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I think I like fall best of all... fall photo shoot in the backyard. Local mums, pumpkins, gourds and a new chair from a garage sale for $8!

**Seasons fall home**

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**Ohio Regional Publisher** - Tony Adams  
**Kentucky Publisher** - Rod Baker  
**Regional Sales Director** - Pamela Stricker  
  pstricker@cmpapers.com  
**Director of Operations & Advertising** - Jennifer Marshall  
  jmarshall@cmpapers.com  
**Sales Team**  
Teresa Arn, Angela Allen, Kayce Cahall, Kim Moore, Terry Rigdon, Angie Rushmeyer, Kent Staten  
**Graphics Team**  
Frances Pope, Jamie Schubert, Tammy Newberry, Cristal Graham, Melody Evans

October 2019
Embracing the Imperfect

WABI-SABI

The Japanese word basically explains the Japanese philosophy of accepting your imperfections and making the most out of life.

“Wabi” can be defined as “rustic simplicity” or “understated elegance”. “Sabi” is translated as “taking pleasure in the imperfect.”

We have become a culture that relentlessly pursues perfection and dismisses or discards anything that falls short. But wabi-sabi encourages us to celebrate the way things are instead of how we think they should be.

A child’s piece of art with misspelled words, pottery with a chip, the crow’s feet that define such character in an aging face, a slight bruise on a fresh Honey Crisp apple, a brilliant Sugar Maple leaf with spots, the darkened patina on an antique silver pitcher... all examples of beauty with flaws but so worthy of celebrating.

As I look around my house, I am amazed that so many of what I consider my treasures are flawed. However, the flaw makes them no less precious to me. Often the sentimental significance or the beauty despite a chip, a stain or a crack serves as a gentle reminder of a sweet memory.

I have a wooden knife holder my son, Jake, made for me as a little boy. He added a note taped to the front of it. It reads “to mom who makes a meal tastes great!”. Yep, he misspelled the word “great”, but I never replaced that note, now faded and yellowed with age. It makes me smile when I think of the day that little boy presented that gift to his mother. Perfectly imperfect!

The older I get the more forgiving I am of myself. I more readily accept my flaws, my imperfections. Not that I don’t want to keep improving, but I can accept my shortcomings. If my house is not perfectly in order when company is coming, I don’t panic. I can make a trip to the grocery store without makeup... sometimes. I’m more tolerant of the character flaws in other people. God knows mine are too many to count.

I have discovered the beauty of “wabi-sabi”... embracing the imperfect.

My daughter, Darcy, gave me a homemade piece of pottery created by Michael Cole (Willahollow Pottery, Perry, OH). It incorporates the traditional Japanese art of repairing ceramics by mending the broken pieces back together, filling in the cracks with lacquer dusted with powdered gold. It’s called Kintsugi, literally golden (“kin”) and repair (“tsugi”). Each work of art has its own unique beauty. The broken pieces now add greater value to what some may have regarded as useless once broken.

Darcy gave me that bowl at a time in my life when I was experiencing a lot of brokenness, a lot of loss, a lot of pain. That bowl, displayed on my dining room table, serves as a reminder of the beauty that can come from a shattered spirit.

I’m also more aware of the lives around me that I encounter every day. I see the flaws; I see the brokenness... none of us are perfect. I want to appreciate the beauty of a life despite the flaws. I want to see the Kintsugi... the golden repair... and wabi-sabi... embrace of the imperfect.

It’s a season of beautiful change as God paints our Ohio Valley with bold and amazing color. Let’s not let the imperfections keep us from appreciating that beauty... in landscapes, in objects, in the lives around us.

Wabi sabi! Embrace the imperfect! Happy Fall everyone!

seasons fall home
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SOUTHERN STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Fall has arrived and with it the holidays are right around the corner. Stay calm with some ideas and tips to make your home cozy for the holidays – from Halloween up to Thanksgiving and beyond!

By making a checklist of the things that have to be done, the things you’d like to do, and ways to reflect on the true meaning of these special times of the year, savor bits and pieces of the holiday blur. Do you make a fall holiday checklist? Today we’ll be sharing a few simple ways to make the most of fall, from reveling in fun projects to setting aside time with the people you care about.

Fall can be a time of welcoming guests, whether it’s out-of-town visitors who will be enjoying a seasonal dinner at your home. Are there design projects you want to finish before the fall holidays arrive? With the weather cooling down, fall is the perfect time to tackle DIY projects, from painting to rearranging furniture.

Paint a wall (or room), switch out your throw pillows to reflect the upcoming cooler months with warmer colors or jewel tones and arrange your furniture around the fireplace. Switch out artwork for an autumn scene.

**Fire Up the Fireplace**

We all love to curl up next to a roaring fire on a chilly day but as inviting as it is, put safety first. Before lighting the season’s first log, have the chimney and fire box inspected and cleaned by a
professional chimney sweep.

Make It Easy for Guests to Get Comfy

In the living room or den, fill a deep woven basket with plush pillows and cozy throws so guests can grab one if an achy back or chill strikes.

Getting your home ready for fall can also involve adding some seasonal decorations that can span from fall to Halloween to Thanksgiving. Shown below, a harvest table runner, serving dishes that look good from September to November, fall candles and pumpkins. Bring the fall scents back with pumpkin spice, cinnamon apples and vanilla with candles.

Preparing to Entertain

If you plan on hosting a meal or a big holiday gathering, plan a fall tablescape that reflects your style with ease. Once you find a look you like, you can duplicate it as needed. We suggest using items you already have and perhaps add to that with new seasonal accessories or even fresh fruit and flowers. Mrs. Verbarg has always used special accessories that have meaning, adding natural elements to complement. Shown below a beautiful Thanksgiving table at Harold and Shirley Verbarg’s home.

Just because you’re hosting an event doesn’t mean things have to get complicated. Knowing how to easily create a decadent spread is half the battle. Sometimes a stunning combination of food items is all it takes such as a charcuterie board featuring ingredients such as cheese, olives, meat, hummus and fruit.

Shown below is a beautiful charcuterie display.

Don’t Forget the Outside - Freshen Up Your Front Door

Variegated croton in saturated shades of green, gold and red surrounded by vibrant mums and pumpkins give this front entry a colorful fall pick-me-up. Both plants are perennials and can
either be brought indoors to weather the winter or, if you live in a warm climate, planted to add color to your landscape.

Looking Within

Because life gets hectic in the midst of the holiday rush, it can be easy to lose sight of what’s important. Before the fall holidays arrive, take a moment to reflect on what’s important to you in the upcoming season. Perhaps this means reconnecting with family and friends and hosting one of the holidays or starting a new tradition, such as a Friendsgiving. It may also be a time to volunteer at your local food bank remembering others that aren’t as fortunate.

Whatever your traditions or style, take some time to enjoy this upcoming season by preparing and organizing in advance.

Sheri’s Pumpkin Muffins

In my house it’s Fall when the smell of pumpkin muffins permeates the air! I love making them and we eat them for breakfast – or anytime for that matter!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ¾ cups flour
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup dark brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 eggs
- 1 - 15 ounce can pure pumpkin puree
- ½ cup coconut oil, melted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat the oven to 375° and place 12 paper liners into each well of your standard size muffin baking pan. Measure out the flour, sugars, baking soda, salt and spices in a medium bowl and whisk together. Set aside. In another bowl, whisk together the eggs, pumpkin puree, coconut oil and vanilla extract. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and stir together. Do not over mix, just stir until everything is incorporated into the batter. Option to add nuts or chocolate chips. It is helpful to use a large scoop (like an ice cream scoop) to evenly distribute the batter into each well. They will be nearly full. This will help give your muffins a nice puffy dome. Bake your muffins for 20-22 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center of a muffin comes out clean.
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**My Sister’s “Wicked Potatoes”**

Every year my sister Linda would bring wicked potatoes to Thanksgiving. We all loved the recipe so much that now we alternate bringing them and I have them for every special occasion I can think of – they are really wicked – in a good way!

**INGREDIENTS**
- 5 pounds Yukon gold potatoes (my favorite kind)
- 1 stick of salted butter
- 15 ounces sour cream
- 1 can of cream of onion, celery or chicken soup (I use the onion or celery because I’m vegetarian – the original recipe called for cream of chicken!)
- 2 cups cheddar cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste
- A pinch of garlic powder
- Crushed up potato chips

**INSTRUCTIONS**
Peel potatoes (or not if you like the skins!) Place them in a large pan of water with some salt and boil till done. Drain. Mash the potatoes – add the butter and mash more. Add sour cream, soup, cheese and seasonings. Place in a buttered 9x13 casserole dish and bake for 45 minutes at 350°. Place crushed potato chips on top and bake 10-15 minutes more.

Contributed by Sheri Mitchell
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Wood floors are a worthwhile investment that can improve the beauty and function of just about any room in a home. Even though wood floors are durable, and new protective treatments help seal out many of the things that may have damaged floors in the past, homeowners still need to prioritize protecting their hardwood floors.

Certain seasons of the year can be more harsh on wood floors than others. For example, seasons characterized by moisture and precipitation, particularly the early spring, winter and fall, can be hard on wood floors. The experts at ServiceMaster Clean say that cold, snowy days can damage wood floors, and Lumber Liquidators agrees that winter weather can be harsh on flooring.

Homeowners need not give up on hardwood if they live in an area that sees all four seasons. They just need to take a few steps to keep floors looking beautiful.

- Clean up the salt. Salt that keeps sidewalks and streets clear of snow and ice inadvertently gets tracked inside a home. Hard chunks of salt can scratch wood floors, and, if left to sit, that salt can eventually cause white marks and other stains. Routinely vacuuming and sweeping up salt is necessary to protect wood floors.
- Invest in shoe storage. Wet or snowy boots can create puddles around the house. Have a special mat or tray by the front door where wet shoes can be kept. A nice bench in the entryway makes it easy for residents and guests to remove their shoes until it’s time to go back outside.
- Use water-wicking mats. Homeowners will probably need a few extra mats around to tame errant drips.
and wipe shoes. Any entrance that might be used by people or pets should be protected. Try to avoid petroleum-based, rubber-backed mats, as they could discolor the wood floor.

• Control humidity indoors. Cold, dry air in a home can be problematic because the moisture in the wood can eventually evaporate into the air. The heat will suck that moisture from the flooring, causing it to shrink, creak and splinter and become more brittle. Think about investing in an in-line humidifier for the home’s HVAC system that can keep a moderate amount of humidity in the home. Hardwood floorboards are installed to accommodate minor temperature and humidity fluctuations. This is typically a range of between 60º and 80º F with a relative humidity range of 35 to 55 percent, advises ServiceMaster.

• Use the right cleaning products. Avoid excessive water to clean wood floors, and select soaps that are specially designed for wood flooring. Consult with the flooring manufacturer for a list of detergents that are safe to use.

With proper care, hardwood flooring can survive rain, snow and cold weather.
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Fall’s Here, Soup’s On!

By Rita Heikenfeld

It’s that time of year when we get down to what I call “nesting in” for the coming winter. The pumpkins and winter squash will be harvested and stored. The little ones help dig the potatoes. They love to look for what they call buried treasure!

Soups and stews are a mainstay during the autumn months, and I’m sharing 2 family favorites. Both the gumbo soup and beef stew are good dishes to tote, as well.

And to go along with either the soup or stew, how about a slice of warm maple oat bread slathered with butter?

**Slow Cooker Beef Stew**

A hearty stew for autumn is one of my family’s favorites for supper. I’m making it easy since the crockpot does all the work.

**INGREDIENTS**
- 4 slices bacon, cut into small pieces
- 3 pounds boneless beef chuck, cut to 1 inch cubes
- 1 cup red cooking wine
- 14 oz can beef broth
- ½ cup tomato sauce
- ¼ cup soy sauce
- ¼ cup flour
- 1 tablespoon garlic
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 5-6 carrots, cup up in large chunks
- 1 pound potatoes, cut up in large chunks
- Fresh chopped parsley for garnish

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Cook bacon until crisp. Put bacon in slow cooker. Salt and pepper the beef and add to the skillet and sear on each side for 2-3 minutes. Transfer beef to the slow cooker. Add the red wine to the skillet scraping down the brown bits on the side. Allow it to simmer and reduce and slowly add broth and tomato sauce, and soy sauce. Slowly whisk in the flour. Add the sauce to the slow cooker. Add garlic, thyme, carrots, potatoes to the slow cooker. Give it a good stir and cook on low until beef is tender, 8-10 hours or 4-5 hours on high. Enjoy!

**Chicken Gumbo Soup**

Soup is one of those recipes that can be adapted to your taste. Feel free to tweak the recipe as you like.

**INGREDIENTS**
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken, cut into ½” pieces
- 1 bell pepper, diced
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 ribs celery, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon dry basil
- About 6 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup rice
- 1 can diced tomatoes
- As much okra as you like

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Sauté chicken, pepper, onion, celery, garlic and basil in a little butter or olive oil until chicken is just starting to cook. Add 4 cups broth, rice and tomatoes. Cook at a gentle boil until chicken is done, about 20 minutes. Add more broth if necessary. While soup is cooking, steam okra in microwave and add to soup. Taste for salt and pepper.
Maple Oat Bread

This is not difficult and worth the time it takes to make this special bread.

INGREDIENTS
- 1 cup old-fashioned rolled oats
- 1 cup boiling water
- ½ cup maple syrup
- 1 package (¼ ounce) active dry yeast
- 1/3 cup warm (105º F to 115º F) water
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 ½ teaspoons salt
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil

TOPPING
- 1 tablespoon butter, melted and cooled
- 2 tablespoons old-fashioned rolled oats

INSTRUCTIONS
Place 1 cup oats and boiling water in 12-cup food processor fitted with dough or steel blade; let stand 10 minutes. Meanwhile, dissolve 1 tablespoon of the maple syrup and yeast in warm water in small bowl. Let stand until foamy, about 5 minutes. Add flour, salt, oil and yeast mixture to food processor. With machine running, pour remaining maple syrup slowly through feed tube, just as flour continues to absorb it. When ball forms, process another 1 to 2 minutes. If dough is too sticky and doesn’t clear sides of bowl, add more all-purpose flour, 2 tablespoons at a time. If too dry, add water, 1 tablespoon at a time. Place dough in large greased bowl, turning to coat. Cover loosely with plastic wrap. Bring large shallow pot of water just to simmering. Remove from heat. Place rack on top. Place bowl with dough on rack; cover with towel. Let rise 45 minutes or until doubled. Punch down dough; knead few turns on lightly floured surface. Grease 1 ½ quart souffle dish or 10-inch-round cake pan. Place dough in prepared dish, pressing level to fill dish. Cover with oiled plastic wrap. Place bowl on rack over very hot water in pot; cover with towel. Let rise 45 minutes or until doubled in volume. Preheat oven to 350º F. For topping, brush top of bread with melted butter and sprinkle with oats. Bake in 350º F oven for 30 to 35 minutes or until golden brown and hollow-sounding when tapped. Remove bread from dish to rack to cool for at least 30 minutes.
For many homeowners, the arrival of fall and winter marks an end to time spent lounging and dining al fresco on the patio. But cold air does not necessarily mean patio furniture must be packed up until flowers bloom anew in spring.

In its 2017 Home Design Trends Survey, the American Institute of Architects found that consumers continue to emphasize practical features that expand the functionality of their homes via heavy investment in outdoor living spaces. The survey found that the popularity of outdoor living spaces increased by 72 percent between 2012 and 2017, highlighting just how much homeowners enjoy spending time outdoors. By taking measures to make their outdoor living spaces winterproof, homeowners can enjoy these areas of their homes even more.

**How to create a winter-friendly outdoor living space**

**Cover your deck.**

A covered deck may appear to make the space less enjoyable during spring and summer. However, covered decks can protect residents from the sun on especially hot days while also making the space more functional in winter. An overhead shelter on a deck can be outfitted with heaters (and fans to provide a cooling effect in summer) and allow residents to sit outside and watch snow fall without getting wet.

**Plant the right trees.**

Coniferous trees prevent wind, which can be especially harsh in winter. Homeowners who are unsure about which direction wind typically comes from can consult a landscape architect to determine
where to plant the trees to ensure they’re most effective.

**Fire up the patio.**

A firepit or fireplace can warm up an outdoor living area, making such a space warm and cozy even on a cold winter night. A patio with a built-in firepit can cost a pretty penny, but such an addition can withstand winter weather better than a standalone firepit, which might be vulnerable to being tipped over by winter winds.

**Install lighting.**

The sun sets early in winter, so homeowners won’t be able to rely on natural light to illuminate their outdoor living spaces well into the evening like they do in summer. Heat lamps can be used to both warm and illuminate a space, serving dual, budget-friendly functions.

With the right adjustments, outdoor living spaces can be enjoyed throughout winter.
Rose Petal Rolls

INGREDIENTS
• 1 pkg. dry yeast
• 1 egg
• ¾ cup oil
• ½ cup warm water
• 4 cups self-rising flour

INSTRUCTIONS
Dissolve yeast in warm water. Add sugar and oil and mix. Beat in other ingredients, mix well. Spoon into greased muffin tins, a third to half full. Bake in a preheated oven at 400° for 13-15 minutes. Makes 2 ½ dozen. This dough will keep one week in covered container in the refrigerator.

Patty Hanshaw – Tollesboro, KY

Lemon Cake-Top Pudding

INGREDIENTS
• ¼ cup sliced natural almonds
• 4 large eggs, separated
• 1 cup sugar
• 3 tbs. margarine, softened
• 3 tbs. all-purpose flour
• 1/8 tsp. Salt
• 1/3 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
• 1 cup reduced-fat or lowfat milk
• Grated peel of ½ lemon

INSTRUCTIONS
Preheat oven to 325°. Spray the inside of 1 ½ quart glass casserole with butter-flavored nonstick cooking spray. Sprinkle almonds over bottom of casserole. In medium bowl, with electric mixer, beat egg whites at high speed until soft peaks form. Gradually add ¼ cup sugar, beating until medium-stiff peaks form; set aside. With same beaters, in large bowl, beat together margarine and remaining ¾ cup sugar. With same beaters, in small bowl, beat egg yolks well; add to margarine-sugar mixture, beating thoroughly. Add flour, salt and lemon juice; beat well. Stir in milk and lemon peel until blended. Stir in 1/3 of the egg mixture, then gently fold in remaining egg whites. Pour batter into prepared casserole over almonds. Place casserole in shallow baking pan filled with 1 inch hot water. Bake, uncovered, for 50 to 55 minutes, or until golden brown and top springs back when lightly touched with finger. Carefully remove from water and let set for 20 to 30 minutes. Serve warm or chilled. Garnish each serving with lemon half-cartwheel slices and fresh mint leaves, if desired.

Ann Devoe from Mays Lick, KY

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How to store firewood the **RIGHT** way

A fireplace is a cozy and warm spot around which a family can gather. The home and real estate resource HomeGuides.com indicates that 60 percent of new homes have a fireplace, which is up from 36 percent in the 1970s.

Naturally, fueling a fireplace for the season may require homeowners with wood-burning units to keep an ample supply of wood at the ready. How that wood is stored is important, as properly stored firewood can prevent waste and other issues around the house.

Wood that is freshly cut has a water content of 60 percent or more. Yet, for best burning ability, wood should be near 20 percent in water content. Green wood is hard to ignite and will not burn nearly as well or efficiently as seasoned wood. Another concern associated with green wood is that it can contribute more to creosote accumulation in the flue of a fireplace. Creosote is a combustible material that may lead to fires if left unchecked.

According to BioAdvanced®, a science-based lawn, garden and home improvement innovator, seasoning wood typically takes six months to a year. Homeowners may opt to purchase seasoned wood that already has sat and dried.

Homeowners who have an abundance of firewood have to store it somewhere. Log Splitters Direct suggests choosing a dry, breezy area of the property that is about 20 feet from the nearest door to the house. This helps avoid hitchhiker pests from coming inside with the wood, such as termites, ants, spiders, and mice. Do not stack the wood flush against a structure. It should be at least a few inches away to allow airflow behind the stack.

Stick to organized rows of wood no more than four feet high. Log racks and pallets and posts will keep the wood up and off of the ground where moisture and rotting can develop. Placing the logs in an unorganized pile will impede air flow and cause the wood to rot rather than continue to dry and season even more.

Homeowners also should use a cover to protect seasoned firewood from the elements. Position a tarp or plastic sheeting so it blankets the top of the stack and extends a few inches down the sides. Keep the sides mostly exposed to air. Others prefer to stack it in a barn or shed or under an overhang.

Green wood is less expensive than seasoned wood. Those who prefer this method should do so in the early spring and let it season over the next several months.

Bankrate says that the cost of a cord of wood varies across the country, but in general one can expect to pay between $120 and $180 for a cord of hardwood that is split and seasoned. This price may be higher in mid-winter when demand increases.
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Jack-O-Lantern Stuffed Peppers
by Sherry Mitchell

Fall is a wonderful time with crisp weather and cozy vibes. Here’s a fun twist on the original stuffed pepper you may be familiar eating. Daughter Christi and I got together and jacked up the traditional stuffed pepper recipe with a tasty homemade sauce, orange bell peppers with Jack-O-Lantern faces. This is really, surprisingly quick and easy to make homemade sauce chock full of yummy vegetables. Butter up some sourdough bread and a spoonful of mashed potatoes and enjoy your Jack-O-Lantern feast.

PEPPERS
6 Orange Bell Peppers- washed and seeded.
Use a sharp pointed pairing knife to cut the jack-o-lantern faces in the peppers.

SAUCE
• 1 Tablespoon butter
• 1 Tablespoon olive oil
• ½ of a medium chopped onion
• 1 clove garlic minced
• ½ cup chopped celery
• ½ cup chopped pepper
• ½ cup chopped carrots
• 1 can diced tomatoes
• 1 - 8 ounce can tomato sauce
• 1 teaspoon oregano
• ½ teaspoon basil
• 2 teaspoon salt (to taste)
• ½ teaspoon pepper
• 1 ½ teaspoon Worcestershire Sauce

INSTRUCTIONS
In a pot on the stove, make the homemade sauce. Brown onion and garlic in butter and olive oil. Add all other vegetables and sauces. Cook 15 minutes until tender. Cool.

MIX
• 1 egg
• 1 ½ pounds ground beef
• 1 ½ cups cooked white rice (Big Ben boiling bags works nicely)
• Shredded cheddar or colby jack cheese (optional)

Add the sauce mixture to the ground beef and mix well. Saving some sauce for the top of the peppers before baking. Combine ground beef, cooked rice, and homemade sauce in a large bowl as you would for a meatloaf. The KitchenAid mixer works wonders for this step. Optional, add about a cup of grated cheddar cheese to this combined mixture. Stuff the Peppers. Cover with a small amount of sauce, a bit of grated cheese on top, then add the pepper’s hat. If you have leftover meat mixture, put it in a small loaf pan and bake like a meatloaf topping with sauce and cheese. Yummy indeed. Bake 55 - 60 minutes at 350º.

Sherry Mitchell shares her farmhouse memories and recipes from her farmhouse on Cherry Ridge Farms sprinkled with peace, love and joy. She blogs at sherryhillismsmitcchell.com. Her book, My Farmhouse Journal: Memories and Recipes, is available on Amazon.
Pumpkin Spice Cupcakes
by Sherry Mitchell

It’s an easy recipe for the kids to shop for their ingredients from the list you make for them, and equally easy to make. The fun is in the decorating. Kids like to be creative. It’s how they learn. Truthfully, adults like to be creative too. I know. I enjoy working with their young, creative minds as much as they love creating. Being with young minds makes one young again. In the kitchen with the grands is truly a great way to connect!

**INGREDIENTS**
- 1 (15 ounce) can pumpkin puree
- 3 large eggs
- 1/3 cup oil (no water; the pumpkin puree is the substitute)
- 1 box Spiced Cake Mix
- Halloween Cup Cake Liners

**INSTRUCTIONS**
Follow the above directions. Remember to not add water. Follow the cake mix directions for baking.

**DECORATING**
Once the cupcakes are cool, it’s time to start decorating. This is where the fun begins. A can of store-bought icing will do. I do not like to use the whipped style. Tint the icing to coordinate with your cupcake liners. Or you can use store bought decorations, we chose a Halloween theme. Kids love to add the food coloring (blue+ red=purple) to see the magic happen. Be as creative as you want to be. Don’t worry if they like to put every little decoration on one cupcake or want to add more food coloring when you think the color is just right. Remember their masterpiece is that one cupcake “their” creation. Let them run with it. Too many rules ruin the fun! It’s fun to see what they come up with. Happy Baking! ~ Sherry
If you fall, I will catch you.
Many homeowners wish they had more storage space, and kitchens are one area where people seemingly can always use more storage.

Despite a desire for more kitchen space, until recently, kitchen pantries fell out of favor. Builders and architects may have thought that close proximity to supermarkets as well as multi-use cabinets in kitchens would offset the need for pantries. But according to a recent survey from the National Association of Home Builders, a kitchen pantry is the most desirable kitchen feature for buyers in the market for a new home.

According to a 2016 survey from ReportLinker, 98 percent of Americans say cooking at home is their preferred way to prepare a meal. And despite the wide array of restaurants, prepared meals and fast food options nearby, more than one-third of people cook at home daily, with nearly 50 percent cooking between three and six days a week.

In order to accommodate for spending more time in the kitchen, homeowners are directing additional attention to kitchen preparation and storage features. In fact, one recent trend in kitchen renovations is creating custom-designed pantries.

**Locate the appropriate space**

Ideally, pantries should be in or adjacent to the kitchen. But not every home layout allows for this setup. Some homeowners need to move storage pantries into the garage, the basement or a mud/laundry room.

Various factors should be considered before placing a pantry outside a kitchen. What is the climate? Will food spoil? Is there a possibility that vermin or insects can infiltrate the room and access food? These factors will dictate whether to have closed cabinets, air-tight bins or open shelves or if other modifications must be made to the room prior to building.

**Choose the type of pantry**

Accessibility is essential in a pantry. Everything should be easily reached and grabbed as needed without having to move too many things. Ideally, foods should be arranged in a single layer so that all items can be viewed at a glance. Shelves of various depths and heights can accommodate items of different sizes. Adjustable shelves are ideal because they can be modified as foods change. Sliding drawers can improve reach in cabinets.

In smaller spaces, French door-style reach-in cabinets are convenient and flexible. In complete kitchen remodels or new constructions, walk-in pantries offer the most space and flexibility.

**Must-have features**

Pantries serve different functions in different homes. For the bulk shopper, a pantry with plenty of room for large items will be needed.

Lighting can be beneficial in all pantries. Lights can improve visibility when trying to locate items. Others prefer an outlet for charging hand-held vacuums or other small appliances. Counter space in the pantry enables homeowners to unload groceries directly onto pantry shelves.

For pantries located outside of the kitchen, built-in freezers can maximize storage possibilities, especially for those who freeze-and-eat after bulk shopping ventures.

Pantries are popular features that homeowners can customize depending on their storage needs and the amount of time they spend in their kitchens.
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Although off-grid homes were more common in the past (using battery banks for power storage), grid-tied homes are becoming very popular for people who want to save on their electric bill.

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Withamsville’s new concrete artist

To say Steve Seipelt, a soon-to-be-retired Cincinnati firefighter, amends concrete would be like saying a spider spins webs. It’s true, technically, but it doesn’t capture the magic unfurling beneath the surface.

Owner of Amended Surfaces at 969 Ohio Pike in Withamsville, Seipelt is a decorative concrete contractor, or put in one-word he prefers: artist.

Seipelt specializes in concrete and epoxy overlays for interior floors and vertical surfaces, outdoor living spaces, such as fireplaces, outdoor kitchens and grill enclosures, and stonewall benches, among other features.

Amended Surfaces also installs cabinets.

The intricacies and complexities involved in creating the web is similar to mixing the right ingredients to make concrete, and then shaping it, and staining it per the desired wishes of a customer.

It’s a lot more than just taking a bag of concrete and mixing it with water.

“We’re baking countertops,” he said.

And much like the web, it’s durable and strong, made with the right touch of elbow grease. All for use in residential homes or commercial businesses.

“We’re trying to create the, ‘Wow!’ factor, like, ‘Wow, I didn’t know you could do that with concrete,” he said.

It’s not the materials you use, it’s the craftsman who’s doing it, Seipelt said.
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“You dream it. We create it,” is the building block of Seipelt’s business.

Seipelt has been in business for a few years now, but his new expansive showroom off of Ohio Pike officially held its grand opening on Sept. 10.

The concrete business became more than merely a way to transition into a new career after retiring from firefighting after 32 years; it became a way to find peace.

Peace today looks like using a hand-press to form the concrete, a more traditional, minimalist approach to the trade and craftsmanship.

Several years ago, Seipelt said he started out with a few classes on epoxies, and then it grew from there.

Honing his craftsmanship took Seipelt all over the country to cities, such as Chicago, Cleveland, Phoenix, and the states of Florida and Texas, learning from others in the trade.

“I love my career, but my career has run its course. I can feel at peace here. I can come in here and create and be relaxed and not have to worry about all the past experiences,” he said.

Hand-pressed, which is exactly what it sounds like in terms of taking a clump of concrete in one’s hands and molding it into place, offers many different looks and uniqueness, Seipelt said.

His other techniques are sprayed concrete (the concrete is sprayed into place) and cast-in-place (poured into place onsite to not risk breaking a large piece by transporting it).

Very few people are doing this sort of specialized concrete work in the Cincinnati area, Seipelt said.

“That’s why I wanted to get into this business is because I saw the potential and I saw a need for it that no-one has been able to fulfill that need,” he said. “The designers, homebuilders, they want something custom, different and unique, and I can provide that.”

Everybody knows and has seen granite, but it’s limited with the edges and thickness, Seipelt explained. With concrete, Seipelt said he has more flexibility, especially with sinks.

“When the concrete, I have lots of flexibility, I can create different edges, whether it’s rough looking edges, or a waterfall edge, it gives us a lot of flexibility to mix and match.
colors,” he said.

Flintstones for the proverbial man cave? Seipelt can do that, too.

Pieces moved to the curbside, headed for the local dump? Seipelt will find a use and mold for it, and turn it into a new sink.

He can make it look like wood, a barn, rustic, and embed metal, and fire pits, and coat styrofoam with concrete to make shelving, and all other manner of styles.

Seipelt said he has a “a lot of different tricks” that allow him to provide many different looks.

“I’m offering them the vision. I like to say, show me your vision, and I have to be able to grasp that vision,” he said.

As he said, he and a customer might have different ideas conceptually of what a cat may look like, but if the customer can explain the sort of “cat” they are looking for, he will get there with that customer.

“I like the challenge, I kind of thrive on the challenge,” he said.

To learn more about Amended Surfaces, visit their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/amendedsurfaces.

Brett Milam is the editor of The Clermont Sun in Clermont County. Prior to being the editor, he worked as an intern with The Cincinnati Enquirer, and The Post Independent in Glenwood Springs, Colorado. When not reporting and writing, his interests include politics, horror movies and professional wrestling. He has a dog named Dallas; she’s named after the Dallas Cowboys. (To be clear, he’s not a Cowboys fan or much of a sports fan, for that matter).
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Seasons Fall Home 37
Homemade Hot Dog Sauce

**INGREDIENTS**
- 1 lb. Hamburger
- ½ medium onion, chopped
- 2 cups ketchup
- 1 cup water
- 1-½ tsp. chili powder
- 1-½ tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1/8 tsp. Oregano
- 1 tbs. vinegar
- little salt and pepper
- ½ cup brown sugar

**INSTRUCTIONS**
Brown hamburger in skillet; drain. Add chopped onions, ketchup, water, chili powder, Worcestershire sauce, vinegar, oregano, salt & pepper (to taste), add brown sugar, simmer for 30 minutes until flavors are all together.

Patty Hanshaw – Tollesboro, KY

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Mom’s Tennessee Cornbread

**INGREDIENTS**
- 1 cup white cornmeal
- 1 cup sour cream
- 2 tbs. Milk
- 2 eggs, slightly beaten
- ½ tsp. Salt
- 1/8 tsp. baking soda
- 1 ½ tsp. baking powder
- ¼ cup melted butter

**INSTRUCTIONS**
Preheat oven to 425°. In roomy bowl combine sour cream, milk and eggs and beat well with whisk. Add salt, soda, baking powder and butter with cornmeal. Mix thoroughly and quickly spoon into buttered (or greased) baking pan/skillet. Bake 30 minutes until golden brown on middle rack.

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Jamey Mills

Jamey Mills - Chief of Police, City of Milford, resides in Milford

Favorite season? My favorite season is autumn. I enjoy the colors, the weather, and most of all, football.

Morning ritual(s)? I start my day around 6:45am with a cup of coffee and the local news as I read emails. I start with the overnight recap email from the night shift supervisor. Next, I send text messages to my two oldest sons, put my youngest on the school bus at 8:30am, and head to the office. I’m an MBWA (Management By Walking Around) type. When I get to the office, I grab a cup of coffee, walk the halls, and check in with the officers, clerks and detectives. Next, I sit down with Assistant Chief Sean Mahan for an update on the status of any major investigations, outreach projects, or any other issue that I need to be aware of.

Vacation? I prefer my vacations to include a combination of R&R and adventure. In the last year, my girlfriend and I went to the top of Pike’s Peak in Colorado, rented a wave runner in Florida, and went zorbing in Tennessee.

Music? I enjoy almost every genre of music, but my favorite is anything from the ‘80s. I listen to classical music when I need to calm my mind, hip hop music when exercising, and classic country when I’m relaxing.

Last good book you read? I’ve learned a lot from John Maxwell’s leadership books. My favorite is the “Maxwell Daily Reader.”

What’s one of your all-time favorite movies? Anything with Denzel Washington. My all-time favorite movie is “Training Day.” I’m fascinated with the ethical spiral of his character. I teach ethics at the Clermont College Police Academy and often reference that movie.

Someone who had a positive impact on your life? It’s hard to narrow that down to one person. I’ve been blessed with amazing parents, teachers, coworkers, supervisors, and friends who have helped, guided, and mentored me. But the one person who has had the most positive impact on my life is my girlfriend, Amy. She inspires me daily with her work ethic, positive attitude, and by the way she treats people.

C.J. Hunter

C.J. Hunter IV

Executive Director of the Kentucky Gateway Museum
Center in Maysville, KY

Lives on the family farm, Indian Spring Farm, in Mason County, near Washington, KY

Favorite season? Summer, but enjoy all the seasons

Morning ritual(s)? Read the paper on line, check messages and deal with our dog Max and cats

Vacation? A cruise with family

Music? Classical, strings and piano selections

Last good book you read? “Songs of America” By Jon Meacham and Tim McGraw

One of your favorite movies? “Churchill”, A 2017 film with Brian Cox

A quote you like? “Act well your part, there all the honour lies.” - Alexander Pope

Someone who had a positive impact on your life? My parents and grandparents

Joey Rockey

Joey Rockey

Georgetown, OH Fire Chief

Favorite season? My favorite season is fall. No other season is even close.

Morning ritual(s)? My morning ritual consists of feeding my neighbors dogs a bologna sandwich every morning. They wait patiently every morning on our front porch for their sandwiches.

Vacation? My idea of a great vacation is exploring and seeing our country with my family. Don’t get me wrong, the beach is fun but exploring and seeing different states is enjoyable for me.

Favorite music? I have nearly two hundred songs loaded into my phone that I listen to while mowing or traveling. They range from classic country, big hair, bluegrass, and some gospel, so to say I have a favorite would be a stretch..
### Blackberry Cobbler

**INGREDIENTS**
- 1 stick butter
- 1 ½ cup berries (can use any fruit)
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cups flour
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ cup milk

**INSTRUCTIONS**
Put melted butter in pan (8x8 or larger). Add berries to melted butter. Mix sugar, flour, and baking powder together, stir in milk to make a batter. Pour the batter over the hot berries and butter in baking dish. Bake at 350º for 45 minutes or more.

*Patty Hanshaw – Tollesboro, KY*

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### Chicken Parmesan

**INGREDIENTS**
- Chicken breast, cooked
- Pizza sauce
- Mozzarella cheese
- Parmesan cheese
- Hoagie buns

**INSTRUCTIONS**
Bake at 350º. Place cooked chicken breast on bottom half of hoagie bun. Cover with pizza sauce, Mozzarella cheese and Parmesan cheese. Put on top of hoagie bun and spread with butter. Bake until butter is melted. Cool and serve.

*Patty Hanshaw – Tollesboro, KY*
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4203 Carliss Ln, Batavia, OH 45103
Office:
(937) 444-2910
(513) 753-9660
Cell:
(513) 404-9544
Email: brown@koogler-eyre.com
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Why homeowners should add more exterior light to their properties

Homeowners are increasingly realizing the benefits of improving the exteriors of their home, which can be just as valuable as improving the interior spaces. As individuals design picturesque garden beds and cultivate lavish lawns or revamp exteriors with architectural features, they probably want to spotlight these improvements. This is where exterior lighting can be put to great use.

Exterior illumination can cast a glow on various features, but there are many other reasons to increase lighting around the exterior of a home.

Safety

Trips and falls can occur at night when trying to traverse walkways and landscapes in the dark, as it can be difficult to see rocks, stairs and uneven pavement. Outdoor lighting can illuminate pathways, entryways and other areas for safer access for homeowners and their guests.

Extend outdoor entertaining

Ample lighting can increase the amount of time one can use outdoor spaces and make them the perfect gathering spot. As autumn arrives, days become shorter. However, patios, porches and more can get extended use with lighting.

Safeguard security

A well-lit home may be less likely to be targeted by burglars than one swathed in darkness and shadows. Lights can remain on all evening or be motion-triggered. Setting lights on timers also ensures that the home is illuminated whether residents are home or not.

Create drama

Landscape lighting designers can establish focal points around the landscape and highlight the best features of a property. Uplighting in trees, silhouetting techniques to showcase plants and spotlights to show off architectural features are all options for homeowners to consider.

Add value

The experts at Parker Homescape, a landscape design service, say that exterior lighting can add roughly 30 percent to the value of a home. They also indicate that 50 percent of all home buyers say that outdoor lighting is important when buying a home. If current residents are thinking about selling, now may be the time to invest in exterior lighting.

Improving a home’s exterior may be as simple as adding more lighting to improve functionality and beauty.
How mulched leaves help your lawn

Various chores are synonymous with certain times of year. For example, cleaning a pool is a summertime task. In addition, rare is the instance that Mother Nature forces anyone to break out the snow shovels outside of winter. Raking leaves has long been a task for fall afternoons, but homeowners may be surprised to learn that they might be better off putting their rakes in permanent mothballs.

In the 1990s, turfgrass specialists at Michigan State University began exploring the potential benefits of leaving mulched leaves on a lawn instead of raking them and leaving them for curbside pickup. While the researchers noticed an obvious leaf residue on the lawn after mulching, they noted that it only sticks around for a few days. Eventually, the tiny pieces sifted down into the lawn, ultimately serving to control future weed growth while also providing the lawn with essential nutrients. Over time, researchers noted that homeowners who mulched rather than raked their leaves needed less fertilizer to give their lawns a green look in spring, saving homeowners the effort and cost associated with fertilizing.

Researchers also noted that decomposing pieces of leaves cover up bare spots between turf plants, which have traditionally proven to be excellent spots for weed seeds to germinate. In fact, MSU notes that homeowners can expect a nearly 100 percent decrease in dandelions and crabgrass after mulching leaves for just three years.

Depending on the type of mower being used, up to six inches of leaves can be mulched at a time. Push mowers can handle smaller amounts, though can still be as effective as ride-on mowers.

Fall may be synonymous with raking leaves. However, homeowners who want to give their lawns a healthy boost should consider putting their rakes away and mulching their leaves this fall.
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Add a POP of color to your garden this winter

Winter weather comes on the heels of a vibrant, colorful autumn season. Shortly after fall foliage falls to the ground, nature tends to greet us with a considerably less colorful palette. What’s more, much of the wildlife and plants that make spring, summer and fall so awe-inspiring tend to hibernate in winter, making it more difficult to find bright spots on drab days.

If you think that winter means the end of beautiful garden colors, think again. There are plenty of cool-season flowers and other plants that can add a pop of color to brighten your day. These flowers provide color right when most people need it most.

In areas where winter is not marked by a deep freeze, homeowners can plant pansies, snapdragons, English daisies, calendula, and other blooms from early fall through late winter. These plants will survive the cold, keeping containers, borders and gardens full of color.

Camellias are a type of flower that bloom in fall and winter in hues of red, pink, coral, white, and more. The plants are evergreen and will grow from shrubs or small trees when fully established.

Homeowners who live in climates marked by cold winters can opt for plants that offer color but without flowers. According to HGTV, these include cabbages and kales, which can survive most cold winters and lend an interesting texture to a winter landscape bed.

Of course, no list of winter’s colorful plants would be complete without holly, which offers an eye-catching display of evergreen leaves and bright red berries, though sometimes the berries are golden. Either way, they can be a sight for sore eyes on gray winter days.

For more ideas, visit a local garden center to learn about plants that can add vibrant color to a landscape, even as autumn transitions to winter.
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Grandma’s Famous Pumpkin Pie
by Sherry Mitchell

There’s pumpkin pie, and then there’s pumpkin pie just like Grandma Fender made. And my mother. And me. And my daughter. And her daughter. It’s a 5 generation recipe. Everyone was always excited to see—and asked her to bring—her pumpkin pie.

INGREDIENTS
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon ground cloves
- 2 large eggs
- 1 can (15 ounces) Pumpkin Puree
- 1 can (12 ounces) evaporated milk
- 1 unbaked 9-inch deep dish pie shell

INSTRUCTIONS

Have your own pumpkins to puree? Bake, boil or instant pot your cut up pumpkin chunks or leave them whole like I do. Once soft, separate the rind from the flesh scrape out the seeds. Note, a small pie pumpkin—about a 6” pumpkin—will reduce to about 2 cups, just enough for a pie. Hence the name “pie pumpkin.” I like those little pumpkins with a dark orange rind. However, I might add, you’ll want to puree the cooled cooked pumpkin well in a food processor; otherwise the pie texture will be grainy.

October 2019
A warm fire can make even the coldest winter day more enjoyable. Fireplaces may not get much use in spring or summer, but come late fall and throughout the winter, the fireplace can be a great place for families to gather.

Before fireplace season hits full swing, homeowners might want to brush up on a few fireplace facts so they can safely enjoy nights spent sitting by the crackling flames.

The Chimney Safety Institute of America advises homeowners with fireplaces to hire a CSIA-certified chimney sweep to clean their fireplaces. After a lengthy period of non-use, various issues could be affecting the chimney, many of which might not be noticeable to an untrained eye.

Professional, certified chimney sweeps have extensive knowledge of fireplaces, making them valuable resources who can let homeowners know if any safety issues developed since fireplaces were last used. The National Protection Agency recommends that chimneys be swept at least once per year.

Things to consider before warming up next to your first fire this winter
A full inspection of the chimney might be in order as well. Chimney service technicians will conduct thorough examinations of readily accessible portions of the chimney exterior and interior and accessible portions of the appliance and the chimney connection. The CSIA recommends that homeowners who plan to use their chimneys as they have in the past request a Level 1 inspection, which will examine the soundness of the chimney structure and flue as well as the basic appliance installation and connections. Technicians also will verify if the chimney is free of obstruction and combustible deposits.

Homeowners also should inspect their chimney dampers before lighting their first fires of the season. Dampers should open and close smoothly. If not, a service technician can help fix or replace the damper.

Firewood is another thing homeowners must consider before lighting their first fires of the season. The CSIA says that well-seasoned firewood works best, noting that wood that is not well-seasoned will produce more smoke than heat. In addition, the home improvement resource *This Old House* recommends using dense wood that’s been split and stored in a high and dry place for at least six months.

Oak is an example of dense wood that, when stored properly, can make for an enjoyable fireplace experience. Avoid softwoods like pine. Pine can produce a lot of creosote, which is a byproduct of wood combustion. Creosote is highly flammable, and as it builds up in a chimney, the risk for a chimney fire increases.

Choosing the right wood, making sure it’s well-seasoned and having a chimney professionally cleaned can reduce the risk of a creosote-related chimney fire. A Level 1 inspection should determine if there are potentially dangerous levels of creosote deposits in the chimney.

Before nestling up to a fireplace this winter, homeowners should consider a host of factors and safety measures to ensure their fireplaces are safe and ready for the season ahead.

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No homeowner wants to look at the exterior of his or her home and see roof damage. Such damage may lead homeowners to think they need a new roof, a potentially costly expense that can quickly throw household budgets into a state of disarray.

According to the HomeAdvisor, the average homeowner spends a little more than $7,600 installing a new roof. Various factors, including the size of a home and the type of roof homeowners prefer, will affect the cost of a roof replacement. In addition, homeowners who see roof damage can rest assured that not all roof problems will necessarily require a replacement roof to be installed.

Curled shingles are a problem many homeowners have encountered. This particular problem is not always indicative that a roof is on its way out. In fact, the home improvement resource This Old House notes that, as asphalt shingles age, their corners often begin to curl downward or upward. Homeowners who notice this early enough can glue down the curled section of each shingle that’s beginning to curl.

Some shingles may be curling because they’re defective. Fortified Roofing, a New Jersey-based roofing company that specializes in the repairing and replacing of various roofing configurations, advises homeowners to contact a local roofing professional to diagnose the cause of the curling. Doing so quickly can prevent curled shingles from contributing to more widespread damage.

Moisture and poor ventilation may be contributing to curled shingles as well. Homeowners with attics in their home may see curled shingles on their roofs because moisture is building up in their poorly ventilated attics. In addition to causing damage such as curled shingles, a poorly ventilated attic allows moisture to build up, potentially contributing to mold growth. Mold presents a host of additional problems, including some that can adversely affect the health of a home’s inhabitants.

Improper roof installation also may be the culprit behind curled shingles. When a roof is not installed correctly, shingles may not be aligned or nailed down in the right way. This might be what’s causing shingles to curl on recently installed roofs.

Curled shingles are unsightly and can pose a significant threat to a home if not addressed promptly. Homeowners can protect themselves and their roofs by working with skilled roofing professionals, who can diagnose issues like curled shingles and offer the right solutions.
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D12R Loader 53" Bucket | $3,699 | $36 | 60" Front Hydraulic Blade | $2,399 | $23 | 3025R Tractor
Power Beyond Kit | $299 | $2 | 54" Front Hydraulic Blade | $1,999 | $19 | 1025R Tractor
EH-Third SCV Kit | $999 | $9 | 647 Rotary Tiller | $2,699 | $26 | 1025R Tractor
Ballast Package | $999 | $9 | BB5044L Box Blade | $899 | $8 | 1025R Tractor
54D Mid-Mount Mower | $1,999 | $19 | AP10F 42" Pallet Fork | $999 | $9 | 1025R Tractor
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72" Grooming Mower | $1,899 | $19 | BB5060 Box Blade | $999 | $9 | 1023E Tractor
RC2060 Rotary Cutter | $1,899 | $19 | RB5072 6' Rear Blade | $899 | $9 | 1023E Tractor

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was on my way to work the other morning with the radio on, of course. I like to listen to music, but instead of a song catching my attention, it was a commercial. The voices like those in old haunted movies like Dracula or The Werewolf. The music was eerie as well. I realized then it was October and Halloween was approaching!

There wasn’t as much commercialism when I was growing up as there is now. We did harvest pumpkins and carved Jack-o’-lanterns. We would cut some stalks of corn and tie them into shocks, just like the ones in fields back then. We would place some pumpkins at the base of the shock and there you had it... we were decorated for Halloween.

Stores didn’t have all the candy in seasonal wrappings to buy for trick or treaters. Don’t think I’m going to say I didn’t go trick or treating because I did. My parents would take me down to Moscow in my costume made Dad’s old work clothes with a little added charcoal on my cheeks and chin. I looked like a hobo (again!).

Today, treats are store-bought, machine-wrapped and safe to hand out. Back when I went from house to house, I got homemade candy, an apple or best of all, a homemade popcorn ball. Very little was store-bought but if you did get a candy bar, it was a full-sized candy bar and no bite-sized ones. We never had concerns about anything dangerous being put into our treats. It was a safe, good-natured time, not only for the kids but also the adults. They loved seeing us in our costumes, even if they were often the same as the year before.

When I got older and in high school, I learned that trick or treating was for kids. To be cool, you had to go “Halloween-ing”. So, the Marshall brothers, Herb and Charlie, and I tried this. We had a good night pulling some pretty creative pranks.

The best prank was when we placed a buggy on top of a barn roof. The next morning every kid on the school bus stared, laughed and pointed at that buggy. Even the bus driver stopped the bus a little longer just so he too could look. It was fifty years later before anyone found out who did that.

Out on Fruit Ridge Road homes were not close to each other, so we walked much more than we pranked. But we had no candy to show for our long evening of
pranking. This became a short-lived way of celebrating Halloween.

The best way to celebrate Halloween was going to the school harvest socials. They were hosted by the PTA and set up in the gym. I remember one in Felicity. There was bean bag toss and a basketball goal and prizes to be won. There was a game with dishes laid out on a table. You could toss a quarter and if it landed in a dish, you won it. A good aim could send a child home with a lot of dishes but more than likely they didn’t match.

You could pay to have someone caught and put in “jail”. Then they would have to pay to get out. I never liked that game. I didn’t want to waste money on paying my way out. Then there was the always popular “cake walk”! How much skill does it take to walk in a circle and have a chance to win a cake? Those were some great cakes made by some awesome cooks! Here is where I wanted to spend my money instead of bailing myself out of jail.

Then there was the costume contest. Contestants from each age group went on stage to be judged. Even with their masks on it wasn’t hard to figure out whose parents were in the crowd. The winner received a blue ribbon and a prize.

During the festival, the husbands stayed outside the gym door and talked and got in as many smokes as they could before their wives coaxed them back inside. This was some of the best entertainment of the evening.

These days, television offers up all kinds of scary, gruesome and spooky movies. Some folks like to pop up a bowl of popcorn and get close to the set and have a great time. As for me, I look elsewhere to find a way to be entertained. Blood, guts and gore are just not for me.

Even though Halloween is celebrated in much more commercial ways, it is still very popular. When children dress up like a fairy or a Ninja Turtle, you can’t help but smile. So, get out that popcorn and some chocolate candy and enjoy! It’ll take your minds off the fact that colder days are coming.
Chicken Bacon Ranch Grillatillas

**INGREDIENTS**
- Flour tortillas
- Ranch dressing
- Chicken, grilled & diced
- Pepper slivers (optional)
- Onion slivers (optional)
- Bacon, fried and crumbled
- Shredded Cheese
- Dipping Sauce

**INSTRUCTIONS**
Spread small amount of ranch dressing on each tortilla. Put on desired amount of chicken, peppers, onions, bacon and cheese. Fold tortillas in half. Wrap in aluminum foil. Lay on grill rack and grill each side for a few minutes or until nice grill marks on each tortilla. Dip in ranch or BBQ sauce.

Miriam Kay Graber – Wallingford, KY

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5 Layer Mexican Dip

**INGREDIENTS**
- 1 lb. hamburger, cooked and drained
- 1 bag sharp cheddar cheese
- Guacamole
- Small or large pico de gallo, amount you want to use.
- 1 16 oz. sour cream
- 1 can refried beans (optional)
- Lettuce
- Tomatoes
- Onions
- 1 bag of Mexican cheese

**INSTRUCTIONS**
Cook hamburger, drain and pour in dish. Add bag of cheese on top of hamburger. Layer guacamole, Pico de Gallo, refried beans, sour cream, onions, tomatoes and lettuce. Spread bag of Mexican cheese over top. Chill and enjoy.

Patty Hanshaw – Tollesboro, KY

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Angel Food Cake

**CAKE**
1 dozen egg whites (room temperature about one hour)
- 1 ¼ cup sifted cake flour, add ½ cup sugar and sift with flour 4 times
- ¼ tsp. Salt
- 1 ¼ tsp. cream of tartar
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- ¼ tsp. almond extract

**ICING**
1 ½ cup confectionary sugar
- 2 tbs. margarine
- 2 or 3 drops red food coloring
- a little milk (use own judgment)
- ¼ tsp. vanilla extract

**INSTRUCTIONS**
Oven at 375°. Combine egg whites, salt, cream of tartar and extracts in large bowl. Beat with mixer until moist peaks form. Add 1 & 1/3 cups sugar in four additions until blended each time. Fold in flour mixture with wire spoon and pour into angel food cake pan. Run spoon around edges. Bake 35 to 40 minutes. Use toothpick to make sure it is done. Turn pan upside down on glass pop bottle and cool. Then frost.

Wilma Hines – West Union, OH

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Curb appeal is beneficial in various ways. Curb appeal can make a home more attractive to prospective buyers and give existing homeowners a place they want to come home to. In its study of the worth of outdoor remodeling projects, the National Association of Realtors found standard lawn care and overall landscape upgrades were most appealing to buyers, as well as the most likely to add value to a home.

Although plants, grass and other items can improve curb appeal, homeowners should not overlook hardscaping.

Hardscaping is an industry term that refers to the non-living features of a landscape. These features can include everything from decks to walkways to ornamental boulders. Introducing paths or paver walls to a property helps develop that home’s hardscape. Hardscape and soft elements often work in concert to create inspiring landscape designs.

DIY landscape designers can heed certain tips to make the most of hardscape features on their properties.

Choose materials.

As with many landscaping projects, homeowners must first determine what types of additions they would like on their properties. Common hardscape features include patios, decks, walkways of pavers or bricks, and retaining walls. Hardscape elements can be functional or simply decorative features that add whimsy to the yard.

Choose a theme.

The right style allows hardscaping and softscaping materials to work together. For example, homeowners may want to give their yards an eastern feel, complete with a koi pond and decorative bridge or trellis. A formal English garden, however, may include manicured paths with stepping stones and ornate topiaries. Mixing too many styles together can take away from the overall appeal.

The pros suggest looking at the overall plan of the design, even if all of the work can’t be completed at once. This way the eventual finished project will be cohesive.
Think about the purpose.

Hardscaping can look good but also serve key purposes. Pebbles or gravel can mitigate trouble areas that don’t grow grass or plant life well. Retaining walls hold back soil in yards with sharply inclined hills. Mulch can set perimeters around trees and shrubs, as well as planting beds. Fencing, another form of hardscaping, is essential for establishing property boundaries and adding privacy.

Consult a professional.

While many hardscaping additions can be handled by novices, large-scale projects, such as patios and decking, can change the grading of the yard. Professionals can map out how to handle drainage issues and meet building codes. In addition, professional installation can ensure hardscaping features last for years to come.

Hardscaping should blend with the nature around it and take its cues from the surrounding environment. This can help softscaping and hardscaping work as one.
Outdoor entertaining areas are popular among homeowners, and firepits are one of the most sought-after additions to such spaces. In fact, a 2016 survey from the American Society of Landscape Architects found that fireplaces and firepits were the most popular outdoor design element in 2016. Various styles are available to homeowners who want to add firepits to their backyards, and choosing the right type may come down to budget, the amount of yard space available or even personal preference.

**Wood firepit**

As their name suggests, wood firepits burn wood, which may appeal to homeowners who already have wood-burning fireplaces inside their homes. Because they don’t require homeowners to tap into gas lines, wood firepits are generally easy to set up and install, and many homeowners prefer the aesthetic appeal of crackling wood and flames that’s synonymous with wood firepits.

**Gas firepit**

Gas firepits are touted for their convenience, as they don’t require homeowners to carry wood and build fires. Upon being connected to a gas source, gas firepits provide fire at the click of a switch. Gas firepits are also appreciated for their safety, as there is little or no risk that flames from gas firepits will grow too large and become difficult to control.

**Gas fire tables**

Gas fire tables might be ideal for those homeowners whose sense of decor favors more modern looks. Gas fire tables come in a variety of shapes and sizes and, like gas firepits, there’s no need to struggle with lighting a fire or carrying firewood.

**Tabletop firepits**

Homeowners, condominium or apartment dwellers with limited backyard space may want to consider the convenience of tabletop firepits. Restaurants may use tabletop firepits in their outdoor seating areas because they provide warmth and ambiance without taking up much space. Tabletop firepits fueled by gas will not need to be connected to a gas source, which may appeal to consumers who want something that’s simple as well as small.

**Fire urns**

While they might not technically qualify as firepits, fire urns provide a similar effect as firepits. Fire urns are typically gas-powered and may be an ideal choice for homeowners who are looking for a unique, awe-inspiring feature for their outdoor entertaining areas.
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