in, while functioning better as a home. Installing original features is an appealing way to make this transformation while keeping a period property true to its surroundings.
- The aesthetic value of choosing an antique or reproduction fireplace is immeasurable but you've got to love what you are investing in.
- Never rip out an old fireplace to make way for a replacement without getting expert guidance.

Useful contacts

- www.english-heritage.org.uk provides comprehensive information on living in a historic building.
- **Old House Handbook** by Roger Hunt & Marianne Suhr, £25, published by Francis Lincoln, is an invaluable resource for owners.
- www.renaissancelondon.com supplies original and reproduction fireplaces, lighting, mirrors and architectural salvage.
- www.SPAB.org.uk gives advice and runs courses on caring for older homes, and equipment for periods starting from one day.
- www.projectbook.co.uk includes directories of products, craftsmen and contractors for period properties.

▼ As part of the restoration of this Georgian farmhouse, modern windows – put in by a previous owner – were replaced by period-style double-glazed box sash windows

Hallways get a lot of wear and tear, so if your Victorian tiled floor is past its best, take a look at Original Style's Victorian floor tile collection, used in lots of renovations and restorations

Image www.welshblankets.co.uk



Image www.lomaxwood.co.uk

CASE STUDY

'We added period features to give our extension more character'



▲ Having completed the hall, Kate is now keen to introduce more traditional character elsewhere in her home

When Kate and Graham Thomas first started to look for a character property for their move to Devon from London five years ago, they ended up with more than they bargained for. 'We fell for a place which was almost two houses in one,' Kate recalls. 'The original was a tiny two-up, two-down Victorian cottage, which had later been enlarged with a two-storey extension'. The problem for the couple was that the two parts didn't match up well, so they set about introducing some period features to merge the rooms in the

extension with the 150-year-old original in a much more sympathetic way.

'They say first impressions count so we started with the hall, which was a lovely size but totally lacking in character,' says Kate. Plaster coving helped to solve part of the problem. Fixed prior to decorating, it was painted in brilliant white to make it stand out against two steel grey feature walls. Next they fitted an ornate ceiling rose to show off a pretty glass chandelier, one of a pair they found in a local reclamation yard – the second hangs on the upstairs landing. Another bargain from the same source was the stripped pine panelled door bought to replace a contemporary flush door that leads into the cloakroom. Kate didn't much care for the modern radiator



▲ Added to the original red brick Victorian cottage was a substantial extension, rendered white in contrast, but lacking the period features of the original

either, so she swapped it with a traditional-style version from the kitchen: 'It was taking up too much room in there and makes such a great feature in the hall, it was worth the extra expense to move it', she says.

Kate and Graham also splashed out on engineered oak flooring which is virtually identical to the original stripped wood floorboards. 'We decided to buy unfinished boards so that we could stain them ourselves to get a perfect match with the original and, after some trial and error, we got it right,' remembers Kate. She cut costs by recycling some old curtains, adding a fabric edging in the same shade of grey as the walls. Final finishing touches were the vintage window-style mirror bought locally for £60 and an antique table which is a treasured family heirloom.

▶ Traditional coving and Farrow and Ball paint colours create a classic backdrop for period pieces in the hallway



Be inspired by the Ideal Home Show *at Christmas*

Find everything you need to make your home the highlight this season

From festive furnishings to New Year home improvements, sumptuous gifts to the finest foods and Christmas tipples, plus must-have gadgets and fashion trends, the Ideal Home Show at Christmas sponsored by Gocompare.com brings you everything you need to prepare your home for the festive season. Back for 2014, from 19th-23rd November at Earls Court London, this annual shopping event will provide plenty of ideas for decking the halls, filling your stockings, trimming the turkey and so much more.

With over 650 exhibitors across seven sections; Interiors & Furnishings, Food & Drink, Home Improvements & Outdoor Living, Fashion & Beauty, Technology & Gadgets, Gifts and Christmas Decorations, it's the biggest home show at Christmas.

If you want to finish those last-minute DIY jobs, prepare the perfect festive feast, complete your Christmas shopping, find the ultimate party outfit, discover decorations that add some sparkle, or just enjoy a day out with friends and family, then you will find it all under one roof.

You'll be spoilt for choice with all this as well as live entertainment, catwalk shows, celebrity chefs, industry experts, exciting demonstrations, and a spectacular skating rink, making the Ideal Home Show at Christmas a great festive day out for the whole family.

So join the celebrity team, Gino D'Acampo, Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen, Suzi Perry, Lisa Faulkner and Olly Smith at the biggest home show at Christmas.



See you there!

Visit the **Your Home** stand at this year's Ideal Home Show at Christmas for your chance to meet the team and take advantage of some great special offers. You'll find us on stand 1Q132 in the gifts area.

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Property know-how with George

This month property developer, architect and presenter of Channel 4's *Amazing Spaces*, **George Clarke**, discusses the challenges faced when living in a smaller home

There has been a lot of debate in the British housing industry over the last few years about the size of the new homes we are building and the concern that the rooms within those new homes are becoming unbearably small. It is a fascinating debate as there is no question that to build larger homes costs more money and with house prices becoming increasingly unaffordable there is an argument to say that if we build smaller homes then we would be building more affordable ones. The counter argument could be that with there being such a demand for homes, the house builders will achieve a good sale price irrespective of how small the house feels.

Obviously if a new home is built and it is ridiculously small and claustrophobic then it can have a detrimental effect on the family that lives there, so there needs to be a sensible balance struck between comfort, functionality and affordability.

In the 1960s we had minimum space standards as developed by Parker Morris report for the construction of new publicly funded homes, but unfortunately these standards were gradually phased out between 1981 and 1993. The only remaining Authority in England to have minimum space standards is The Greater London Authority. The rest have gone, which is a national scandal.

The RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) recently released a report called 'The Case for Space', which did show that our homes are certainly getting smaller and it does annoy me when I visit so many new-build homes that have woeful lack of storage and spaces planned in a poor way. I recently saw a bedroom where, once you installed a standard sized double bed there was no room whatsoever for a wardrobe!

I have to point out that there is also a major problem with how UK estate agents communicate information about a property. If I asked you how many square feet or square metres of usable space you had in your home I bet you wouldn't be able to tell me. You'd be able to tell me the number of rooms you have but you would have no idea about the gross floor area. Throughout Europe and in the United States people know the area of floor areas of their homes off by heart. And so they should because the construction cost of a home is based on the amount of floor area, the sales cost is broadly based on the usable floor area and it also defines how much space you have available to live in. The usable floor area of every home should be made clear on all sales particulars and more importantly there should be comprehensive floor plans of the home showing all furniture. Have you ever noticed how estate agents' floor plans never have furniture on them? It drives me mad! If there were furniture on the plans even the untrained eye would soon be able to see if a space works or not.

But size isn't everything. My biggest criticism of the house building industry is that the way rooms are planned and designed just isn't creative enough. Most spec-built properties are dumb boxes linked together with a few corridors. As you might have seen on 'George Clarke's *Amazing Spaces*' we work really hard to make even the smallest spaces do so many different things. It is about innovative and creative design that doesn't have to cost much money. Small really can be very beautiful.



If you have a small room you could think about creating more fully height-integrated storage rather than wasting space with free-standing units. You could be really clever with fold-out or pull-down furniture to make a space multi-functional and allow a small room to be used for many different things. Multi-functional design is a great way of getting more out of a small room. I always try to design in high-level storage as so often the space above your head is wasted. I've also designed minimal sleeping pods in rooms pushed for space to avoid wasting space around the sides of a standard bed. Fold-out beds, bunk beds and even raised beds to allow lots of storage beneath is so standard these days, but they are brilliant. I saw a staircase recently where each step doubles up as a pull-out drawer for storing small, but important items such as kids' shoes. Genius!

Creative and innovative design is everything when it comes to new and affordable homes, but the industry just isn't doing it. As the old saying goes, 'it's not the size that matters, it's what you do with it that counts.'

■ For more tips and advice from George, check out his website at www.georgeclarke.co.uk. To order a copy of George's new book, *More Amazing Spaces*, at a special discounted price, turn to page 109.

We have £6,279 worth of fab prizes up for grabs!

Win a Pyrex bakeware set

30 great prizes

To make sure you can continue to bake up a storm during 2015 and beyond, iconic kitchenware brand Pyrex is giving away 30 sets of its Asimetria range, worth £56 each. Each Pyrex prize bundle contains two cake pans, a 12-cup muffin tray, flan pan, baking tray and loaf tin. The Pyrex Asimetria metal bakeware collection makes baking even easier thanks to a large grip handle, with a smaller support handle which makes the product easier to hold with one hand as you open and close the oven door. The products also feature a non-stick coating, ensuring successful results every time.

To find out more visit www.pyrexuk.com, follow @PyrexUKOfficial or 'like' the Pyrex UK (Official) Facebook page.

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We've teamed up with Doro, global leader in easy-to-use phones for seniors, to give six lucky readers the chance to win a Doro PhoneEasy® 624 mobile phone.

The eye-catching and vibrant red handset, worth

£130, includes a one-touch camera with video to capture special moments instantly. Plus, the built-in location-based forecast feature on the home screen provides up-to-date weather information on the move. This handset is available from the RNIB or learn more about Doro at www.doro.co.uk.

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Win a selection of Nederburg wines

To celebrate the partnership between South Africa's award-winning wine, Nederburg, and TV presenter and food producer Jimmy Doherty, we're offering six lucky readers the chance to win a selection of Nederburg Winemaster's Reserve worth £125.

The Suffolk-based farmer enjoys nothing better than good food, great wine and a table full of friends and family and we want you to do the same!

Jimmy has worked with Nederburg's winemakers to bring you great wine and food pairings, as well as some delicious recipes. Full recipes can be viewed at the Nederburg UK Facebook page. Visit www.nederburg.com for more information.

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6 lucky winners



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We've teamed up with Triton to give away ten T80Z Fast-Fit 7.5kW chrome electric showers, one of the best replacement electric showers on the market, worth from £150 each.

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The Triton T80Z Fast-Fit is available in 7.5kW to 10.5kW models in either a chrome or white finish and all units are available with a two-year guarantee and the added reassurance of Triton's excellent customer service. Visit www.tritonshowers.co.uk for more information.

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We've teamed up with bed specialist Warren Evans to offer one lucky reader a Natural Air Pocket Sprung double mattress, worth £795. The mattress' air spring system of carefully selected long and short springs responds and adapts to your body weight and shape, minimising roll and ensuring superb individual support – perfect for couples with larger differences in weight. Combined with sumptuous natural fillers, this creates a supremely comfortable mattress. For more information visit www.warrenevans.com.

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ProCook

Win a ProCook knife set and block

6 fab prizes

Six lucky readers will win a ProCook Professional X50 8-piece knife set, worth £129, to get their kitchen ready for 2015.

The set is not only incredibly functional but will look great on the worktop of any kitchen. Included is a 9cm paring knife, 13cm utility knife, 16cm chefs knife, 18cm santoku knife, 23cm bread knife, 25cm carving knife, 20cm carving fork, 25cm sharpening steel and a solid wood block. Additional features include contoured, micarta riveted

handles for comfortable chopping and a 25-year guarantee. For more information visit www.procook.co.uk, call 0300 100 1010 or visit one of ProCook's 22 UK stores.

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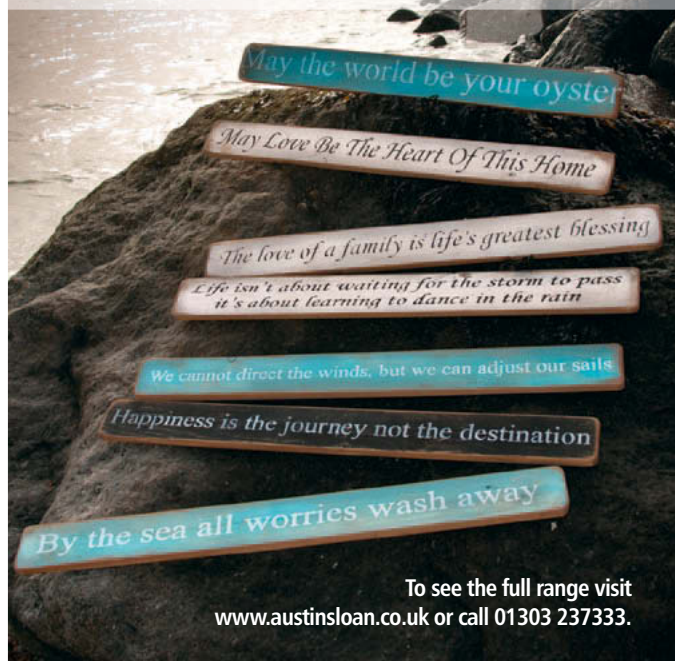
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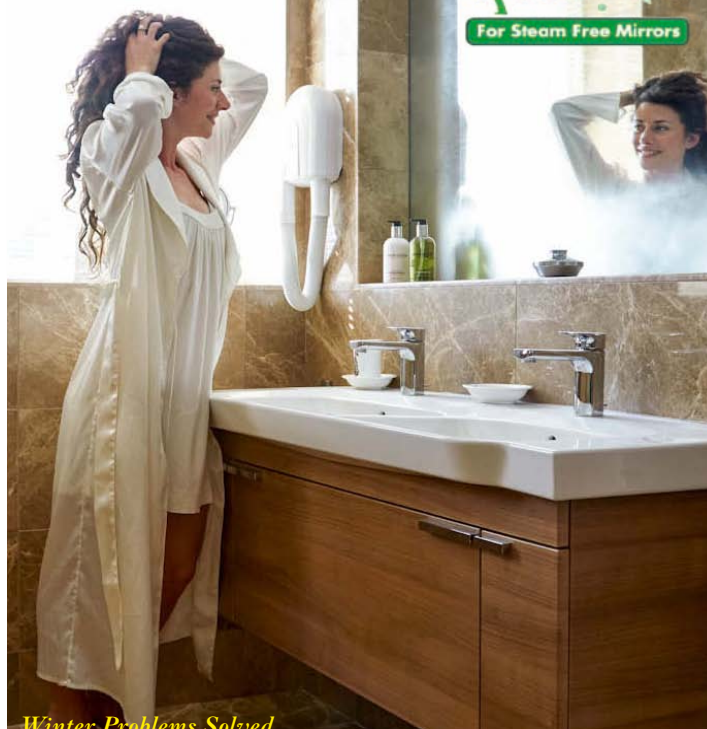


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 **Hannah Evans** "I've been published in The Guardian and Good Life earning £400. And now I've got my first book published by Bloomsbury called MOB Rule: Lessons Learned by a Mother of Boys. The Writers Bureau course provided me with structure, stopped my procrastination but most importantly it provided the impetus to try something different."

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Lavender gift set, £15; uplifting gift set, £15, both www.greentulip.co.uk

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Dishcloths, £2.95 each, Jangneus



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Decorations, £5.50 each, www.in-a-strange-land.com

Eco Expert

Tallulah Chapman, Communications Manager at Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), gives advice on how to make sure your Christmas tree is eco-friendly



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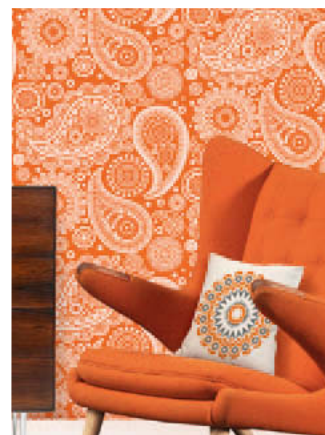
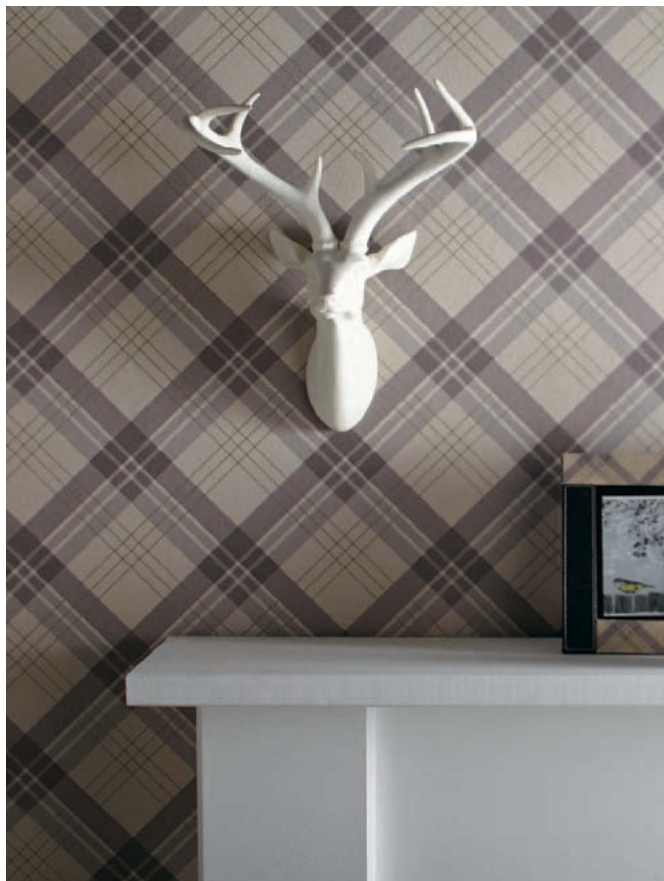
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