

DESIGNING THE BIOPHILIC HOME

Remodeling to Bring Nature into Your Everyday Life

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Top Ten Hacks for a Fun and Successful Holiday Meal

Hosting a holiday meal at your house can be overwhelming and stressful. You need a game plan and a strategy if you want to wow your friends and family. With the holidays right around the corner, I wanted to share my favorite holiday hacks that I use consistently when I host at my house.



- 1. Planning & Prepping:** Planning is crucial in making your event easier and more fun. Plan out your entire event from start to finish. How many courses are you preparing? Know what you want to serve for drinks, appetizers, main course, and dessert. Do as much of the work beforehand as possible, including chopping vegetables, measuring and prepping spices/herbs, pre-making appetizers and desserts, and more. Make a signature cocktail that can be prepped in larger quantities before the event. I also know ahead of time who I am going to recruit to help me in the kitchen when it comes down to crunch time.
- 2. Holy Trinity:** I learned this little tip from my mother-in-law, Carol Dorgan. When she is prepping for the holiday meal, she will make enough of the holy trinity (onions, bell peppers & celery) for all of her dishes that require this versatile mixture. She will make this up to a week ahead of time, then she simply measures out what she needs.
- 3. Gaaaahlic:** I will admit, I cheat on this one. I use a lot of garlic in my recipes. Especially "my" garlic soup, or should I say, Emeril Lagasse's garlic soup. Rather than getting garlic heads, I buy peeled garlic. It saves a tremendous amount of time.

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One new design trend has a deeper meaning and impact than many trends, ensuring its staying power. More designers and homeowners are “bringing the outdoors in.” Most people spend an excessive amount of time indoors. Many indoor environments have artificial light and recirculated air. In his article “What Is and Is Not Biophilic Design?”¹ Stephen R. Kellert states that “We are just beginning to find that these environmentally impoverished habitats foster fatigue, symptoms of disease, and impaired performance.” Large windows, glass walls, skylights, inner-courtyards, and elaborate outdoor living spaces are just some of the solutions designers have incorporated into more and more home remodeling and building projects.

From Commercial Architecture to the Latest Trend in Homes

In the past, biophilic design has been implemented in commercial architecture. Exposure to nature improves focus and productivity. When you look at architecture historically, you can see how both interiors and exteriors mimic nature, from leaf patterns in the stone of a building, to vines in wallpaper: imitating nature is a long-standing design tradition. Recently, home builders, remodelers, and designers are using more biophilic techniques. Biophilic designs combat stale environments in the home. They are alive and place homeowners right up against a natural backdrop in a seamless way.

Experts say specific qualities make a design biophilic; for example, elements included should be alive and native to the area. If a home is in a suburban or wooded setting, seashells and driftwood



may be pretty to look at, but they are neither alive, nor biophilic. Living nature incorporated into design can have a positive impact on stress levels, mood, and overall well-being. When homes incorporate components from their environment, it creates a cohesive look between the surrounding landscape and the home.

Varying Environment and Sensory Engagement

When we are in nature, temperature and light often shift, whereas indoors the lighting and temperature remain fairly constant. Abundant natural light, fresh air, and variables in both of these elements are healthy additions to your home. Living walls turn plant life into art pieces and filter the air, adding a biophilic touch. Fountains or indoor water features can replace having a view of water and also produce a nice auditory stimulus. Biophilic design maximizes all the senses, from the sounds of birdsong to the breezes from an open window.

When remodeling your home, incorporate glass walls, large windows, skylights, and even glass blocking. Consider transitional spaces, like the glass wall going onto a deck or outdoor living area. Having quality outdoor furnishings, and several potted plants indoors near the transitional space, pulls the two areas together. Seamless flow of the design from inside to the outside helps to blur the line between you and your natural environment. Bringing the outdoors in is not just a trend for beauty, but for peace of mind.

¹Kellert, Stephen. “What Is and Is Not Biophilic Design,” Metropolis, Oct. 26, 2015, www.metropolismag.com/architecture/what-is-and-is-not-biophilic-design/.

New Design Solutions for a Simple, Serene Kitchen Remodel



Can you look around your kitchen and name aspects of it that don't function efficiently? Is countertop clutter always in the way when it's time to prep? Are you shuffling around a collection of small appliances so you can wipe counters down?

Streamlined kitchen designs are appealing. It isn't solely their futuristic, serene appearance, but how they incorporate solutions for maintenance and functionality. Homeowners of all ages are swapping out tired styles from the past for a fresh look and smooth workflow.

Siding Options for Your Home



Your home's siding is vital, not only for curb appeal, but for protecting your home's walls and structure. Weather conditions can impact which type of siding you choose. Preventing damage caused by moisture, insects, or fire are important considerations as is proper maintenance of this investment in your home.

Here are some popular siding options for your consideration:

- **Vinyl** is easily installed and maintained, and tends to be the most versatile, economical siding. It comes in a variety of styles. It is moisture, insect, and fire resistant. Vinyl comes in various colors because it cannot be painted, but make sure the color you select is one you will not tire of in the next 20 years—the average lifespan of properly installed vinyl siding.

- **Wood** has a timeless appearance. While wood does not have the same resistance to moisture, insects, or fire that vinyl has, it is a beautiful siding option. Wood siding has good insulation properties. The color or stain can be changed, but the upkeep is costly due to the frequency of staining, painting, or sealing. Wood siding, when cared for properly, can last for the lifetime of your house.

- **Steel/Aluminum** siding is mold, fire, and pest resistant. It has a modern, sometimes industrial look. One drawback of metal siding is that it is one of the costlier options. If a chip forms in the metal,

it must be sealed right away, or else it may rust—and it is hard to stop rust once it begins. Aluminum siding can form dents and does not provide the same type of noise insulation as wood or vinyl.

- **Fiber Cement or Wood Composite** siding both have a wood-like appearance and come in many styles and colors. They are more expensive than vinyl but less expensive than wood. Although composites can last up to 50 years, they require frequent painting after the first 10-15 years for upkeep. If the surface is damaged and not repaired or replaced, moisture can encroach on the siding's core and cause damages.

- **Brick and stone** siding resists weather, insects, and fire, but is extremely expensive. Real brick and stone can last a lifetime and the look is very elevated. Veneers are less pricey options that are easier to install than true stone. With both real and faux stone and brick there is a risk moisture can be trapped behind the siding. Usually, expert installation prevents this possibility.

Wood, composites, and stone or brick are wonderful for mixing and matching siding on your home to create a more eclectic look. With vinyl, you can have many different styles of siding all made from one material. It depends on what kind of look you want your home to have, but it is a choice to plan carefully!



Photos courtesy of CertainTeed

Upper cabinetry is becoming more obsolete as more homeowners choose lower cabinetry storage. Well-liked options include deep drawers, oversize islands, or floor-to-ceiling storage walls. Microwaves and refrigerators can be relegated to lower drawers, making them more reachable. Open shelving often displays attractive collections of objects. Range hoods are sometimes hidden, adding to the clean aesthetic. Some remodeled kitchens look more like living areas than kitchens. Skylights, large windows, and camouflaged lighting provide an airy, bright, and inviting atmosphere.

Monochromatic color palettes still hold appeal, but many homeowners are embracing bold colors, especially in cabinetry. Matte laminate, and wood veneer cabinets are gaining traction along with the use of metal. Cabinetry hardware is often left out altogether, for a clean, easy to maintain look. Appliance cabinets and “garages” are more popular than ever for stashing away all of those small countertop appliances that can hinder your working space. Customizable storage options in drawers and cabinets have no signs of losing ground as trends.



10 Hacks for a Holiday Meal

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Siding Options for Your Home

Design Solutions for a Kitchen



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4. **Wine:** Many of the recipes I use call for wine in the ingredients. If I'm cooking with wine, I only use a wine that I would drink. So, in other words, I would not buy "cooking" wines. Yes, the cooking wines are less expensive, but they also taste less expensive.
5. **Spice of Life:** Don't forget to taste your food as you are making it. This allows you to make adjustments to the spice level of the food. It is amazing what a little salt at the end will do to really open up the flavors of the dish.
6. **Theme:** When I am entertaining, I like to have a theme for my parties. If I am doing a creole meal, I go all the way. Starting with the cocktails and appetizers, progressing all the way through the meal and dessert. It helps to tie everything together.
7. **Everybody:** When entertaining large groups of people, don't be afraid to ask for help. At Thanksgiving, I will normally have 25-30 people over to our house. Typically, I do the entire meal with the help of my sister. Now that sounds pretty impressive right? Well, that is a small lie. Everybody who comes actually helps...and I mean, helps a lot. Many people are involved in the setup crew, making sure the house is ready for serving. There are the entertainers, they help entertain the children until dinner. There are multiple bar tenders, making sure no one is thirsty. Finally, there is the clean-up crew to put the house back to normal. It's a complete team effort in making a holiday meal come together.
8. **Memories:** Make your gatherings memorable by creating traditions. At Thanksgiving, I deep-fry two turkeys, and I smoke one. When we are putting the turkeys in the deep fryer,



all the males gather around with their cocktail of choice in hand. It's pretty impressive to see the turkeys hit the oil. Once this happens, everyone knows that dinner is 60 minutes away.

9. **Cheers:** Always propose a toast at family dinners. This goes along with making your gatherings personal and memorable. This year we will have a very special toast to my father-in-law who passed away this year. Be creative in your toast and have fun.
10. **Last but not Least:** Always remember...if you screw things up really bad, you can always order pizza.

Visit our Facebook page for upcoming fun with Chef Erich! From Thanksgiving to Christmas, we will post weekly holiday cooking videos. These will feature yours truly live from our showroom kitchen. I'll take you on some kitchen tutorials including the "Holy Trinity," entertaining with themes, deep-frying turkeys, my favorite holiday cocktails, and maybe a funny holiday story (or two).

Happy Holidays, Ya'll!