

Compliments of Tobin Seven, Principal Broker / Army Veteran

# AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

THE MAGAZINE CELEBRATING LIFE IN AMERICA

ISSUE 113



**Tobin Seven, Principal Broker / Army Veteran**  
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## A LABOR OF LOVE

**PAGE 24** | An inspiring, stunning  
French chateau project

**4** | chocolate in vogue

**32** | many kinds of kindness

ISSUE 113

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113 53939 38570 8

## Front of Tear Out Card 1

**pretzel  
TOFFEE BARK**


6 oz. semisweet chocolate,  
coarsely chopped

6 oz. milk chocolate,  
coarsely chopped

6 oz. white chocolate,  
coarsely chopped

1½ c. pretzels



½ c. toffee bits



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## Back of Tear Out Card 1

1. Line a quarter-sheet rimmed pan or 9-by-13-inch pan with parchment and set aside.
2. In a double boiler, heat water to just a simmer in bottom pan. Water should not touch top pan. Place semisweet and milk chocolate in top pan, taking care to not spill any water into the chocolate. Stir chocolate with a rubber spatula until melted. Remove top pan and wipe away any water that may have condensed there with a towel. Pour into prepared pan and spread evenly.
3. Repeat melting process with white chocolate. Take care to ensure top pan is completely dry before adding chocolate. Pour melted white chocolate on top of semisweet chocolate and spread as evenly as possible. Marble the two chocolates with a butter knife. Evenly top chocolate with pretzels, pressing lightly on each pretzel so it is at least halfway pressed into chocolate. Sprinkle toffee bits over chocolate.
4. Place tray in refrigerator for about 1 hour. Once the chocolate has set completely, remove from pan and break bark into chunks. Store in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks.

Excerpted from *Christmas Baking: Festive Cookies, Candies, Cakes, Breads, and Snacks to Bring Comfort and Joy to Your Holiday*. © 2020 by Joyce and Laura Klynstra. Photography by Laura Klynstra. Used with permission of Good Books, an imprint of Skyhorse Publishing. All rights reserved.



**SERVES 20**





# AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

The turning of a new year is often associated with personal resolutions for physical health. But why not add resolutions to connect more deeply with our loved ones and to have gratitude for the beauty in the world? This issue of American Lifestyle magazine celebrates love, kindness, and contentment as it's expressed in our passions, our viewpoint of the world, and our surroundings.

Travel destination Cook County, Minnesota, is known for its winter activities and attractions, Scandinavian cuisine, and embracing of hygge, a Danish concept that refers to finding contentment and well-being in simple things like a cozy atmosphere. What a great spot to snuggle up in a toasty cabin after a day on the slopes.

Designer Chris Goddard understands the love language of home renovation. The French chateau re-creation he carefully crafted for clients in Rogers, Arkansas, is an homage to their love and incorporates little tributes to their history together.

Because art is an expression of the artist's viewpoint, it's easy to see the romance and beauty photographer Jamie Beck witnesses in the ordinary moments of life. Her Isolation Creation project was a way to turn uncertainty into inspiration, as she began creating daily art of her home and garden.

And, finally, you can read heartwarming stories of how people around the country have experienced unexpected kindness from both loved ones and strangers.

In this new year, may you find more ways to love others and stay open to the love that is making its way to you. As always, it's a pleasure to send you this magazine.

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# OPERATION DECLUTTER

written by **shelley goldstein**  
photography **as noted**

What words would you use to describe your home? If you said *peaceful, clean, inviting, or organized*, congratulations—it sounds like you’ve cracked the declutter code. If you said *chaotic, overwhelming, or messy*, let’s chat. Of course, it’s perfectly natural for your home to alternate through phases of clean and cluttered; we’re human, after all. Here are some strategies for streamlining your space.

**ENTRYWAY:** Establish a landing area for your keys, wallet, purse, and shoes. A console table with a small bowl can hold keys, or a tiny hook in the wall will suffice if the space is small. If you don’t have a coat closet, install coat hooks along one wall and slide a shoe rack underneath it.

**KITCHEN:** Let the decanting begin! Choose some jars of various sizes to hold grains, nuts, seeds, pasta, and flour. To store smaller amounts, you can save money by soaking off the labels of pasta sauce or pickle jars. This will not only make your pantry look more cohesive but also make it much easier to know what you need at the grocery store to replenish your supplies.

**LIVING ROOM:** One word: curate. Pretend you are staging your living room as if it were an Airbnb. How do you want guests to feel in the space?

What could you get rid of to make the room more livable and inviting? If you’re holding onto knickknacks solely out of guilt, give yourself permission to toss them.

**BEDROOM:** Are you overwhelmed by the amount of clothing in your closet? Consider a capsule wardrobe of thirty coordinated pieces that will make getting ready for the day much simpler. Try designating a “maybe” bin if you have trouble being decisive. If you don’t miss the items of clothing in the bin after a few days, you know it’s time to donate them.

**BATHROOM:** Change your habitat instead of your habits. If your dirty clothes always find their way onto the bathroom floor, move your laundry hamper into the bathroom. Do you have half-full bottles of shampoo that you used and didn’t like or face masks

gifted to you by well-meaning friends? To paraphrase Elsa from *Frozen*, “Let them go!”

Think of decluttering as a journey and not a destination. It’s a constant process of assessing your habits and establishing systems, like taking out the trash every Tuesday or hanging up three shirts before going to bed. Instagram is a great resource if you are someone who likes to follow a plan. Search #declutterchallenge for weeklong, monthlong, or even yearlong strategies. Or commit to a “no-buy month” (other than essentials) and get to the root of your motivation to accumulate. Go forth and declutter! ■





# Chocolate in Vogue

interview with **elle lei**  
written by **shelley goldstein**  
photography by **elle lei**

**Elle Lei's bonbons are so visually stunning, it's hard to know whether to classify them as chocolate or art. Her passion for culinary art and design (and specifically sweet confections) has made her Chicago-area business, SUGOi Sweets, a beautiful success.**

## **What was your dream career growing up?**

I liked the idea of being a fashion designer. And, while I never really knew about careers in design, looking back now, I think creating and designing things were directions I always wanted to go in. As I grew older and continued school, I was pointed toward more practical subjects. I eventually chose a non-art-related major and worked in non-art-related fields for many years.

## **How did you get started in the culinary arts?**

I feel every journey in the culinary arts begins from a memory. For me, this was family gatherings as a child. I had an uncle who was a very skilled chef, and he worked at the best hotel in my city. He would create wonderful meals for the family to share during the holidays.





**What other culinary jobs have you held?**

The restaurant world is very hierarchical. Like many chefs coming up through the ranks, I held a variety of different jobs, including dishwasher, pantry chef, line cook, macaron baker, and confectioner. The turning point for me was getting hired as the garde-manger at the acclaimed restaurant Proof on Main in Louisville, Kentucky. Working there taught me a whole new world of flavor pairings. It not only tapped into my love of food but also awoke the designer in me. This job launched my culinary career, and when I moved to Chicago, I soon found myself making pastries for one of Rick Bayless’s restaurants.

**What made you want to go to Japan?**

I have always been a fan of Japanese culture, design, and food. While we can experience these things from afar, nothing is quite like going there and being immersed in it. So I jumped at the chance to go when my partner got a job opportunity in the beautiful and charming city of Kyoto. It is probably the most traditional city in a very traditional country, and, as a result, it has a lot of layers. You can have a great time there on vacation because it is beautiful and the Japanese are great hosts, but I feel it is best experienced through an extended stay, which allows you to peel away those layers.

**What makes Kyoto inspiring? Is there a moment or memory that stands out to you?**

Kyoto taught me that dessert can be exciting and offer endless possibilities. I was particularly struck by the appreciation Japan shows for the seasons. Shopping districts decorate for every season, and menus feature seasonal ingredients. For example, in fall and winter, every shop seems to have its own version of the Mont Blanc, a

famous Italian/French dessert made of sweetened chestnut puree piped into vermicelli and topped with whipped cream. Sampling different versions, like a green one made with matcha and a pink one made with sakura essence, was one of my favorite pastimes.

**Did you feel prepared to start a business?**

To be honest, I was totally clueless about starting a business. I had to attend local workshops, Google everything, learn the legal and tax aspects of the business, and lean on others for help. I taught myself the intricacies of chocolate and created recipes that are not only diverse and delicious but also have a long enough shelf-life to remain stable over a period of time. I enjoyed brainstorming and designing the logo and packaging the most. I spent days deciding on the typeface and main brand colors.

**Will you talk about what sugoi means?**

Sugoi (すごい) is a Japanese term used to express the sense of being awestruck or overwhelmed by the excitement of an experience or a moment. Every time people interact with my business, I want them to have a positive "SUGOi moment" that can pick them up after a tough day or contribute to one of life’s many celebrations.

**What do you find most rewarding about your business?**

Most of my joy comes from the people and the products. My partner and I started building our customer base by attending Chicago-area maker markets. I still remember the names of our first customers, and, while we have been almost strictly online for the better part of a year, it brings a smile to my face when I see an order come through from one of those original customers. It is like they are saying, “I see you and I appreciate you.” I appreciate them too.



I enjoyed brainstorming and designing the logo and packaging the most. I spent days deciding on the typeface and main brand colors.





**TO ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO TRY NEW THINGS, I CREATE DIVERSE CHOCOLATE BOXES, BUT I ALSO TRY TO MAKE “INTIMIDATING” FLAVORS MORE APPROACHABLE BY PAIRING THEM WITH MORE FAMILIAR ONES.**

**Where do you find inspiration for flavor profiles? What is the most unusual flavor you sell? And the most popular?**

I find flavor inspiration everywhere but mostly from other foods, such as plated desserts, snacks, and ice cream. Sometimes it’s as simple as a color combo I want to include. For example, the Matcha bonbon is inspired by my Kyoto experience—the green represents matcha, the swirl design is reminiscent of the whisking in a traditional Japanese tea ceremony, and the gold is a nod to the famous Temple of the Golden Pavilion.

I would say our most unusual flavors on the year-round menu are Cotton Candy Pop Rock and Beer Pretzel. Cotton Candy Pop Rock is very popular with its fun color design and an unexpected popping sensation that comes later as the chocolate melts away. The ganache in the Beer Pretzel flavor is actually made with Cascade hops. I also get a lot of positive feedback on our Chicago Corn flavor, which tastes like the city’s popular caramel cheddar cheese popcorn.

**Why is it important to you to incorporate Asian flavors like umeshu and yuzu?**

Sharing these flavors can put us all on common ground and demonstrate that we are not so different. To encourage people to try new things, I create diverse chocolate boxes, but I also try to make “intimidating” flavors more approachable by pairing them with more familiar ones.



**What do you consider visually when designing the bonbons?**

Working on the bonbon designs is my favorite part of the whole process! Usually, it starts with a review of all my existing designs and colors. I try to make them as fun and balanced as possible. I like to utilize visual variations like gradients or speckles. I also use flavor to determine the design because, in my opinion, the bonbon’s design needs to match its flavor.

**What do you offer in your shop aside from chocolate bonbons? What is your favorite confection to make?**

We also have a variety of caramels, soft nougats, and marshmallows. The nougat is just a wonderful eating experience, but caramel is probably my favorite confection to make. Since everything is made by hand, stirring caramel and watching the moisture evaporate while the flavor concentrates is very therapeutic.

**What advice would you give to your younger self?**

Don't be afraid to follow your heart and let the chips fall where they may. Never stop learning new things.

**What dreams do you have for the future of your business?**

Anything is possible, but I would like to have a brick-and-mortar storefront. We have also been exploring bean-to-bar chocolate making. I would really enjoy introducing an educational component where people can see how chocolate is made and the variety of things you can do with it. But, ultimately, I want to continue delivering unique and exciting treats to our customers.

For more info, visit [sugoisweets.com](https://sugoisweets.com)

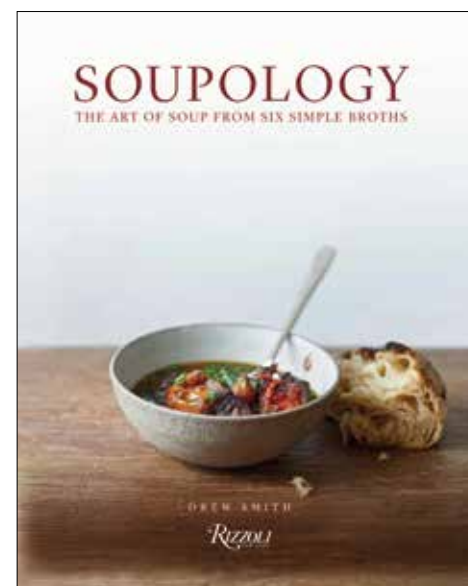


# SIMPLY SOUP

recipes by **drew smith** | photography by **tom regester**



Excerpted from © *Soupology* by Drew Smith, Rizzoli New York, 2020. Photography ©Tom Regester.



**This essential, restorative, parsimonious noodle soup is a catch-all standby to fight off colds and flu. I have added some rice here for an extra dimension.**

Serves 4

## chicken noodle soup

Roast Chicken Broth Ingredients  
(makes 1 gallon)

- 1 roast chicken carcass**
- 1 leek**
- ½ head celery**
- 1 carrot**
- Bunch of fresh parsley**

Chicken Noodle Soup Ingredients

- ½ cup rice**
- 1 tablespoon butter**
- 4 cups roast chicken broth**
- ½ cup pasta or noodles**
- Handful of spinach**

**1. Make the Roast Chicken Broth:** Set the oven to low, about 250°F. Pick over the carcass and keep any trimmings for sandwiches or another recipe; add the remains and any leftover bones to a large, ovenproof cooking pot. Add 1 gallon of cold water to cover and set over the heat. While it is coming to a boil, trim and roughly chop the leek, celery, and carrot. Reserve the leaves of the parsley for garnish and add the stalks. As the water comes to a tremble, take off the heat and move to the oven.

**2.** Cover and leave for 5 to 6 hours. Remove and allow to infuse while it cools. Strain, discarding all the bones and vegetables and reserving the liquid. Store in the refrigerator and lift off the fat before using.

**3. Make the Chicken Noodle Soup:** Cover the base of a small pot with the rice. Melt the butter and stir in so all the grains are covered. Cover with the broth. Bring to a simmer and let it cook for 20 minutes.

**4.** Cook the pasta separately for 10 minutes, then drain and add to the soup. Lastly swirl in the spinach leaves to wilt.





**This is a good recipe if you are short on space or time. You can substitute chicken for the beef and follow the same technique.**

## **small kitchen beef and tomato soup**

*Serves 2*

**10½ ounces trimmed beef, chuck, or braising steak, with no fat**  
**2 tablespoons olive oil**  
**1 onion**  
**1 carrot**  
**1½ tablespoons unsalted butter**  
**2 fat tomatoes**  
**1 glass red wine**  
**Parsley to serve**

- 1.** Preheat the oven to 375°F. Chop the meat into small cubes. In a wide frying pan, warm enough olive oil to cover the base. As it starts to smoke, add the beef pieces and shallow fry them for 4 to 5 minutes until they are well colored. Roughly chop the onion and carrot, then add to the beef and let them color for a few minutes. Take everything out of the pan and drain off any fat.
- 2.** Add the butter to a pot and heat until it foams and is just turning brown. Put the beef and vegetables back in and stir well.
- 3.** Cover with a quart of water and let it bubble away until the liquid has almost disappeared.
- 4.** Meanwhile, put your tomatoes in a roasting pan with a little olive oil or butter and roast for 15 to 20 minutes until soft.
- 5.** When your beef soup is reduced by at least half, top up to a quart again and repeat the process, then let it cook down again so that it is almost gone. Finally, add the red wine. The soup should be dark and the meat should be soft. Add in the tomatoes and garnish with parsley.





Serves 4

**2 corn on the cob**  
**1 large tomato**  
**4 stalks celery**  
**¼ fennel**  
**Bunch of fresh parsley**  
**2 tablespoons heavy cream**

## cream of corn soup

**1.** Place the corn on the cob in a pot. Roughly chop the other vegetables to manageable sizes and add to the pot. Chop the parsley stalks and add, reserving the leaves for garnish. Cover with 8½ cups of boiling water and cook for 5 minutes. Lift out the cobs and let drain for a couple minutes until cool enough to handle. Meanwhile, let the broth continue cooking.

**2.** Use a fork to remove the kernels so you have a good pile, and return the cobs to the broth. Cook for another 15 minutes.

**3.** Take off the heat, remove the cobs, add in the kernels and liquidize in a blender or food processor. Add the cream, season to taste and garnish with parsley leaves if desired.

**Cook's Tip:** You could add chicken breast here too. Or use any leftover corn to make succotash, which is just a warming through of diced red onion, corn, lima beans, and tomatoes.





This soup began life as a way of using up the offcuts from a recipe for cauliflower with cheese sauce. Cauliflower leaves are also useful steamed and served as a vegetable with oyster sauce. The water in which the cauliflower cooks can be used for broths; so too, the water in which dried mushrooms are constituted. This recipe brings them both together.

## cauliflower and wild mushroom soup

Serves 4

**Handful of dried mushrooms—shiitake or any wild mushrooms, especially morels or Porcinis**

**1 cauliflower**

**1 leek**

**2 stalks celery**

**Handful of cilantro**

**1.** Soak the mushrooms in 1 quart of boiling water to reconstitute for about 15 minutes. If they are bigger than a soup spoon, then snip them smaller with scissors.

**2.** Put the cauliflower, whole, into a large pot and cover with boiling water. Trim and dice the leek and celery neatly and add to the pot. Add the cilantro stalks, reserving the leaves. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes until the vegetables are soft. Strain the broth and reserve a few cauliflower florets, the leek and the celery.

**3.** Transfer the mushrooms and their soaking liquid to a clean pot. Add a cup of the cauliflower broth (the remaining liquid can be added to another vegetable broth). Break off the florets from the cauliflower—two per serving. Add in the leek and celery. Warm through and serve each bowl with several leaves of cilantro.



# LAND OF LIGHT *AND ICE*

written by **alexa bricker**  
photography by **visit cook county, unless noted**



If you were told that there is a winter destination where you can experience the grandeur of the northern lights, dine on delicious Scandinavian cuisine, and embrace the Danish lifestyle concept of *hygge* from your own private cabin—all in the same day—would you believe it?

Well, this place *does* exist, and, no, you don't have to trek to Europe to get there. This place is actually Cook County, Minnesota, and it's one of the most incredible winter getaways anywhere in the contiguous forty-eight states.

#### **NORTH COUNTRY TRADITIONS**

One of the first things you'll notice is that Minnesotans are proud of their ancestral heritage. In the 1850s, the state saw an influx of Scandinavian immigrants, who brought with them their traditions, language, and cuisine. In many ways, Minnesota was the perfect American settlement for Scandinavians, as the state's climate is very similar to that of Norway, Finland, and Sweden.





© Jill Davis Kneeskern, Allez-y Travel Adventures

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For more than twenty years, the North House Folk School in Grand Marais has welcomed tourists and students of all ages to practice traditional crafts.

There are ample opportunities to explore this heritage for visitors and locals alike. For more than twenty years, the North House Folk School in Grand Marais has welcomed tourists and students of all ages to practice traditional crafts. The school is located along the picturesque north shore of Lake Superior, offering guests an opportunity to explore the natural beauty of the lake while learning from instructors. Some of the courses offered in past years include basketry, boatbuilding, fiber art, wood carving, and foods.

Aside from crafts and educational activities, there are also many opportunities for rest and relaxation. The cozy cabin resorts along the Gunflint Trail encourage you to embrace one of the other most important aspects of Scandinavian culture: *hygge*. If you haven't heard of it already, *hygge* (pronounced hoo-ga) is a Danish lifestyle concept driven by comfort and wellness.

Winter is perhaps the perfect time to take advantage of the comforting *hygge*-minded amenities that the cabins and lodges across the region have to offer. Bearskin Lodge, also located in Grand Marais, is one of the most historic destinations on the trail. Hosting travelers since 1925, the lodge is well known for having neither phone nor television access, which means it's great for anyone who is looking to truly unplug and unwind. *USA Today* named it one of the top three American resorts for cross-country skiing, with over forty-seven miles of trails, including well-lit night trails.

Take a short thirty-five-minute drive north of Bearskin Lodge and



you'll find Gunflint Pines Resort and Campground, which offers an unparalleled view of the state's Northwoods region. You'll want to stay in one of the resort's quintessential A-frame cabins, which include access to a sauna and winter sports equipment rentals.

#### SNOW ADVENTURES

While the resorts and lodges in Cook County provide direct access to an abundance of winter activities and attractions, there are also plenty of ways to experience the excitement and beauty of a Minnesota winter on your own.



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**AGATES ARE FLAT, COLORFUL ROCKS THAT FORMED BILLIONS OF YEARS AGO FROM LAVA HARDENING ON THE LAKE FLOOR AND MIXING WITH THE MINERAL-RICH WATERS.**

Fans of snowy weather, take note: Cook County receives, on average, 120 inches of snow each year, which typically starts falling in November and continues through late April. That means that winter sports are one of the most popular seasonal activities for both tourists and locals alike. Cross-country skiers are catered to across the county, from the Gunflint Trail to Grand Marais along the coast of Lake Superior. In fact, there are more miles of cross-country ski trails here—nearly 250 miles’ worth—than anywhere else in the United States.

Of course, there are also plenty of traditional alpine skiing and snowboarding trails to explore. The Lutsen Mountains resort is settled in the massive Sawtooth Mountain Range, rising one thousand feet above Lake Superior. The frequency of lake-effect snow means that, during peak season, the ski area’s sixty-two primary runs and thirty-two sidecountry runs are almost always blanketed in fresh snow.



© Allie Carolan

All this snow also makes Cook County the ideal place for snowshoeing and snowmobiling, both of which can be done inside the expansive and beautiful Superior National Forest. Nearly the entire park is open to off-trail cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, but if you’re looking to stay on-trail, there are also many options to consider, ranging in distance and difficulty. Most of the county’s trails and roadways are accessible via snowmobile, so the opportunities to sightsee are endless.

The Visit Cook County website provides a comprehensive trail map, which also notes the trails where you might catch a glimpse of dogsled teams or the natural wildlife.

#### **NATURAL WONDERS**

What drives all of the incredible winter activities and attractions in Cook County is the area’s natural beauty, which can be experienced in so many different ways. Whether you’re on skis, on foot, or on the water, the grandeur

of a North Country winter is unlike any other—starting with America’s “greatest lake,” Lake Superior.

The lake expands over 31,700 miles, so there are plenty of activities to enjoy and sights to see, one of the most fascinating being the wealth of agates along the lake’s shoreline. Agates are flat, colorful rocks that formed billions of years ago from lava hardening on the lake floor and mixing with the mineral-rich waters. They look like shiny,

colorful tree rings, and, if you’re lucky, you could spot an agate with an elusive two-ring formation. Many of Cook County’s public beaches, from Lutsen, Tofte, and Schroeder to Grand Marais, are great places to spot these beautiful stones and take your treasure home; just be mindful of local restrictions, as some areas do not permit visitors to remove agates from the beach.

Another colorful natural wonder you might be able to spot in Cook County is the Aurora Borealis, or northern lights. The northern lights occur when particles from the sun enter the Earth’s magnetic field, and the dark skies and high latitude of the county make it one of the best places in America to spot them. Late fall and winter are the best times to witness the Aurora Borealis, and many of the county’s lakes have public viewing spots to help improve your odds. Visit Cook County recommends downloading the My Aurora Forecast & Alerts app to keep track of the KP Index, which measures the amount of magnetic disturbance in the atmosphere caused by solar winds.

There are many places in America where you can experience winter, but there aren’t many places where you can fully embrace winter like you can in Cook County, Minnesota. From the snowcapped peaks of the Sawtooth Mountains to the crystal-clear waters of its lakes, Cook County offers a truly superior kind of adventure.

For more info, go to [visitcookcounty.com](http://visitcookcounty.com)





interview with **chris goddard**  
 written by **matthew brady**  
 photography by **chroma/mark jackson**

# A Labor of Love

High-end designer Chris Goddard discusses the secrets to his longtime success, his time on a reality TV show, and a French chateau project that's both a home and a love letter.

## Tell us about your upbringing:

I'm an only child *and* only grandchild, so I was spoiled. But I grew up in a great, creative family. My mom was an artist, my father loved architecture, and my uncle was a famous florist. My parents felt that travel is the biggest educator, so I'd travel with them around the world. My parents and grandparents were also big art collectors—but they believed in buying items with intent, and that's translated into my brand.

## Were you always interested in interior design?

We had a very modern house with a lot of built-ins, so, as a kid, I would constantly rearrange anything I could in my room and around the house. That continued even when I got my first big client at age twenty-one. Built-ins were everywhere in her house, so, of course, the first thing I did was rip them all out. I think this constant need for change helped trigger my passion for design.



**You were quite young when you started. How did that come about?**

After college, I had a job where I created displays in a men's department store. One of our regulars liked them and asked if I could work on the bookcases in her massive house. That led to me helping her with some rooms and then the whole house. Before I knew it, I was designing all of her family's corporate offices and homes, her friends' homes, etc. I did that for nine years. I was in the right place at the right time but also had the talent.

**What's your ideal client-designer relationship?**

In my opinion, a house should never look like I was there. It should reflect the homeowner, so I spend a lot of time getting to know my clients and getting them involved in the process. I want every client to feel unique, so we don't ever use the same fabric twice for the same piece of furniture.

**Tell us about the area where this French chateau project is located:**

We have a lot of commerce here in northwest Arkansas—in fact, at one point, I believe we had more billionaires per square mile than anywhere in the world. I just happened to be here when the area exploded. There was no



architectural style for these massive new homes, so I got to set the tone and became the go-to person for luxury design.

**How did the project come about? What were the clients' wishes?**

I had been designing ultramodern homes, so this project was a breath of fresh air. When I first got it, my client, Jeannie, and her husband, Bill, had already started creating their dream house on three hundred acres in Rogers, Arkansas. But Bill got very sick, so Jeannie came to me because she wanted to see it finished before he passed.

Their goal was to recreate their favorite French chateau, and they wanted it to be authentic both inside and out—down

to every tree, door handle, and door stopper—so it didn't look like this mega-mansion was dropped in the middle of the countryside. The home is surrounded by limestone and iron fencing, and the driveway is forged from a mile of granite blocks, all hand-cut by artisans from around the world. Likewise, everything in the house is made by hand.

The project was almost done when Bill passed, so it got put on hold for a few years. Then Jeannie wanted to finish it to honor him. It became a love letter to her





husband, so we began to personalize a lot of it. From the framing to the furnishing, the project took around ten years. I sometimes look back and wonder how we pulled it off.

**How did you honor their love?**

Bill had bought gifts for Jeannie, such as chandeliers, which we added. We also incorporated certain architectural elements, such as the lovebirds hand-carved into the plaster details of the living room. And the kitchen bricks were literally taken from their favorite downtown street where they dated as youngsters. There are lots of other little tributes to him throughout as well, such as a motif of his favorite flower, the iris.

**How did you make such a large house feel like a home?**

The key is making it warm, cozy, and inviting; otherwise, the rooms can feel sterile. We wanted people to come in, sit down, and feel comfortable in any room, so we made the finishes more welcoming by using







“

When it came time to renovate, she was ready for color. Her favorite color is any shade of blush and Bill’s was a French green, so we injected these colors in different tones.

wood tones and created more intimate seating areas with textured furniture. Some of the architecture, such as the staircase that’s modeled after the one in the French president’s home, is grand, and we counterbalanced that with cast bronze. Also, even though the artwork is of museum quality, it doesn’t make the house feel like a museum.

**Which rooms are you most proud of?**

I love the formal dining room and living room, which are across the grand hall from each other. I used a fun trick with them. The walls are upholstered in silk; I used the front side of the fabric in the dining room and the back side in the living room, so they look the same but

they’re not. Plus, the beautiful apricot color feels so inviting. The master bedroom also turned out really beautiful with its hues of pink.

**What other clever touches did you incorporate?**

We repeated the exterior of the house throughout the interior. For example, it’s painted on the headboard in the master bedroom, and there’s a massive tapestry in the family room that shows the front of the home. So when you walk in, it’s kind of an indoor-outdoor feel. Things like this make you feel comfortable but you don’t know why, which is what really good design is about.

**How does height play into the overall feel?**

Ceilings are vitally important, especially for a house with so much height, because when people walk into a room their eyes automatically go up. So I wanted to add special little details in each room, such as fruits in the dining room molding. And, in the master bedroom, we covered the ceiling with sheets of platinum and added a massive rose quartz crystal chandelier.

**You recently renovated this chateau. What did you update?**

My brand emphasizes timeless elegance and quality and doing things right the first time, so it never goes out of style—you just make subtle updates.

This house was beautiful before but so neutral, which reflected Jeannie’s mindset at the time. When it came time to renovate, she was ready for color. Her favorite color is any shade of blush and Bill’s was a French green, so we injected these colors in different tones. We also refreshed the wallpaper, added more interesting art, and updated all the rooms to reflect her current happiness.

**What was it like being a competitor on HGTV’s Design Star: Next Gen?**

It was a fun, unexpected ride. I looked at it as an opportunity to push myself out of my comfort zone. It was also nice to show that luxury designers do have fun and get our hands dirty. I had a blast.

**As a designer, do you take notes when inspiration hits?**

I have a photographic memory, which is great for work but bad for relationships. .

**How has COVID-19 impacted home design?**

I’ve found that the pandemic has made people realize the importance of home even more, and they’re injecting quality and comfort into it.

**What is your life philosophy?**

Even after thirty-five years in this business, there’s still so much to learn every day. You have to be open-minded to stay relevant. I also believe there’s beauty in everything if you look for it. Personally, I’m one of those people who

lives for today, doesn’t worry about yesterday, and looks forward to what tomorrow is going to bring.

For more info, visit [goddarddesigngroup.com](http://goddarddesigngroup.com)



# MANY KINDS OF KINDNESS



Many years ago, when I was living next door to my parents, there was a terrible storm. The rain was coming down in sheets so heavy it looked opaque outside my window. When the tornado warnings rolled in, I knew I had to find my way to a basement. I was too scared to run next door, so my mom came outside to the edge of my lawn in her nightgown, flashlight in hand, to collect me.



Recounting this memory made me reflect on kindness and our capacity to both recognize and receive it. Inspired, I asked people:

## How has kindness been shown to you?

“As I was getting ready for my Zumba class one day, I realized that I had grabbed two different sneakers—both right-footed. I would’ve missed the whole class if I had driven home for a left one, so I texted my husband. Twenty minutes later, he showed up with my shoe. I felt like Cinderella! That showed me not only kindness but also respect and support for my physical and mental health.” **-Allison**

“A few months before my dad passed away, I’d taken my parents on their first overseas trip. Despite my dad’s health not being good at times, he was very intentional about creating happy memories. With me being the one taking care of logistics instead of him, he found the role reversal amusing. At the end of the trip, he made sure that I heard him say one of the kindest things one can say to a loved one: ‘You made me happy.’ Because of him, I know that kindness is also accepting love.” **-Karthik**

“I had to spend a whole day at doctor appointments going through extensive testing. We decided my sweetheart would stay home to take care of my dogs. At one point in the day, he sent me a long, funny, heartfelt poem (supposedly dictated to him by the mutts) from a dog’s perspective about the many ways I was so wonderful to them. It was corny and sweet and made me cry.” **-Elizabeth**

“After I evacuated for Hurricane Katrina, I landed in Eugene, Oregon, to spend the semester at the University of Oregon. The school put me in touch with a local retired businessman who was helping evacuees. He set me up with a free apartment for the semester and took me shopping for clothes, dishes, and other necessities. He even gave me his old vacuum cleaner, assuring me he was due for a new one anyway. When I asked him why he was so charitable, he told me he had been successful in business only because others had helped him. His only request was that I pay it forward someday.” **-Paul**

“The first time I returned to synagogue after my husband’s death, I debated about where to sit. We had ‘our seats,’ but that felt too painful. A friend who saw me enter came over and walked me to my old seat. Immediately, another friend left her husband to come and sit with me for the entire service. Those acts of kindness gave me the strength to continue coming there every week.” **-Sue**

“When I was fighting cancer, I opted to use Penguin Cold Caps to reduce hair loss. For eight hours every Monday, while I was getting chemo, my friends would come in shifts—two people at a time—to help me change these caps that were 40 degrees below zero. They were my Penguin warriors, and there were at least a dozen of them.” **-Juliet**

“My last naval deployment was tough because I was going through the beginning of what would become my divorce. There was an officer whose job was to distribute the letters and care packages from home to the crew. One day he said to me, ‘Hey, Chief, I notice you never get any letters or care

packages from home. Is all good on the home front?’ I shared briefly that things weren’t great but I was doing OK. About three weeks later, he showed up at mail call with a big smile on his face and handed me a big cardboard box. I looked at the return address and saw in disbelief his wife’s name. Inside were cookies, brownies, candy, fancy coffee, crayon-drawn pictures, hand-painted crafts, and a letter from his entire family saying how proud they were of me. To this day, I keep the little wooden box that his six-year-old kid painted an American flag on.” **-Andre**

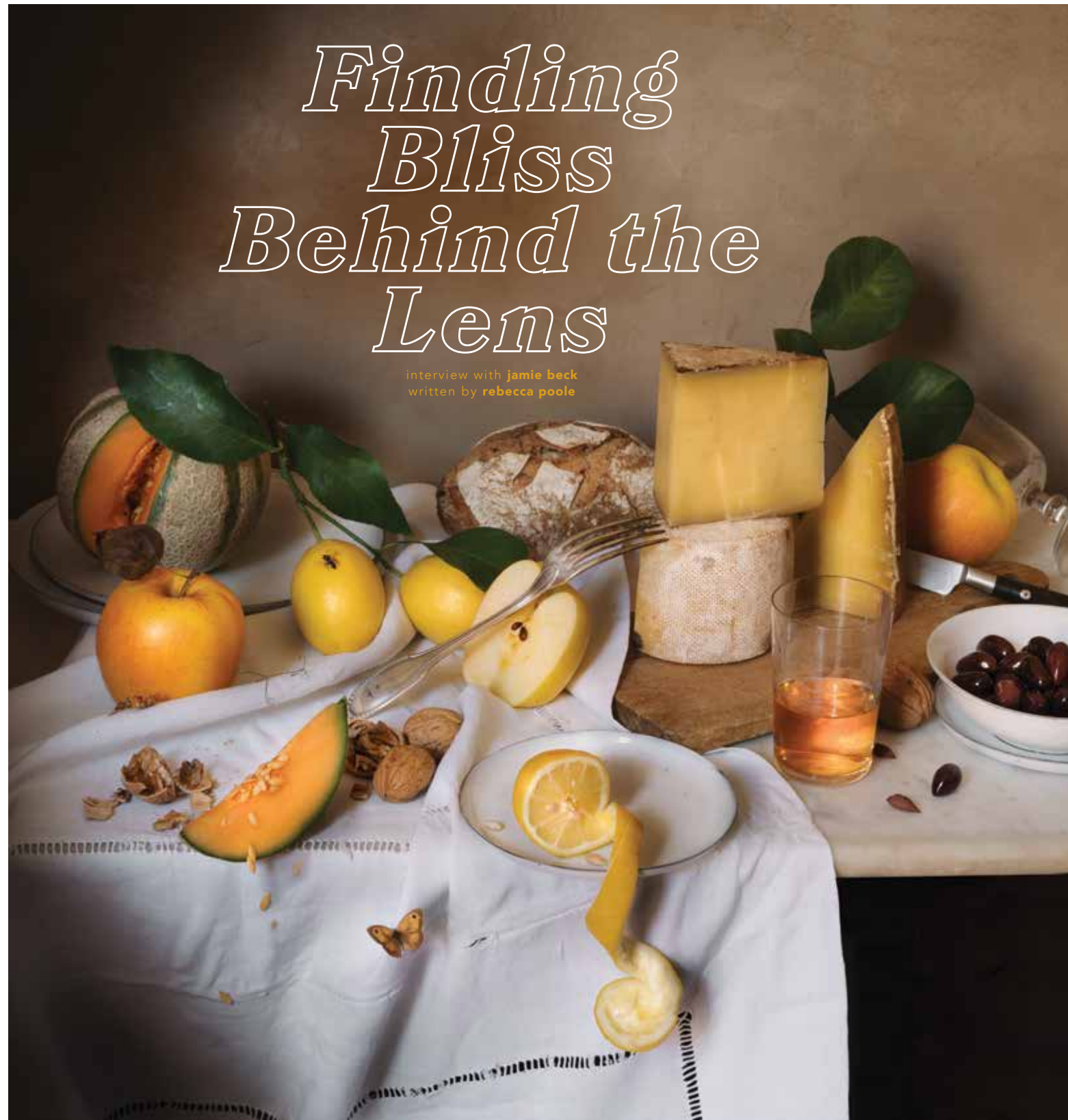
“My dad’s love language could best be described as care-taking. Whenever I go to visit, he’ll hide cash in my wallet before I get on the plane to fly home. The last time I visited, I was going through some heartache, and he tried his best to give good advice. A week after I got back home, I was reaching into the hidden inside pocket of my jacket for a tissue when I discovered some folded up cash paper-clipped to a piece of paper. On the paper, my dad had drawn a heart.” **-Lauren**

It makes me laugh when I think of my mom and that scene with her yelling “Run!” to her twenty-something daughter as her nightgown whipped around in the most cinematic way. But she (and others in the stories above) showed up in the way we needed them. I was reminded that kindness is a choice, a way of volunteering to make someone else’s life better. It shows up in unexpected ways and at unexpected times. If we’re paying attention, we recognize it for what it is and cherish it in all its different forms. ■



# Finding Bliss Behind the Lens

interview with **jamie beck**  
written by **rebecca poole**



**Photographer Jamie Beck discusses her transatlantic journey to capture the light, no matter the circumstances.**

## **What initially led you down this creative path to photography?**

I started taking pictures when I was thirteen. My mom gave me her old film camera, and from the moment I looked through the viewfinder, it's all I ever wanted to do. It gave me access to the world. I studied commercial fashion photography in New York at the Fashion Institute of Technology. After I graduated, I stayed in New York and started my career by assisting photographers and then working for magazines.

At age twenty-eight, I opened my photo studio, Ann Street Studio, in Lower Manhattan and worked on amazing projects for brands like Netflix, Disney, Google, Donna Karan, and Nike. I took a one-year sabbatical to focus on personal work in the South of France and fell in love with the area, so I decided to stay.

## **Were there any standout experiences?**

Yes, being on a Disney movie set was pretty amazing. It was cool to experience that old-school Hollywood production. I also did a road trip around Sweden with Volvo that was really interesting.

My husband, who's my creative partner, and I also invented a form of photography called a cinemagraph, which is a hybrid between a photo and a video; it's a







living image. We've done some viral campaigns using this technique, one of the pinnacles of which was being showcased at the International Center of Photography in New York.

**Your style reminds me of seventeenth-century paintings. Has it always had that romantic feel to it?**

There's always been a bit of romance and beauty in everything I've done, which reflects my viewpoint of the world. As far as the aesthetic of my photographs, it wasn't until I came to France that I really went in that direction. It took a few years to get there, and it came from studying the light.

**What was the impetus for *Isolation Creation*? How does it differ from your other work?**

The *Isolation Creation* project was born out of the global pandemic. At that point, I was still earning my living as a commercial photographer. I had an exhibition and a campaign planned, which were basically going to be my income for the year. When everything stopped overnight, I didn't like that feeling of losing control. However, the thing I *could* control was what I did

with my creativity. I decided to create a piece of art during every day of the quarantine.

I made an Instagram hashtag and asked others to go on this journey with me. It was also a way to raise money for artists who don't have the same platforms I do—and we raised over \$30,000. I made a piece of art for sixty days in a row and built a great online community through that. We also launched our online store, which was the first time I publicly sold my work. It included more affordable pieces aside from my fine art, such as posters and phone cases. It was really successful and fun.

**Would you talk more about your process for your fine art prints?**

I use natural light because I think of it as a character in my work, especially since where I live in Provence translates to "Land of Light," so the light influences everything I do here. I work in an eighteenth-century studio that overlooks a garden, which is where my light source comes from. A lot of what I created for *Isolation Creation*, for example, was foraged since we couldn't go anywhere. I make my work based on the idea, feeling, or story I'm trying to create.

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**What environment do you work best in?**

I have to work alone—I call it an internal dance that happens in my head. I have a mostly classical music playlist that helps guide me along emotionally. My work is dependent on weather, so I've marked the sun pattern in my studio. In the winter I shoot at 3:30, and in the summer I shoot at 9:30 if it's a clear day. My work involves a lot of

postproduction, so I'll do that in the evening.

**Does inspiration come naturally to you, or do you have to actively seek it out?**

Of course, there are wonderful "light bulb" moments in life. For the most part, though, creating is work, and you have to just go to work. If I don't have an idea, I like to go for a walk and try to



observe my thoughts, and that internal dialogue usually leads me somewhere. If not, being out in nature almost always gives me a gift.

**Your Instagram has a strong voice. What made you want to approach social media in this storytelling kind of way?**

I try to provide substance in everything I do. One of the reasons I live in France and do the work that I do is because I want to have an enriching life, and I want to share that with others. It's always better when you can learn and feel something from someone else. The goal of a photograph is to evoke an emotion—it makes it feel like we're sharing a human experience together.

**Do you find challenges in balancing work and creativity?**

[Laughs] Well, I'm under so much pressure right now. The number one piece of advice someone gave to me is to start with just one thing. Sometimes I feel overwhelmed or I can't find inspiration, and it helps to keep that in mind.

**How is your life in France different than it was in New York?**

I'm a lot softer. People take so much time here (like three-hour lunch breaks!), so my patience has increased dramatically. In New York, all I did was work, and I can't imagine ever going back to that. It's good to really engage with what you're doing.

**Has your style as a photographer changed since moving there?**

It couldn't be more night and day. In New York, I was taking thousands of photographs a day. Now, I spend the entire day making one photograph, and it will last longer and can be shared.



**Do you see yourself living in Provence forever?**  
I live so much in the present. I love my town and my studio, but I also thought I'd live in New York forever. I love it very much for now, and it will always be a part of me.

For more info, visit [jamiebeck.co](http://jamiebeck.co) or follow her on Instagram [@jamiebeck.co](https://www.instagram.com/jamiebeck.co)



I TRY TO PROVIDE  
SUBSTANCE IN  
EVERYTHING I DO.  
ONE OF THE REASONS  
I LIVE IN FRANCE AND  
DO THE WORK THAT  
I DO IS BECAUSE I  
WANT TO HAVE AN  
ENRICHING LIFE, AND  
I WANT TO SHARE  
THAT WITH OTHERS.



# CARVING OUT A CALLING

interview with **kate swann**  
written by **matthew brady**  
photography by **florida school of woodwork**

The timeless craft of woodworking has experienced an uptick in interest recently. Kate Swann, the founder and director of the Florida School of Woodwork, discusses her school and her vocation.

## How did you pick up woodworking?

I used to watch my dad making stuff in the garage. However, it didn't all come together until I was living in Portland, Oregon, where my former husband and I owned an early twentieth-century house. It was beautiful but it was a money pit; I had a project every weekend. I found that I really enjoyed using the tools for these projects, so





I did Oregon College of Art and Craft's evening program for about four years and started making things. When people started asking if they could buy my crafts, I knew it could be a business. After we moved to Tampa, I opened up my first little workshop in my garage, where I made custom, commissioned furniture for customers who became like family.

#### What was the impetus for opening your school?

After I'd been making pieces for a while, I started to build a reputation. One day, somebody asked, "Could you teach me how to do that?" I taught a few lessons and really enjoyed it. Within three or four years, I was teaching individuals and groups of two or three. When we moved into our current space, it gave me the chance to evolve and expand the teaching opportunities. It had reached the point where I couldn't be a furniture maker and run a school at the same time, and there were enough students that it became viable to focus on the school.

#### How much has the school grown? What's your mission for it?

The school has grown significantly. There are around 150 classes scheduled this year. They range from one day to four weeks, and we will welcome around 1,000 students. We have national and international instructors, as well as students from all over the country. The most important thing for me is that I learned so much during my time as a full-time commissioned maker, so I feel like I have a responsibility to be a good steward of my craft and help people start on this lifelong journey of woodworking.

#### What challenges did COVID-19 present for you?

Starting in March of 2020, I closed the school for three months and figured,



THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT MADE THINGS THAT CARRIES THE SPIRIT OF THE MAKER WITH THEM. WHEN YOU CREATE SOMETHING WITH YOUR HANDS, YOU ARE NOT JUST DOING THE PHYSICAL CRAFT—YOU'RE POURING YOUR THOUGHT, CARE, AND LOVE OF THE CRAFT INTO IT.



"It's been fun." But then I took a leap of faith and started doing some Zoom classes. After all, how can you teach something that's a very hands-on, interactive experience via a computer? As it turns out, fabulously! We put kits together and sent them to the students, and then the students followed virtually.

I'm definitely going to continue online classes. There are people who could never get to Florida or wouldn't be able to take time off from work to do this, but they can do it from home. This has really broadened our reach, especially internationally—we've had students from places like France, Australia, Israel, and Poland. It's been wild. And funny, too. We'll see people in their pajamas. We had one guy sitting in his car for an entire class. When I asked him about it, he said

that his car was the only place he could find a few moments of peace from his kids. *[Laughs]* So there is an audience out there, and it's been really wonderful to increase the reach of this community of woodworkers all coming together in different ways.

#### Do you get a wide array of students?

As a societal observation, woodworking has historically been the domain of white guys over fifty—and I love white guys over fifty, don't get me wrong—but because we are an urban school, our demographics don't match that. Our breakdown is about 40 percent women and 60 percent men, and we have a broad range of ethnicities in our classes. Our average age is about forty, but, in any class, you'll find a twenty-year-old and a seventy-year-old.





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As far as different skill levels, some experienced woodworkers want to work with our masters, but a lot of people are beginners. In fact, we can't offer enough Beginning Woodwork classes—each class has a waitlist of ten to fifteen people. I think it's a life inflection point of sorts for a lot of people who want something they can engage in, do at home, and find some pleasure doing. There seems to be more interest now than there's ever been.

#### **Is woodworking an easy skill to pick up?**

It's like cooking: people can cook if they learn the sequences and manage their tools. So, even if they have no experience and may choose never to go on to more complex woodworking skills, they can learn to make simple things and enjoy that process. We want them to learn how to use machinery well and safely before they give it a shot in their garage.

#### **Considering your medium and materials, is being eco-friendly a priority?**

We do everything we can from an environmental standpoint. For example, we only use US-produced or US-grown hardwoods to ensure controls on the forestry and the way the wood is harvested. We also produce a lot of offcuts from different projects, which we reuse in our intro chopping board classes, and use a lot of donated wood



rather than going out and driving the harvesting of new stock. In addition, for the safety of our students and the environment, all the finishing products we use are completely nontoxic.

#### **Can you explain the magic of creating something with your hands?**

A long time ago, I made a chopping board for my sister. There was nothing special about it. Several years later, I visited my family in England, and the chopping board was sitting unused on the windowsill! I asked her about it, and she simply replied, “You made it for me.” There is something about made things that carries the spirit of the maker with them. When you create something with your hands, you are not just doing the physical craft—you're pouring your thought, care, and love of the craft into it, which is incredibly satisfying. There's a real thrill in creating something out of something else.

#### **Do you feel the same when you see your students completing woodworking projects?**

I live vicariously through them now. Something that I didn't anticipate, though, was that so many students would find the path so enthralling that they would switch their lives entirely and become full-time makers. To see people embracing this profession and know that I've been a good steward of my craft is probably the most rewarding part of all this.

For more info, visit [schoolofwoodwork.com](http://schoolofwoodwork.com)





# Mirror, Mirror

written by alexa bricker | photography by roger bradshaw

When it comes to incorporating simplicity into interior design, there's a frequently overlooked tactic that can make a tremendous difference in the look and feel of your rooms: hanging mirrors. A simple mirror can work wonders on everything, from the way natural light is dispersed to how large a room feels.

Below are some of the best and most cost-effective ways you can transform your rooms by incorporating mirrors into your design:

## A TRICK OF THE EYE

Place a large mirror above a mantel or sofa to create the look of more space in a room. The reflection the mirror creates can help add depth, making the room appear larger than it actually is.

## A SIMULATED WINDOW

If your room is lacking natural light or doesn't have many windows, hanging a window-like mirror or multiple mirrors can work just as well. Try placing them directly across from a light source, and watch as your room instantly glows.

## A STATEMENT PIECE

Installing a large floor-to-ceiling mirror might seem excessive, especially if the rest of your design is minimalistic. However, you might be surprised by how much space and intrigue a full-body mirror can create, especially in a bedroom or bathroom.

## A PERFECT MATCH

One of the best parts about using mirrors in your design is that you can often find the perfect match for your personal taste. Mirrors come in a large variety of sizes and shapes, and they can be framed in materials such as wood or ornate gold or stand alone for a sleek, modern look. Whatever you choose, select mirrors that will blend cohesively with the rest of your interior.

## A PRISTINE REFLECTION

When utilizing mirrors in your design, the most important thing to keep in mind is also the most basic: keep them clean. Be sure to dust and wipe down the surface of your mirrors weekly so that they can reflect natural light properly. ■

# eight

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## Front of Tear Out Card 2

### vegetable and egg SKILLET




- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 2 tsp. butter
- 3 c. shredded potatoes
- 1 medium red onion, peeled and chopped
- 2 bell peppers, cored and chopped
- 1 c. spinach, chopped
- 1 c. grape tomatoes, sliced
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 7 eggs
- 2 scallions, sliced
- 1 tbsp. chopped cilantro, optional




**Tobin Seven, Principal Broker / Army Veteran**  
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## Back of Tear Out Card 2



**SERVES 6**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Heat oil and butter in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add shredded potatoes and cook for 5 minutes, scraping the bottom of the pan to keep them from sticking. Reduce to medium heat and add onion and peppers. Cook for another 4 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in spinach, tomatoes, salt, and pepper.
3. Make 7 wells in the vegetable mixture. Crack one egg in each well. Sprinkle a little more salt on each egg. Using hot pads, place skillet in oven. Bake 14 minutes for soft yolks or 18 minutes for hard yolks. Top with scallions and cilantro, if using, and serve immediately.

Excerpted from *Christmas Baking: Festive Cookies, Candies, Cakes, Breads, and Snacks to Bring Comfort and Joy to Your Holiday*. © 2020 by Joyce and Laura Klynstra. Photography by Laura Klynstra. Used with permission of Good Books, an imprint of Skyhorse Publishing. All rights reserved.



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minimalism sells

### **Too much furniture can clutter a home (among other things).**

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