

THE MODERN DAY

# HOMEMAKER

DECEMBER  
2023  
No. 9

## FAMILY-FRIENDLY MEAL PLANNING:

*DELICIOUS IDEAS FOR THE WHOLE WEEK*

*Hygge-Inspired  
Garden  
Retreats*

*Building Good Habits:  
HOW TO RAISE WELL-MANNERED KIDS*

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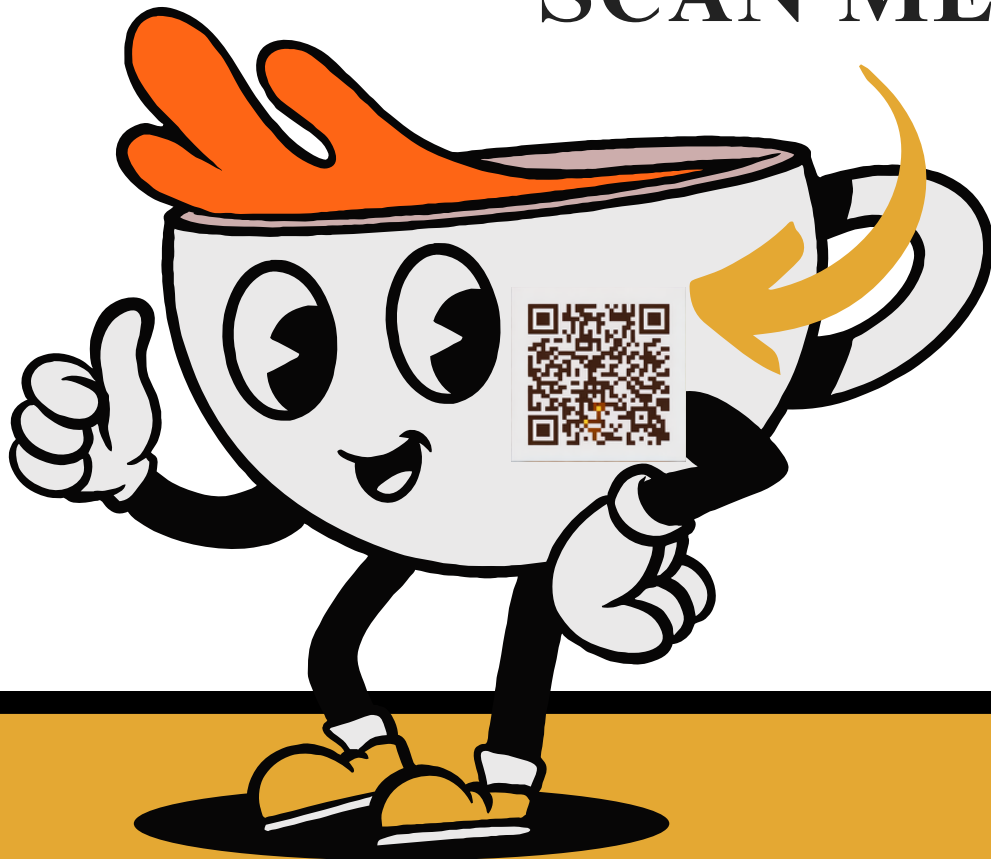




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# EDITOR'S NOTE

Dearest readers,

As we step into the heart of summer (or winter for some of our readers), it's with great pleasure that we bring you our December issue, centered around the concept of coziness, comfort, and connection - Hygge. Hygge (pronounced 'hoo - gah') encapsulates the essence of finding warmth and contentment in life's simple pleasures, irrespective of the season or surroundings. In this issue, we've embraced this concept, seeking to inspire you to create moments of tranquility and togetherness within your homes.

Within these pages, you'll find some delightful articles covering various aspects of Hygge living. From heartwarming food recipes that evoke feelings of comfort and nourishment to lifestyle features that encourage slowing down and embracing everyday moments, our aim is to bring a sense of warmth and happiness to your homes.

We've got some cozy crafts you can do with the kiddos over the holidays, some tips for teens on finding their path early on, and a new feature: the Creative Corner!

If you're a fellow South African and stuck in sweltering heat - we've got you covered too! Hygge isn't only a winter thing. It's about fully being present and embracing the season you're currently in! Keep an eye out for the popsicle recipes!

We hope the articles in this issue encourage you to embrace the art of slowing down, finding joy in simplicity, and focusing on deeper connections within your family.

Thank you for being a part of our journey! May this issue bring warmth, inspiration, and moments of genuine coziness to your lives.

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# GUEST CONTRIBUTORS



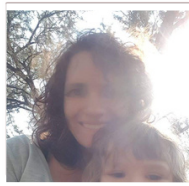
Jemima Noeth

A down - to - earth, tea - loving mother of three, a creative soul who loves new challenges and all things weird and wonderful. She balances sibling chaos, a colourful life filled with learning and laughter, supported by her rock of a husband. Photo: Me, as drawn by my youngest, with my cup of tea and hubby



Ruby Jasmine Rice

I'm a happily married mother of a 1 yo that enjoys taking care of my tiny home and enjoy spending time with my husband and my large herd of Nubian dairy goats. I enjoy canning food, baking, and cooking delicious homemade food, writing and drawing.



Eliyah

Eliyah lives on a farm in South Africa with her husband and three out-of-the-box children. As a daughter of Yahuah, her aim in life is to draw closer to The Most High, to learn about His Truths, to live life according to His will and to live it intentionally and meaningfully. She is an avid reader, and dabbler in handicrafts, homesteading, homeschooling and natural holistic health.

[Website](#)



Erina Agenbach

Married to my best friend for 15 years and Momma to two gorgeous girls. Most importantly, daughter of the Most High King. In our 6th year of Home Education. Loves the slow and simple things in life, like gardening, reading, and painting. Living life as a minimalist, aiming for more presence and impact. Dreaming of writing and illustrating books when I grow-up. Humbly trying to be the light and salt wherever Elohim takes us. From Pretoria, South Africa, currently in Doha, Qatar.

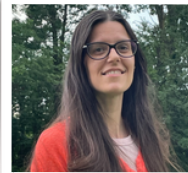
*Photo Credit: Vision Point Photography*



Antoinette Marlow

I'm Antoinette Marlow. Eclectic homeschool mom for 13 years, illustrator of children's books for five years, author for the last two years. I love drawing, art, nature, and learning random unimportant bits of information. I have three children, a vegetable garden, and one dog.

[Website](#)



Sharon Darling

I'm Sharon and I love cats, crafting, reading, and gardening. My husband Aaron and I are passionate about following the Creator and have been married for 21 years. My blog torahwoman.com has the goal to help other women in their walk with God with a focus on bringing glory to Him in all aspects of life. I try to encourage adjusting our thinking and approach to Biblical womanhood through an emphasis on the importance of routine prayer and Bible study, strengthening our marriages and families, and encouraging and supporting each other.



Meloney Barnett

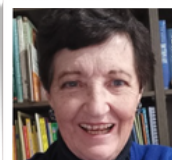
I am a mom of three beautiful daughters. I am a hopeless optimist, I have survived some truly hard times, and I love to make healthy food for my family. If you would like to see some of my baked goods, please like and follow my Facebook page: [Meloney's Delights](#)

## A SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL OUR PATRONS!

Kimberly  
Gina  
Daniel

Bethany  
Nicole

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Margy Kieser

I am Margy Kieser nee Powell, a Christian, retired, homeschooling Granny, avid crafter (anything and everything), homeschool co-op coordinator, and Party Secretary for the CDP. Worked as a locust researcher for 37 years (I love insects), and had an online digital stamp company (Digistamps4Joy) for 10 years. Currently giving card making and craft classes at a local coffee shop. Somewhere in between all of the above I still want to write children's books. Facebook page: [Margy's Crafts](#) Email: [margyscrafts@gmail.com](mailto:margyscrafts@gmail.com)

# Summery Comfort Foods



by Eliyah

When we think of comfort foods, our minds usually default to warm wintry foods like soups, curries, and stews with warm rice or fresh bread. But summer foods can definitely also be comforting while being light and cooling as well! But before we jump into our cozy recipes, let's have a look at some ways to make our summer food preparation as fun and comfortable as possible:

## The summer kitchen

- Keep it clean – after spring cleaning, we need to make sure to keep up with cleaning our kitchen regularly and washing dishes every day. If our kitchen is messy, we are less likely to want to spend time in there. A messy kitchen is also more likely to attract flies and fruit flies!
- Use natural elements like potted herbs, fresh fruit, wooden utensils, flowers, woven baskets, wooden bowls and cutting boards, beeswax candles, and bright artwork as décor.
- Shop seasonally and locally, and make use of your local farmers' market!
- Stock up your kitchen, and make sure you have all the ingredients you use frequently, herbs and spices, olive oil, coconut oil and butter, yummy meats, dairy, eggs, fruits, and vegetables.
- Open the windows for fresh air and light!
- Cook outside on the braai or grill.



## Drinks recipes

### *Flavored waters*

Make your water more appealing by adding fruit and herb combinations!

- Cucumber, lemon slices, and mint.
- Blueberries and rosemary.
- Apple slices and thyme.
- Crushed strawberries.
- Cubed watermelon and mint.
- Electrolyte water: add coconut water, lemon or orange juice, salt, and honey.

### *Ginger bug for homemade ginger beer*

#### Ingredients

- 1 large piece of fresh organic ginger (enough to make 5 Tbsp grated ginger)
- 5 Tbsp sugar (divided)
- 3¼ cups filtered water

#### Directions

1. Mix 3¼ cups of the water with 3 Tbsp of sugar in a glass quart jar. Stir until the sugar is dissolved.
2. Wash the ginger root, then grate 3 Tbsp of ginger into the quart jar. Don't peel the ginger because the skin helps with fermentation.
3. Cover with a cloth (cheesecloth or coffee filter) and secure in place with a rubber band or jar ring.
4. Place the jar somewhere warm and dark to ferment (a kitchen cupboard is ideal).
5. Give the ginger bug a good stir once or twice a day.
6. After 3 to 7 days, it should start to bubble. Once it's started to bubble, feed it 1 Tbsp of sugar and 1 Tbsp of grated ginger each of the next two days. Once it is really bubbly you are ready to make ginger beer.

### *Ginger beer*

#### Ingredients

- 3 ½ cups filtered water
- 4 to 6 Tbsp sugar
- ¼ cup ginger bug starter
- 1 to 4 Tbsp finely grated ginger
- 1 Tbsp fresh lemon juice

#### Directions

1. Mix all the ingredients in a 1 - liter glass jar. Stir until the sugar has dissolved.
2. Cover with a piece of cloth or coffee filter held in place with a rubber band or metal ring. Ginger bug needs exposure to air for fermentation so don't ferment in a sealed jar.
3. Place the jar somewhere warm and dark to ferment for 3 to 5 days and give it a good stir each day. The speed of the ferment will depend on the temperature. It will go quickly at temperatures above 70°F or 21°C.
4. It's ready to bottle when bubbles are forming at the top of the jar. Strain the mixture and bottle it in a bottle that can handle the carbonation.
5. Allow the ginger beer to ferment in the bottle for a further 2 to 5 days to build up the carbonation.
6. Once it's fizzy, store the ginger beer in the refrigerator and consume it within four weeks.

### *Old-fashioned lemonade*

#### Ingredients

- ¾ cup lemon juice (approximately 4-5 lemons)
- 7 ¼ cups water
- 1 cup sugar or honey
- 3 cups ice

## Directions

- Wash then roll then squeeze the juice from lemons until you reach  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup.
- Slice the squeezed lemons and set aside.
- To a large pot over medium heat, add the water and sliced lemons. Bring to a slight boil (about 8 minutes).
- Add in the sugar and stir until dissolved.
- Use a strainer to pour the sugar water into a pitcher to catch any lemon seeds and pulp.
- Add in the fresh lemon juice and stir. Add in the ice.
- Let chill for 2-4 hours in the fridge (or overnight).

## Mains and sides

### *The classic braai*

What is summer in South Africa without the traditional braai? Get the coals ready and cook up some of your favorite meats. I also love to bake some potatoes in the coals!

### *Summer salads*

Here are some of my favorite salads perfect for summer, that are great accompanying a braai, cold meats, or on a picnic:

- Watermelon, feta, chickpea, and mint.
- Greek salad.
- Smoked chicken salad.
- Strawberry and baby spinach salad with feta, blueberries, and pecan nuts.
- Beetroot, peach, and feta salads.
- Tomato, cucumber, mozzarella salad with avocado and basil.
- Tomato and onion salad.
- Potato salad with homemade mayonnaise.

## *Sourdough English muffins*

### Ingredients

- 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups flour
- 1 cup milk/water
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup fed sourdough starter
- 1 Tbsp honey
- 2 tsp salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- Coconut oil or butter for cooking

### Directions

- The night before you want sourdough English muffins, stir in a glass bowl: flour, water, or milk, and fed sourdough starter.
- Cover it with a towel and let it sit at room temperature for 12-24 hours.
- After it has fermented, add to the mixture honey, salt, and baking soda.
- Preheat your cast iron or stainless steel pan on high and add a little coconut oil or butter.
- Mix the ingredients until they are fully incorporated. If the dough feels runny, add a bit more flour. It should be workable, yet not stiff.
- Divide the dough into 12 equal parts and drop each portion of dough into a hot cast iron skillet.
- Reduce the heat to low and cover with a lid for about 10 minutes so the dough has a chance to rise.
- Let them cook until doubled in size. Turn the skillet up to medium/low and continue to cook until they are browned slightly on the bottom.



- Cook them on the other side until browned. These English muffins tend to cook on the outside before the inside is fully done. So, be sure to not turn the heat up too high. If they are browned on the outside, but still not done on the inside, throw them in an 180°C degree oven for 10 minutes or so.
- After they are cooked all the way through, slice them open and use them as bread rolls!

### **Basic pickles**

#### *All-Purpose Quick Pickling Brine*

##### Ingredients

- Fresh veggies (cucumbers, zucchini, cooked beetroot, small onions, carrots, cauliflower, etc.)
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup vinegar
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 Tbsp sugar
- Optional: 1 Tbsp whole spices + fresh herbs

##### Directions

1. Measure out about 1 tablespoon of your chosen spices and herbs and add to your pickling jar. Add your washed and sliced produce, packing the jar tightly.
2. In a medium pot, bring the water, vinegar, salt, and sugar to a boil. Remove from heat and carefully pour into the pickling jar until all contents are submerged. Close the lid on the jar tightly.
3. Let the jar rest on the counter until it cools to room temperature. Then, place the jar in the fridge and allow to pickle for a minimum of 2 hours before serving. For the best flavor, allow to pickle for a full 24 hours before serving.

### **Cold meats**

You can use any meat that you have previously cooked for cold meats, perfect for lunches or picnics on hot summer days! Some options are:

- Chicken pieces.
- Sliced or shredded roast meat.
- Cooled beef or lamb ribs.
- Meatballs.

### **Sweets**

#### *Healthy summer jams*

##### *Honey Berry Jam*

##### Ingredients

- 4 cups fresh or frozen mixed berries
- ½ cup raw honey
- ¼ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice

##### Directions

1. Combine all ingredients into a large stainless steel pot. Bring the fruit mixture to a boil.
2. Reduce heat and stir consistently until the fruit thickens. This should take around 15 minutes. When there is a thin sticky layer of jam on your spoon it is done! This recipe also works well with other summer fruits like peaches, cherries, nectarines, plums, and apricots.

#### *Summer pies*

##### Pie crust ingredients

- 1¼ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ tsp sugar
- ¼ tsp salt
- ½ cup butter, chilled and diced
- ¼ cup ice water (possibly less)

##### Directions

- Begin with very cold butter, you can put it in the freezer for 10 minutes.
- Dice it with a knife into cubes about 1cm across.
- In a large bowl, combine flour, sugar, and salt. Combine until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs.

- Add the ice water a tablespoon at a time and mix swiftly and gently. Add just enough water to allow the dough to form into a loose ball.
- Flatten the dough into disks, wrap tightly in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or overnight.
- Roll the dough out to the desired size on a floured surface with a floured rolling pin. Turn it frequently to maintain its shape and prevent sticking.
- Gently roll it over the rolling pin and transfer it to your pie pan.
- Press the dough evenly into the bottom and sides of the pie pan.
- Trim the dough to a 2cm overhang then crimp the rim with a fork or your fingers.
- Using a fork poke holes at the bottom of the pie.
- Wrap with plastic wrap and set in the fridge or freezer. The dough must be well chilled before baking.
- Add some aluminum foil or parchment paper onto the dough then weigh it down with rice, dried beans, or pie weights.
- Bake in preheated oven at 180°C (375°F) for 20-30 min or until golden brown, then remove the foil or parchment. \*You can brush the entire shell with egg wash and bake a little longer. (The egg wash helps make the pie shell shiny and golden, but it also seals the bottom of the pie shell and prevents the filling from making the crust soggy)
- Cool completely and set aside. \*If using a pie filling recipe that needs to be baked, bake according to that particular recipe. You can use your homemade jams as filling, or another like custard or chocolate pie filling! The fruit pies go very well with homemade vanilla ice cream!

### *Homemade vanilla ice cream*

#### Ingredients:

- 3 raw egg yolks
- 1½ cups cream
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 3 Tbsp honey
- ⅓ tsp sea salt

#### Directions

- Separate the yolk from the egg whites.
- Whisk egg yolks.
- Pour the cream into a pot over medium heat.
- Add whipped egg yolks, vanilla extract, salt, and icing sugar.
- Bring the mixture to a simmer, then lower the heat. Stir until the ice cream thickens, then remove from heat and let it cool.
- Once the mixture cools, place it in a container and chill in the fridge for about two hours.
- Pour the chilled mixture into a silicone mold and freeze for six hours.

### *Popsicles*

Get yourself some popsicle molds for the freezer and try out some of these fun combinations:

- Coconut milk and honey.
- Fruit purees and juices. Add some cubed fruit pieces for texture.
- Fruit and yogurt.
- Fudgy chocolate popsicles.
- Watermelon.
- Rainbow popsicles using different color fruit purees.
- Coffee and coconut milk.
- Elderberry popsicles.
- Dip the popsicles in melted chocolate or yogurt and some nuts or coconut flakes and refreeze for something extra special!

I hope you enjoy your summer food preparation and cooking, and that some of these recipes bring you and your family and friends joy and comfort this summer!



# ***FAMILY- FRIENDLY MEAL PLANNING:***

**Delicious Ideas for  
the Whole Week**



**by Meloney Bartlett**





So we all know, that with kids, traffic, and going to the shops after work, life is hectic, and we don't always have a lot of time for making a hearty dinner. With these dinner ideas, I am trying to make life just a little easier for us moms and dads, so that we get our nutrition in and enjoy what we make ourselves, leading to a happy heart and tummy before putting the little ones in bed.

My aim is to make it as short as possible and as tasty as possible for those picky eaters around the house. Disguising bully beef or pumpkin in the food becomes an art as you get smarter. So what is important to keep in mind is that we should try to use from our gardens what we need, and also, we don't have to go out and buy the most expensive ingredients either.

Meal planning helps to smooth out schedules and brings some form of excitement to the kids, especially because there is something delicious to look forward to.

We set ourselves up to win when we plan ahead, and when the time comes, to make it happen is a lot easier. They say that planning is half the battle won.

I hope you can find joy in the planning and making of these 'not-so-fancy' yet delicious meals that my family and I enjoy in our household. Et voilà!

### **Idea 1: Pancakes with Savory Filling**

*Pancake recipe:*

- 5 eggs
- 3 1/2 cups of flour
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 cup of milk
- 1/4 cup of oil
- 2 to 3 cups of water (check the consistency after 2 cups [If the pancake is a bit too thick, just add a little water until the consistency is just right])
- 1 tsp lemon juice

Put all the ingredients except the lemon juice into a mixing bowl. First, the dry (mix through), then the wet. Mix on medium for a couple of minutes until the batter is relatively liquidy and smoothed out. Add lemon juice.

Heat up a frying pan with a little oil. Use a soup ladle to pour in the batter one at a time. Fry pancakes for a minute on one side, and when the pancake starts to pull away from the sides, flip it over and fry on the other side. Fry until all the batter is finished. Set aside in a container until you need it.

*Mince filling:*

Prepare soya mince 1 cup in 2 cups of water in a saucepan or small pot. Add some spices: turmeric, tomato sauce, apricot jam, mince spice, cinnamon, ginger, garlic & Worcestershire sauce. Add some lentils to the pot with another cup of water. Put onto the stove at a low temperature. Stir every now and then to prevent it from burning to the bottom.

Cut up some vegetables. Just use what you have available.

*I used:*

- 1 stalk of celery, cut into small cubes
- 2 carrots, cubed
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 medium potatoes, cubed
- Small pieces of cabbage, diced into smallish cubes
- 1 heaped tbsp garlic

Fry in a heated pan after the pancakes are done with enough oil to make them nice and soft. Add some water to cook through. Add some salt to taste.

Cook until soft. Add cooked soya mince and mix thoroughly. Fill up pancakes and serve immediately.

## **Idea 2: Potato and Meatball Dish**

Boil approx 10 medium potatoes. Insert a butter knife or fork into the potatoes to feel if the potato is soft. Take off the heat, strain, and leave to cool a bit.

### *Meatballs:*

Depending on the size of your family, you can use any amount of mince so long as you make your balls the right size for how many people will eat, and if you might need it for lunch the next day for Daddy. For argument's sake, I'll give the amounts that I use, but you can always adapt to fit the size of your needs.

- 500g mince
- 3 - 5 blocks of Weetbix
- 2 slices of bread, edges cut off
- 2 - 3 eggs (use two, then add another if need be)
- Spices, herbs, salt & pepper to your family's taste
- A few squirts of Worcestershire sauce
- 3 - 4 Tbsp Tomato sauce/paste
- 2 Tbsp apricot jam
- 1 heaped Tbsp garlic
- Diced into very small cubes chives or celery
- 1 medium peeled & grated carrot

Keep in mind the ratio of wet to dry ingredients. Use less or more according to how dry or how wet your mixture is. It should be firm enough to make a decent ball when combined. So your eggs and Weetbix are your clinging agents. Use less or more depending on the consistency of the mince mixture. Add all ingredients to the bowl. Make approximately 12-15 big mince balls or 20 smaller balls depending on what size oven pan you want to use. I usually use a square pan and make 12 - 15 really big meatballs.

### *Potatoes:*

You can leave your skins on since the skin actually has a lot of nutrition directly under it, and if you cut it off, you lose all the goodness of it. Cut your potatoes in circles of a centimeter thick. Pack them all around and at the bottom of the oven dish so that it has a layer of potatoes and all around. Pack your meatballs in rows and place a slice of potato in between each mince ball on every side so that it doesn't touch the next meatball.

Preheat oven to 200°C.

### *Make a white sauce:*

Now I usually measure this according to how much I want to make and usually just with the eye, but I'll be nice and give you a general guideline here.

- 60 g margarine
- 150 ml flour
- Approx 3 - 4 cups of milk (if you are using pasteurized milk, you can dilute it with water 60/40)

In a deep saucepan, put your margarine on low heat to melt. Stir it to melt a bit faster. Add flour and stir in. It should make a ball called a roux. Add a little milk (about 150ml) at a time and stir with a wooden spoon until the milk is incorporated. Repeat until the mixture becomes thinner. From there, use a ball whisk to whisk the mixture until 3 cups of the milk is added and you see your mixture thickening. Add salt and pepper to taste. When you see your mixture is boiling and when your mixture is nice and smooth and evenly thick, you can remove it from the heat and pour over your meatballs and potatoes until covered.

Grate your choice of cheese over it and sprinkle with fresh herbs and bake at 200°C for about 30-40 mins. Check after 30 mins if your mince balls are done. When they are cooked through, it is ready. Your cheese should be browned at the top. Et voilà! This is one of my kids' favorite meals to have at home.

### **Option 3: Gem Squash with Filling**

Cook 1 gem squash per person, add some extras if you are making for lunch for the next day.

Cut your gem squash in half and cook on high until soft. Strain water out, remove seeds, and set aside on a baking tray covered with foil.

#### *Prepare filling:*

This time I'm going with chicken, but you can obviously use whatever you enjoy. Once again, you can use whatever vegetables you have available, my suggestion is merely a guideline.

- 2-3 cups mixed veg, cooked, strained
- 1 medium onion
- 2-3 chicken breast, no skin, cubed or cut into stirfry long slices
- Spices, flavorings of your preference (e.g., apricot jam, mixed herbs, tomato sauce, chicken spice, fresh garlic)
- Water if needed
- Some oil for frying
- Soup of your choice, creamy chicken

Fry your onions until soft. Add chicken and spices, garlic, sauce, jam, and herbs. Fry until chicken is soft and cooked through. Add mixed veg. Mix some soup powder with water and add to the chicken. Stir to make sure the soup mixture doesn't catch at the bottom. Add more soup mix or more water to balance out the thickness. If the mixture is thick enough to scoop into the squashes, it is ready.

Dish an even amount of meat & veg mixture into each squash and grate a little cheese over it. Put the oven on grill and grill for 10 mins just till cheese is melted. Remove from oven and sprinkle with a small amount of cayenne pepper. This is a really delicious, nutritious, and filling meal. My kids enjoy it very much.

### **Option 4: Stir-fry**

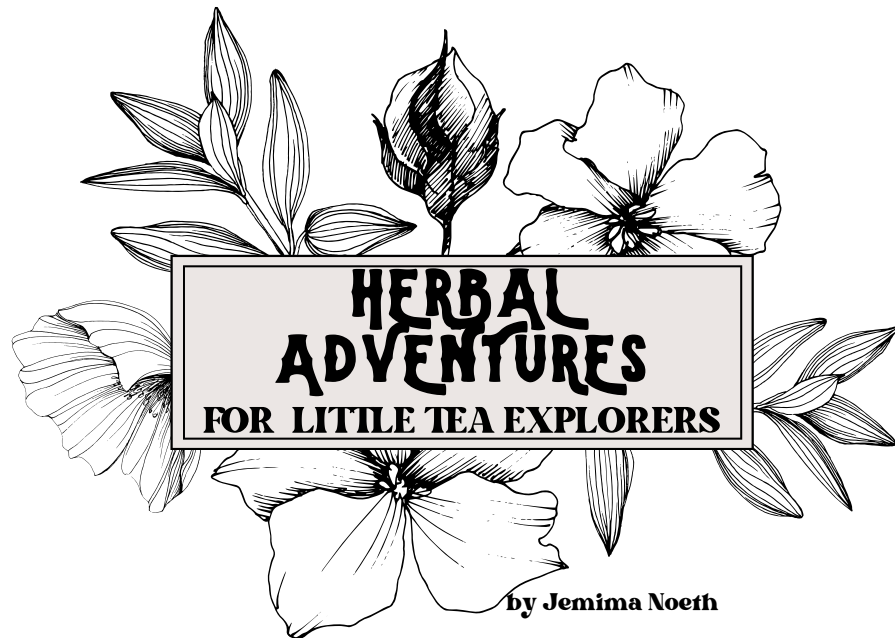
Once again, the meat of your choice. Put enough rice and salt in a big enough pot for the amount of family members you need to feed and cook. Keep an eye on it while making your stir-fry.

#### *Veggies & meat:*

Your choice of beef strips, chicken breast cubed or strips or even bully beef cubed - about 300-500g meat, medium onion, cabbage, purple cabbage, carrots, spinach leaves, oil for frying, garlic, spices, herbs of choice, marmite mixed with boiling water to dilute, salt, margarine. Heat pan, fry onions and some cabbage to soften. Add meat, herbs & spices, garlic & marmite. Fry till meat is done. Add the rest of the vegetables little by little until your pan is full enough and your cabbage has shrunk and becomes softer. Add salt little by little until it has the right taste, then add margarine in the last few mins of frying, so as to not burn it and to give it that wonderful taste that margarine has. Please remember to use the appropriate margarine for the job. Sunshine D or Stork is not for frying. Use something like Spar margarine or Checkers No Name Baking & Frying Margarine that is 80% fat (or something close).

Serve warm with some condiments of your choice. Enjoy!





Hey, tiny tea enthusiasts! Get ready to embark on a flavor-filled journey through the enchanting world of herbal teas. Who says tea is just for grown-ups? Let's brew up some herbal teas that'll have both taste buds and imaginations doing the happy dance!

### **DIY Tea-rrific Blends**

What's better than sipping a cup of tea? Creating your very own tea blends, of course! Gather an assortment of herbs like peppermint, lemon verbena, chamomile, rosemary, lemon balm, and lavender, and fruity delights like berries or cut pieces of apple, oranges, cucumber, and pineapple. Let the little ones mix and match to concoct their own signature brew. It's a tea-rrific journey that ends with a tasty reward!

### **Pineapple Minty Fresh**

- Rooibos teabag
- Fresh mint
- Pieces of pineapple
- Steep rooibos & mint in hot water for 3 minutes
- Add pineapple pieces and enjoy

### **Lavender Berry Delight**

- Fresh lavender flowers & leaves
- Mixed berries

- Honey
- Pour boiling water over a couple of sprigs of lavender
- Steep for 5 minutes
- Add honey to sweeten
- Let cool
- Add a handful of berries – yum!

### **Hibiscus Berry Delight**

- Hibiscus tea bags
- Dried elderberries
- Dried rosehips
- Mixed berries (fresh or frozen)
- Honey
- Pour boiling water over hibiscus tea bags, elderberries, and rosehips
- Let steep for 8 minutes
- Strain the tea and add mixed berries
- Let steep for another 5 minutes
- Add honey if desired

### **Tea-Time Storytelling**

Tea time isn't just about sipping; it's about weaving tales of adventure. Set up a cozy tea corner, grab a few stuffed animals, and let the kids sip their herbal elixirs while diving into a world of imagination. Who knows, maybe the teddy bears are hosting their own tea party! Tea time isn't complete without some tasty treats. How about a batch of Lavender Butter Cookies or Fynbos Flower-Infused Cupcakes?

Infuse your goodies with the essence of your favorite herbal teas for a delightful twist. It's baking, it's bonding, and it's deliciously fun!

### **Lavender Butter Cookies**

- 25 grams of butter at room temperature
- 1/4 cup of icing sugar
- 1 cup + 2 tablespoons of flour
- 1/2 teaspoon of dried lavender flowers
- Beat butter and sugar together until creamy
- Mix lavender flowers with flour
- Add flour mixture little by little until pliable dough forms
- Roll out the dough to about 1cm thickness and cut out shapes
- Place the shapes on the cookie sheet and refrigerate for 30 minutes
- Preheat oven to 160°C
- Bake the cookies for 20 minutes or until the edges start turning brown
- Cool on a wire rack

### **Fynbos Flower-Infused Cupcakes**

- 2 tablespoons of dried Honeybush tea leaves
- 1 cup of milk
- 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract
- 1 cup of flour
- 1 teaspoon of baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon of salt
- 1/2 cup of unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup of granulated sugar
- Edible flowers for decoration
- Infuse Honeybush tea leaves in warm milk and let it cool
- Preheat the oven to 180°C
- Mix flour, baking powder, and salt together
- In another bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy
- Add the vanilla extract to the tea-infused milk
- Alternately add the dry ingredients and milk mixture to the butter and sugar, beginning with the dry ingredients

- Pour the batter into cupcake liners and bake for 18-20 minutes
- Once cooled, decorate with edible flowers

### **Sippable Science Experiments**

Turn tea time into a mini science lab! Watch the transformation as hot water turns herbs into flavorful teas. Discuss fun facts about herbs. Learning has never been so delicious!

### **Fun Herb Facts:**

- Did you know peppermint can make your mouth feel cool like a winter wonderland?
- Or that chamomile can make you sleep so well, you won't need the sandman?
- Or that you can use ginger when your tummy is achy, and it'll make it all better?
- Did you know rooibos is South Africa's most famous herb and can actually make water turn red?
- Or that honeybush, another South African herb, can help your body fight a cold when you feel the sniffles coming on?
- Did you know that buchu, used by indigenous San and Khoi-Khoi, mixed in sheep fat can be applied to your skin as protection against the sun or even used as perfume?!

### **Citrus Buchu Lemonade**

- 2 Buchu tea bags
- 4 cups water
- 1/2 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 cup honey
- Slices of kumquats/lemon (for garnish)
- Brew Buchu tea bags in 4 cups of boiling water
- Allow the tea to cool to room temperature
- In a pitcher, combine the brewed tea, fresh lemon juice, and honey

- Stir well until the sweetener is dissolved
- Refrigerate for at least 1 hour
- Serve over ice, garnished with slices of kumquats/lemon for a delightful, zesty lemonade

### **Rooibos Rainbow Popsicles**

- 2 Rooibos tea bags
- 2 cups water
- 2 tablespoons honey
- Slices of naartjie or other citrus fruits
- Brew Rooibos tea bags in 2 cups of boiling water
- Stir in honey while the tea is still warm
- Allow the tea to cool to room temperature
- Pour the tea into popsicle molds, adding small citrus slices
- Freeze for at least 4 hours or until solid
- Enjoy a cool, refreshing treat

### **Sip, Create, Explore**

Herbal teas aren't just for grown-ups; they're for the little tea explorers too! With a dash of imagination and a sprinkle of creativity, kids can dive into the world of herbal delights. From blending their teas to crafting tea-themed stories, the possibilities are as endless as the flavors they discover. So let's encourage the tiny tea enthusiasts to brew up some magic. Whether it's a playful tea party with stuffed animals or a DIY tea-blending adventure, herbal teas are here to add a touch of whimsy and a whole lot of flavor to the world of our little tea explorers. Sip, create, and explore – it's tea time for everyone!





# HYGGE

BY ELIYAH

Hygge (hoo-gah) is the Danish concept of coziness, warmth, companionship, and comfort. Hygge is usually associated with winter; a way of keeping warm and comfortable in the long, dark, and cold winters of Northern Europe. Hygge paints a picture of blazing fires, candles, woolen socks and sweaters, fluffy blankets, warming soups, mugs of steaming cocoa, and snow falling outside the windows.

But who says we only need to be comfortable in winter? Our summers get pretty hot and uncomfortable here in South Africa, and in many other places over the world as well. I think we should try to make ourselves as comfortable as we can in the hot weather! And so, we have the concept of a hygge summer to jump into! Let's embrace some coziness this summer.

## Hygge in your home

Summer is the time to make your home feel bright, light, airy, cool, and fresh. Here are some of my favorite ways to make my home full of hygge, cooler, and more comfortable in the warmer months:

- Open up the curtains and windows in the morning for healthy sunshine, bird songs, and fresh air. I like to have the curtains and windows open in summer, especially in the mornings and late afternoons for the cooler breezes that come through. Sometimes, though, I need to close up in the middle of the day so that my home doesn't get too hot. I use lighter curtains in summer so it doesn't get too dark inside, and then I put fans on to circulate the air.



- Diffuse essential oils that smell like summer. We have an essential oil diffuser and a humidifier and I like to add essential oils to them. My favorite summer blends are pretty much any combination of citrus and herbs, like lemon, lime, and rosemary, or orange, lime, lavender, and mint.
- Bring flowers and foliage inside as décor. I love having bouquets of flowers in summer! I use wildflowers or flowers from my garden or the farmers' market. I also use beautiful green foliage in my vases as well – ferns and monster leaves are my particular favorites!
- Get some salt lamps for a healthy glow and to clean the air. We have two salt lamps, and they give our home such a beautiful glow! I also love beeswax candles for their air-purifying quality and warm glow on summer evenings.
- Put away heavy winter blankets, bedding, and cushion covers, and use light cottons and linens instead. I've stored all my winter blankets and bedding away and have my cooler cotton bedding out. My goal is to get linen fabric this summer to make bedding for all our beds and also some light kitchen curtains and covers for my scatter cushions. Linen is so light and cooling and has many health benefits!
- Use some fresh herbs inside as décor and make using them easy and fun. I love rosemary, mint, and basil in my kitchen in cute pots. This is definitely on my shopping list for this summer! I also have some other potted plants around my home – aloe vera, snake plants, spider plants, and a few others.
- Clean with summery essential oils. I make my own cleaners to reap the benefits of not using toxic chemicals in my home and saving money while I do so! I use the summery blends I mentioned before in my laundry soap, all-purpose cleaner, and toilet fizzies.
- Make a fun summer playlist to listen to or stream tracks of birdsong or wind chimes.

And let's not forget some summer treats to make at home! Have a look at my other article with some fun and yummy summer recipes.

### **Enjoy the warm weather**

Summer is the time to get outside and soak up the vitamin D from the glorious sunshine, get some grounding time in by walking barefoot, and enjoy the fresh air! There are tons of fun things to do outdoors this summer, and many are on my summer bucket list:

- Water games. There are all sorts, swimming, running through sprinklers, using a slip 'n slide, going to a waterpark, water balloons, and water gun fights – just to name a few. My children even love to splash in our pond or mud puddles.
- Braais, BBQs, and bonfires. Getting together with family and friends is one of the main elements of hygge, and what better way to do this than having an outside cookout with our loved ones? Throw some meat on the grill, mix up some salads, and roast some s'mores! Enjoy sitting around the table outside, chatting, and catching up.

- Bird watching. We have a book all about the birds local to our area and how to attract them to our yard. The kids and I love getting outside to see which birds we can hear or spot. You can also draw them and write about them in nature journals, and take some nature walks to see if you can spot even more. We love to go exploring around our neighborhood to find birds, interesting plants, and cool insects.
- Gardening and landscape design. Getting outside in the mornings to garden is both productive and healthy! Teach your kids all about growing veggies, herbs, and flowers that you can use in your home while enjoying the fresh air and feeling the soil between your fingers and toes. You can also use some of this time outdoors to design a lovely hygge garden retreat to have a cozy relaxation spot in your yard, you will find some ideas for summer hygge retreat in another article...
- Farmer's market. It is so much fun for our whole family to get up early on a Saturday morning and go to the farmers' market! We get to watch the sunrise, enjoy a breakfast out, and get so many fun things like fresh meat, seasonal produce, farm butter, raw honey, and beautiful bunches of flowers. It truly is a hygge treat as the vendors are so friendly and the kids get to climb on jungle gyms and feed the farm animals while my husband and I enjoy a cup of coffee.
- Stargazing. Warm summer nights are a perfect time to put down some cozy blankets on the lawn and look at the stars. You can learn about the constellations you see and you might even catch a glimpse of a shooting star. You can use your night out to search for fireflies or go on a flying ant hunt!
- Night swimming. Another fun nighttime activity is night swimming! Get out some fairy lights and lanterns and enjoy a cooling dip in the moonlight. Make sure to stay safe!
- Garden parties. I love the idea of hosting a tea party outside in summer! Iced tea, healthy treats, and sourdough sandwiches, while surrounded by nature, is just a cottagecore dream.
- Picnics. A summer essential, pack a picnic basket and find a park or farm, or even your backyard, to enjoy an outdoorsy lunch in the shade of a tree.
- Summer rains. All the lovely childhood memories of running around in a downpour to relieve the heat of summer; jumping in puddles and enjoying the cool drops on my face. My children, in turn, love this as well. And best of all, you get to look for a rainbow when the sun comes out again!
- Sandpits and sandcastles. My kiddos absolutely love playing in the sand, it's a warm weather must! They build, dig and decorate.

- Camping, hiking, and rowing. These are summer activities that I haven't done in years, and I probably won't get to them this summer either – one day! However, they are quintessential summer activities. Enjoying the outdoors offers so many fun opportunities for exploration and community. Forest bathing is also very good for mental health!
- The seaside. If you are fortunate enough to live near the ocean or to be able to go there on vacation, make full use of all the seaside fun. Go to the beach, play in the tide, explore tide pools and lagoons, and even have a picnic on the beach.

### Keep the pests away

Summer-loving insects can truly ruin the cozy hygge feelings that we work so hard to cultivate! Here are some tips to reduce those bothersome pests:

- To reduce flies in the home, simmer a pot of water on the stove with a few slices of lemon, some cloves, and bay leaves. The flies hate the smell. Allow it to cool and then pour it into a spray bottle, add some white vinegar, shake well, and spray around windows, kitchen counters, tables, and other spots where you find flies.
- Burning homemade citronella candles keeps both flies and mosquitoes at bay.
- Planting certain plants like lemongrass, basil, rosemary, and mint around your outside entertainment area and windows of your home can also help deter summer pests.
- Homemade bug sprays or lotions using citronella, rosemary, basil, lemongrass, and eucalyptus essential oils can also help to deter mosquitoes.
- Use mosquito nets around your porch and beds.



Well, that's about it for my ideas for a hygge-ry, comfortable summer! I hope you enjoy these ideas and have a cozy, fun summer.

# WINTER HYGGE

BY ERINA AGENBACH

Hygge, pronounced “hoo-gah,” has become a buzzword over the last couple of years, both in home décor and as a lifestyle. The word evokes images of relaxing on comfortable couches with warm blankets, reading your favorite book with a hot cup of tea in front of a lovely fire. But what is Hygge? Where does it come from? And how can you create it in your own home? Hygge is regarded as a defining characteristic of Danish culture. It is a philosophy of living that encompasses creating a feeling of coziness, contentment, and well-being through life’s simple pleasures. Loosely translated to coziness in English and “gesellig” in Afrikaans.

You can find various books and articles on the principles of Hygge. Let me highlight a few:

- **Atmosphere**
- **Comfort**
- **Presence**
- **Nature**
- **Togetherness**
- **Gratitude**

## **Atmosphere**

Hygge is not just a design or décor style like specific textiles, colors, or styles of furniture. Rather, it is creating a specific atmosphere in your home using these design and décor elements. Some people focus on a room, for instance, the family room or master bedroom, others apply it to the whole house, creating a feeling of calm and warmth that is inviting and immersive.

## **Comfort**

Hygge focuses on making the home a place of comfort and warmth, a refuge during the harsh long Scandinavian winters. Utilizing quality furniture and textiles as a base to work from and then adding focused décor items, focusing also on lighting to add to this atmosphere and comfort.



**Presence**

The purpose is to create a safe and cozy haven from the world, devoid of distractions and filled with calm. A place where you can be present and enjoy the simple pleasures of life like reading a book while enjoying a hot drink in your favorite armchair or playing a game of chess with a friend, simplifying and minimizing to add to this goal.

**Nature**

A very important principle of Hygge is adding nature into your home. Whether it is houseplants or herbs, fresh flowers, or dried bouquets. Having some form of nature in the home adds to the feeling of calm and is also beneficial to your health and well-being.

**Togetherness**

The Hygge way of living encourages enjoying the simple pleasures of life with family and friends, making your home inviting and welcoming to guests, having something to enjoy together to eat or drink, and creating spaces to entertain that are comfortable without having to overexert yourself every time someone comes over. Imagine visiting a beloved grandmother; her house is always welcoming, comfortable, loving, and accepting, and there is always a treat or two to enjoy.

**Gratitude**

The underlying principle of Hygge is gratitude. When you are aware of your blessings and grateful for them, you can enjoy your home more, and you are more comfortable sharing it with others, quality over quantity, comfort over chaos, presence over perfection.

**Creating your own Hygge-inspired home**

So how do you achieve this feeling of Hygge in your own home? Can you create this without having to redecorate your whole house? The short answer is yes, you can. By adding elements slowly but steadily, you can have your own Hygge haven without blowing your budget. The first step is to decide if you want to focus on one specific room or the whole house. You can start by slowly adding elements of hygge to one room or a bit in each room of your home. Remove items that crowd the room and do not add to the function of the room or distract from the atmosphere you want to create. Find a new home for these items somewhere else in your house or put them out of sight but close by if needed, think baskets or drawers to keep them in.

**Furniture and color palette**

Scandinavian furniture is known for high-quality natural materials like wood in natural colors. You can easily add wooden and natural woven items to your home without having to replace furniture. You can add wooden trays, wood slices to put candles or vases on, and other wooden décor items. Adding woven baskets to your living areas for storage or as placemats. You can even make items. We made two wooden side tables from cut-down tree stumps that we debarked, sanded, and oiled. We added wheels to one and left the other as is. Raw wood furniture that was both functional and beautiful. As with the furniture, Scandinavian décor utilizes natural colors. Think brown, white, grey, green, and yellow.



This does not mean you have to change all the colors in your house. Keep to what is your natural choice and what you are comfortable with. You can still add the Hygge principles to your home and create a cozy comfortable home that is unique to your family.

#### **Décor items you can slowly add in:**

- Cushions, blankets, and throws.
- For a cozy feeling in winter, add comfortable cushions with soft, warm textiles. Natural blankets and throws to cuddle under, like wool and cotton. Slowly add items to your room, keeping in mind less is more. It should add and not distract from the feeling of comfort and calm you are attempting to create.

#### **Lighting**

Ensure you have different lighting options for day and night. Soft candlelight or low lighting for evenings of relaxing in front of a fireplace and good lighting for reading in a comfy nook. You can add inexpensive lamps or candles to achieve this, or even just change out some bulbs with soft blue lighting.

#### **Electronics**

Encourage being present by creating distraction-free areas, with soft music and lovely scents that engage the senses and help to relax and calm you. You can accomplish this with no television in the living area or choosing to leave it shut off for certain times. Have a dedicated space for electronics.

#### **Plants and flowers**

Add some potted plants or flowers, fresh or dried, to the room to create some color and elements of nature indoors. It does not have to be extravagant; it can be a small herb plant or even some dried roses in a pretty vase or a small succulent.

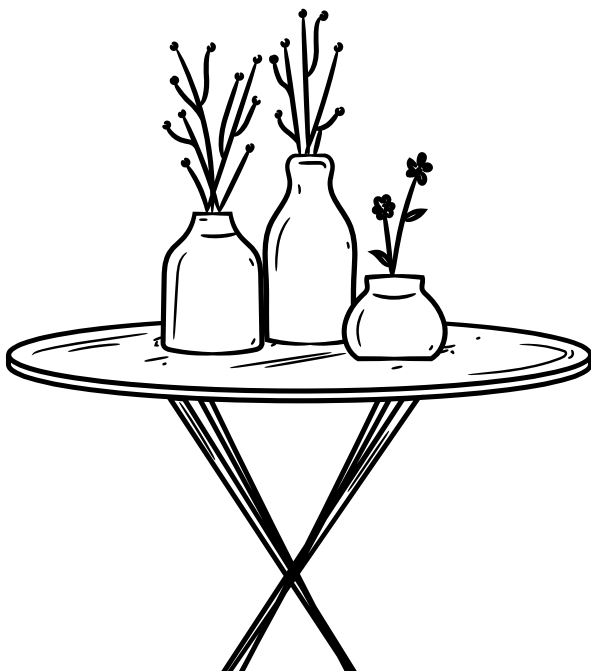
#### **Entertaining**

To make it easier for you to feel comfortable and prepared for any visitors, create areas in your home and set them up in such a way that you can easily entertain guests. Having your cups and teapots packed away deep in a cupboard makes entertaining a bit of a mission. Set yourself up for success by doing a few small things. Create a coffee/drinks area that is always ready to prepare a warm drink quickly and easily when someone comes over. Have a pretty tray out and ready, and have some quick drink options in easy reach. Have some food in the freezer that can easily be heated up at a moment's notice. Some ideas are chicken pot pie, soup, or lasagne. For the South Africans, koeksisters freeze well and can be defrosted by just taking them out and leaving them at room temperature for a while. These tips help you feel more prepared and comfortable to invite people over at any time. Have a space to sit and relax or a table and chairs to entertain around, if everything is always filled with things it is harder to have guests over. Remember presence over perfection.

On that note, as a recovering perfectionist, I normally got so hung up on the preparation and cleaning that I finally jumped out of the shower just when our guests arrived. Over the years I have tried to live a simpler life and create a more minimalistic home so that we need less time and effort to prepare before entertaining guests. I set myself up to enjoy rather than dread entertaining.

### **The Hygge process**

Hygge is not necessarily instant, it is a lifestyle. Do not fret if it takes you some time to really feel you have achieved the Hygge atmosphere in your home. Give yourself some grace, taking into consideration the stage of life your family is currently in. A home filled with littles will surely require different areas of rest en respite than one with teenagers. Having hundreds of lit candles everywhere is just not feasible or safe when you have little ones around. Creating areas that are electronic-free and set up to have your teenagers invite friends over might be more important at a later stage in life. That is the beauty of Hygge, you can adapt it to fit your style, stage of life, and your budget. You can start where you are, with what you have, and slowly incorporate elements into each room.



As a final note, I want to emphasize that if we focus too much on the principles and elements of Hygge, or any decoration of our homes, so that it becomes more important than our faith and family, we need to prayerfully evaluate our priorities and needs. Why is this more important to us? Why is it consuming our time and resources? You can follow all the principles and guidelines of Hygge and still not feel comfortable or at peace in your home or your heart. Our homes are the first space where we live out our faith and as such it will reflect that atmosphere. An atmosphere of grace, love, peace, and thankfulness that invites others to join us and where we can be the salt and the light, serving our families and others, to the glory of our Father.



# HAPPY BIRTHDAY POP-UP CARD

by Margy Kieser

“I sustain myself with the love of family” – Maya Angelou.

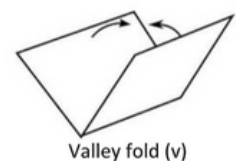
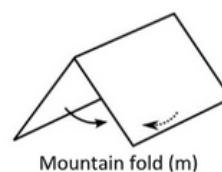
All life is a gift from God. We celebrate this with birthdays, showing our gratitude to Him for another year with our loved ones. Birthday cards have become quite expensive to purchase, but why not make one instead? A handmade card is something special because creating something from scratch not only requires your attention but also lets the recipient know that you put thought into it. There are many different types of birthday celebrations and milestones – baby’s 1st, 18th, 25th, 40th, 60th, 70th, 80th, 90th, 100th, and of course, everything in between.



The card we are making this month is for any age group – we ALL love cake! This is a pop-up card, which means that when you open the card, a section/image pops up. This is an intermediate-difficulty card, but only because you actually have to use a ruler and try to make fairly accurate measurements and cuts. Once you understand the technique, it will be easier to make another one.

*Disclaimer: I am not a cake designer and have never mastered icing a cake, so if you are good at this, I’m sure your cake card will look amazing!*

First, though, you need to understand two easy cardmaking terms: ‘mountain fold’ and ‘valley fold’. These describe the direction of the fold in the paper and are self-explanatory. A mountain fold creates a fold at the top, and seen from the side, the fold looks like a mountain. A valley fold is the opposite, where the fold in the paper is at the bottom, and the resulting fold seen from the side looks like a valley between 2 mountains.



## Requirements:

- 1 x white cardstock 21 x 150 cm (A5) (= inside of card)
- 1 x patterned cardstock 21 x 150 cm (A5) (= outside of card)
- Scraps of different designer paper to 'ice' the cake and to make the candles
- 1 x 11 x 8 cm piece of pattern paper (for front of card)
- 1 x Happy Birthday sentiment
- Scissors
- Pencil, ruler, eraser
- White gel pen
- Bone folder for pressing folds down
- Glue / double-sided tape
- Small, flat sequins or flowers
- Narrow ribbon to match - about a 40cm length

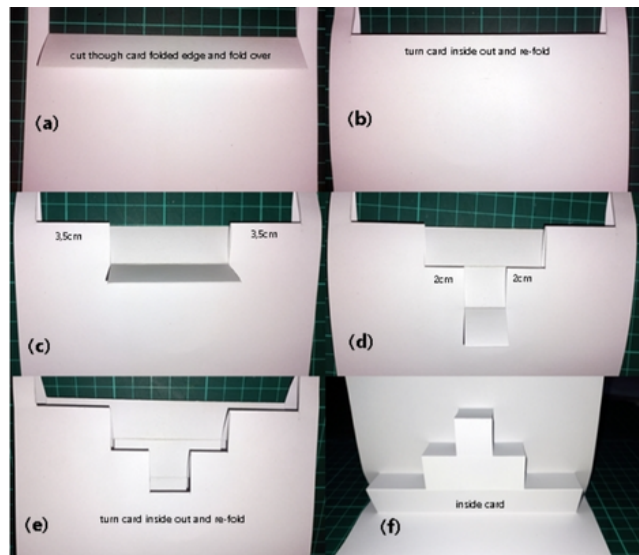
1. Fold the white cardstock in half to create an A6 card. We will use this in a landscape format.
2. Follow these guidelines as in the photo:

a+b. Along the FOLDLINE edge of the card, mark off 1cm from each edge. At these marks, draw a 2cm line into the card front and then cut along these two lines, cutting through both layers of the card. FOLD the cut piece over and press the fold. Open the card and press the middle fold into the inside of the card with a mountain and two valley folds.

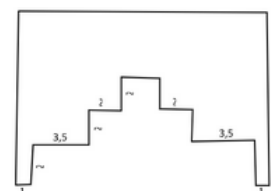
c. Mark off 3.5cm on each side from the last cut. Mark 2cm into the card and cut again BUT this time only through the top layer. FOLD the cut piece over and press the fold. Open the card and press the middle fold into the inside of the card with a mountain and two valley folds.

d+e. Mark off 2cm on each side from the last cut. Mark 2cm into the card and cut again BUT again only through the top layer. FOLD the cut piece over and press the fold. Open the card and press the middle fold into the inside of the card with a mountain and two valley folds.

f. Open the card, and make sure the 'cut-out steps' are as shown in the photo.



Now let's decorate the cake and the card. Cut a piece of patterned paper as shown below (measurements in centimeters), and glue it inside the card behind the cut-out steps.



Using scraps of patterned papers, cut out strips for the front of each cake tier, as well as the top of each tier. Glue in place.



At this stage, you can add 2 small candles and flames, ribbon and sequins, and glitter glue or dimensional pearl glue. In other words...decorate the cake as you wish! I also cut some small triangles and pasted them on as a banner behind the cake.



But there are holes in the card I hear you say? Grab the A5 patterned piece of cardstock, fold it in half, then carefully glue your cut-out card inside the patterned paper card (back to back).



HAVE FUN!!!



# PAINTING

# ROCKS!

by Antoinette Marlow

## A little history of the art of rock painting

The first rock art was done on walls inside caves to document people's lives. The people made paint from whatever they could find, so the paintings were not very colorful. Thus, there are paintings of the hunts they went on. Not much of the art remains since the paint was made from natural items, and wind erosion has eroded many of them. Enough remains to see that people thought it important to keep a history or record of their time.

## Rock Painting Today

People paint rocks today to make cheap decorations or as decorated rocks to spread joy. Pebbles are inexpensive to buy. You can even find pebbles in your garden or on nature rambles. You can paint a rock and give it as a gift or leave it somewhere for someone to find. You can even paint rocks and use them in games.

## Rock Painting for Kids

Paint pebbles as gifts or to make games. Make them bright and keep the design simple. This activity is a great way to keep children busy.

## Rock Painting for Adults

Paint pebbles and put short quotes on them, a pretty pattern, create décor for your garden, or make gifts for friends.

## Garden pebble painting

Paint some pebbles and use them to label your vegetable garden or to line flower beds.

## How to paint your rock

You'll need:

- Acrylic paint – various colors
- Brushes (various sizes)
- Water in a glass or tub
- Dotting tools (optional)
- Earbud (optional)
- Newspaper
- Pebbles/rocks
- Clear varnish or nail polish

Prepare your table. Cover your work area with newspaper. Put a container with water near your workspace. Put on an old shirt or apron to work in. Find a smooth rock. Clean it if necessary. Make sure your rocks are dry. Paint the top half of the rock and paint it with white acrylic paint as a base.

Wait until it is dry and turn it around and paint the other side white. If you do this, the next layer of paint will be bright and shiny. If you leave the rock its natural color, the colors will take on the hue of the rock and be darker than you wish them to be.

As soon as this side is dry, give the top another coat. Cover the base with a second coat too. Clean your brushes between layers, as acrylic paint dries quickly. If you don't clean your brushes, they will set hard and you will have to throw them away.

You may want to prepare a few rocks/pebbles in one go. Acrylic paint dries quickly so this part should not take long. If you want to work quicker, you can dry your pebbles with a hairdryer.

#### **Paint a smiley face (example):**

1. Use one of your prepped pebbles. Paint the top half of the pebble yellow. Leave to dry. Turn it over and paint the bottom half yellow. Your rock should be yellow. If the color is not bright enough, give it another layer.
2. Draw a smile with a pencil. And draw eyes with a pencil. If you make any mistakes, you can paint over them with more paint.
3. Take your small flat paintbrush and dip it halfway into black paint. Draw a thin line for the mouth. Hold your brush so the bristles are upright against the rock. For the eyes, dip your brush halfway and hold your brush over the circle. Hold your brush upright and go in a circle to make the eyes. Or use a dotting tool to make the eyes. Or even put paint on an eraser to make small circles. Make sure you clean your brushes!
4. Leave to dry. Then paint your rock with clear varnish so it lasts for a while.

#### **Painting a ladybug:**

1. Paint the whole pebble black.
2. Paint the wings red, leaving a margin between the wings. Leave a triangle of black for the head. And black spots for the wings.
3. Glue some googly eyes on for fun.

#### **Painting a bee:**

1. Paint the whole pebble black.
2. Paint yellow stripes for the bee, leaving a half-circle black at the top for its head.
3. Draw wings on with a white marker or crayon.
4. Glue on some googly eyes for fun.

#### **Painting a pebble with a word(s) on:**

1. Paint the background first with a solid color. Once it is dry, draw your design on with a pencil. If you make a mistake you can always paint over it.
2. Use a thin tapered brush to fill in your design. Keep your design simple.
3. Use crayons to add pastels to your design.
4. Once it is dry, cover your pebble with a layer of varnish to protect it for longer.

#### **Pick a design for your pebble:**

If you are painting a pebble for the garden, you may want to paint it a solid color and paint one word on it. If you are using it for numbers or letters, you may want to use one color as a base and then the number over it with a white outline. You may want to paint your pebble with a ladybug design or some simple nature motif.

If you feel confident to draw your design onto the rock, you can. However, you may want to practice on some paper first to get it right.

**Fun ideas:**

- Rock quotes – Rock on, I give rocks, You rock.
- Emojis
- Animals, Insects
- Hand or foot-painted pebbles as keepsakes for grandparents.
- Tic Tac Toe – paint a couple of pebbles so they look like ladybugs. Nine red, nine blue. Then play Tic Tac Toe.
- Make a fairy garden – decorate with your pebbles.
- Gifts – paint your pebble and give it as a gift to a friend or neighbor.
- Party favors – a phrase or simple design.
- Paperweights

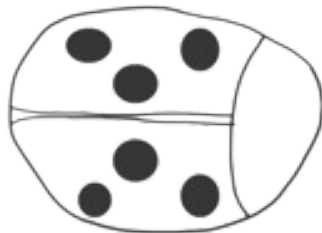
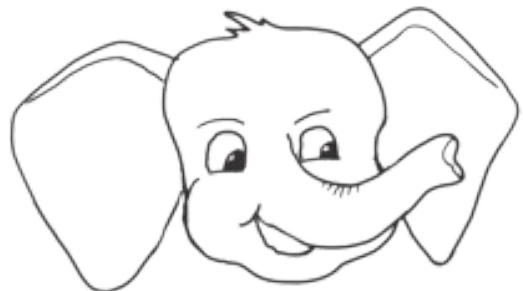
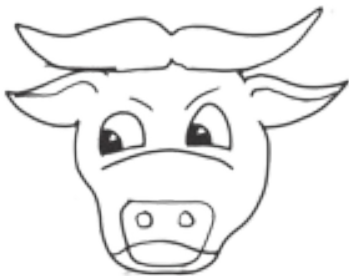
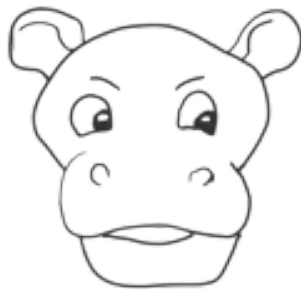
I give  
ROCKS

You  
ROCK



ROCK  
on

RHINO



Bugs  
welcome



# A SUMMER GARDEN RETREAT



**by Elijah**

In the spirit of making hot summer days and humid summer nights more comfortable and enjoyable, it's time to take a look at our outdoor areas and see what we can do to bring more Hygge into the space we have available to us! Now, depending on how big your space is outside, you can try adding some coziness and fun with a few or more of these ideas.

If you only have a balcony, you won't be able to do as much as someone with a big backyard can do, but there are always some things you can do to make a Hygge outdoor retreat, no matter your space or budget.

And we love our frugal ideas, don't we? Let's jump right in!

## **Enhance the senses.**

My first, all-round tip for creating ourselves a little Hygge haven, whether in our home or outside, is to look at each of our senses and incorporate things that will bring joy to our eyes, ears, nose, skin, and mouth. Add some awesome companionship – our kiddos, our spouse, the besties, or extended family – and we will be swimming in all the cozy Hygge-ness!

So pick a spot you want to cozy up, be it your balcony, porch, fire pit area, or a hidden 'secret garden', and get ready for some Hygge fun.

**Sight:**

What is it that you would love to see when you're in your cozy spot? Do you love a riot of colors or do you prefer calming neutrals?

Personally, I love all the tones of green in my garden, copper garden accessories, and pops of color from flowers. I'd love to have some wicker furniture on my porch too, with pretty green cushions.

- **Lighting:** There are so many different options for outdoor lighting! String lights, a fire, candles (citronella are particularly useful!), lanterns, or solar garden lights are all cozy options.
- **Flowers and plants:** Pick some beautiful flowers or plants and plant them around your retreat in the ground, in pretty pots, or both. Hanging planters are also a beautiful idea.
- **Garden ornaments:** You can DIY or buy so many different ornaments to suit your personal retreat.
- **Mosaics and artwork** provide extra beauty!
- **Trellises with climbing plants** like grapevines, jasmine, or roses add an extra dimension.

**Sounds:**

All sorts of nature sounds are soothing and relaxing! What are the sounds you would enjoy hearing in your retreat? Here are some ideas.

- **Bird feeders and bird baths** can be used to attract all sorts of different birds to your garden. Put out some fruit and seed to see how many feathery friends you can attract to serenade you.
- **Chimes:** I love all sorts of wind chimes and bells. The tinkling in the background on a summer breeze is so relaxing.

- **Water features** that trickle and gurgle add a lovely peaceful element to any garden retreat and can double as a birdbath!
- **Crackling fires** are rustic and cozy to have in the background while chatting with family and friends.

**Smell:**

Our sense of smell is also really important when it comes to feeling relaxed and cozy. For example, cinnamon and nutmeg evoke feelings of baking, family, and warmth on winter days, and the smell of pine and lavender always just feels fresh and clean.

- **Flowers of all types** can add sweet smells to your garden retreat. My particular favorites are jasmine, rose, orange blossom, lavender, and wisteria.
- **Candles** can add a wonderful smell of sweet, melting beeswax or the comforting, safe smell of lemongrass and citronella.
- **Herbs** provide an extra layer of scent for warm summers – planted around your hygge nook, they can deter pests and just smell beautiful. Add some fresh rosemary or basil to a fire for a delightful experience for your nose.
- **Cooking on the fire:** Who doesn't enjoy the smell of a steak sizzling on the fire, a lemon and garlic chicken roasting? My mouth is watering just typing this!



**Touch:**

Different textures and surfaces can also evoke cozy feelings. Wools and fluffy blankets are just the best when it's cold, but what would you like to feel on your skin when it comes to hot summer days?

- Textured garden paths and ground covers: You can use all sorts of plants and materials to make the soles of your bare feet happy! I love cool moss, wonder grass, and pennyroyal, smooth stepping stones, and wooden steps, to name a few.
- Comfy cushion covers: No matter what outdoor furniture you have, you're probably going to need some cushions – even just to scatter on the ground to sit on! Pick some covers for them that will wear well outside and that are also comfortable to feel and sit on.
- Soft picnic blankets are a must for summer lunches! There are so many pretty colors to choose from and some even have a waterproof backing in case the grass is damp.
- Cool water: From a dip in a pool and running through the sprinklers, to a light mist spray around your porch and flavored ice water to drink – water is a must in summer!
- Textured plants that are safe to touch are a great addition! Woolly lamb's ear, airy ferns, soft grasses, and smooth monsters are all fun.

**Taste:**

Let's not forget to spoil our taste buds this summer!

- Summer fruits are so delicious to have for snacks and dessert – chilled slices of bright watermelon, juicy peaches, colorful berries, bunches of grapes, and tangy apricots. Add some to water, make a fruit salad, or make fruit kebabs to dip in yogurt or melted chocolate.
- Veggies can be a fun addition to outdoor meals; colorful salads and veg kebabs are great. And they are even better if you have picked them from your own garden.
- Herbs add a layer of taste to delight your taste buds! Combine with fruit in your water or make delicious herb butter to baste your meat with.
- Cold drinks and snacks are a must. Throw together some of your healthy favorites to munch outside.
- Food cooked outside on the grill, braai, or in the smoker is an essential part of summer.
- Delicious summer treats: Let's not forget the popsicles, ice cream, summer smoothies, fresh juices, yummy trifles, summer fruit pies, and s'mores to add extra delight to our summer meals.

### **Themed garden retreats:**

You may want to decorate your outdoor nook according to a specific theme. Here are some fun ideas for you to consider.

- Cozy gathering place: Group some comfy chairs around a table, add some potted plants, a few cushions, and a lantern or two, and you're good to go.
- Secret tea spots are so much fun! A cute coffee table and chairs under a gazebo or in a shady, hidden corner surrounded by greenery and flowers is a perfect place for poetry tea times or your morning cup of coffee.
- Fire pits are so much fun! Some cozy cushions on the ground or some benches around a bonfire, roasting s'mores on cooler summer nights.
- Braai and eating area – whether you braai, barbecue, or use a gas grill, add a picnic table, camping chairs, or an outdoor set of table and chairs to enjoy your meals outside.
- Shady hammocks are a perfect spot to take a good book in summer, to read, relax, and listen to your chimes and all the pretty birdsong.

### **For the kids**

Our children also need their own outdoor retreat! What can we do for them so that they can have fun summer days?

- Outdoor games like outdoor chess sets, swing ball, basketball hoops, and lawn darts are all lots of fun. You can make mini tracks outside for toy trains, give the kids sidewalk chalk, fill up some water balloons or water guns, and let them at it.

- In the water. The first rule for safe swimming is parental supervision! In addition to that, throw in some floaties, a slip 'n slide, a blow-up pool, or a swimming pool, and have fun. Don't forget some sprinklers and a hose pipe for a quick cool down.
- Something to climb like a climbing net, a treehouse, monkey bars, or a jungle gym will provide hours of summer fun for the kids.
- Messing around. Don't exclude messy play from your summer plans! Children love playing in mud kitchens, making nature 'soups,' playing with oobleck, and more. Let them clean up under the sprinklers afterward.
- A little sensory experience. Let your kids pick a spot for themselves in the garden and give them some options of plants, ornaments, and more to build their own little sensory retreat.
- Swings are a must! Swings provide vestibular input for children, calming their bodies and being super fun at the same time. My kids have a sensory swing/hammock that provides deep pressure, and we want to put up some wooden swings too.
- Have a bounce. Rebounders and trampolines are also healthy for children, and us grown-ups too!

Well, there you have it – tons of ideas for comfort and fun outside this summer. I hope you have fun planning and creating your very own Hygge garden retreat!

# CREATING A COZY READING NOOK

BY ANTOINETTE  
MARLOW



Ever since I was a child, my dream was to have my very own personal library. I have fond memories of the cozy reading corner in my Grade 1 class. There were a bunch of poufy chairs and loads of short readers to pull off the shelf. The attraction of this lovely corner was a magnet, and I attribute my love for reading to this cozy sanctuary. My dream is to replicate that feeling for my family and to help you have your own cozy nook to grow a love of reading.

Even our local library was lovely. They had super comfy chairs you could sit in and I would read for hours, lost in many lands and adventures. Anyway, I achieved some of my dreams as a result of home-schooling, I possess a tiny personal library, much to my husband's dismay.

However, this is about a cozy nook to enjoy those beautiful books in. Pull a book off the shelf and explore new worlds. Especially on a rainy day.

Did you know if you read, your children will also read? I hear parents asking 'How do I get my kids off social media and technology'?

Read books where they can see and soon they will do the same. Create a reading corner for your children with books for their levels and interests. Put lots of cushions around the place and some favorite toys. If you have a bit of spare cash, you can even give it a theme, like the ocean.

### **Why read?**

Reading stirs your creativity, is a source of information, can make you laugh, make you cry, and transport you to new places.

Reading relaxes you while you laugh. It can make you feel empathy.

For me, it has been so important to read and love reading. I get most of my art ideas from books that I have read. When I read, my children read and learn to love books.

My biggest challenge right now is where to place a nook. Most of the corners of my house are used for something.

### **So, what does a book nook look like?**

1. Define the space with a rug.
2. Choose a comfortable chair.
3. Add a side table.
4. Bring in some task lighting.
5. Pick a throw pillow, it's the easiest way to set the tone and adds some much-needed back support.
6. Drape a cozy blanket over your chair.
7. Think green with a houseplant.
8. Hang some art you love.
9. Surround yourself with things you love.

### **Tips on how to fit a reading nook into your house:**

1. Build a nook into bookshelves  
Build a chair on top of a bookshelf. Put a nice comfy pillow on the seat. Then the books are close by and you can read and enjoy.
2. Use a storage space  
Build shelving that you can sit on over shelving racks. Then place a few cushions to sit on with shelving for books up on the wall.

### 3. Use a landing

Have a nice wide landing? Place a comfy chair in the corner and you have somewhere to read. Place a pretty rug on the floor and a small bookshelf next to your chair.

### 4. Build a bookshelf with things you own or can recycle

My cousin took some planks of wood, cut them to the length she desired, and used empty colored glass bottles to support the ends. It's functional and pretty! Build shelves from whatever you have around the house.

### 5. Add plants

Plants add a feeling of a place being alive and lived in. Add a plant terrarium if you want the beauty of plants, but might forget to water them.

### 6. Add a touch of fantasy

Put up pictures of places you want to go. Or wonderful places you want to visit. Or pages from books (if you can bring yourself to tear up books).

## **Building your reading nook:**

### 1. Get a comfy chair.

Invest in a comfy chair. A nice chair to get is a wingback chair. Or any other comfy chair you like.

### 2. Have lots of ambient light

Place a chair right next to your biggest window. Right next to a window is perfect, so you don't strain your eyes. Lots of light also creates a positive mood.

### 3. A small coffee table

For your hot cup of coffee and a few yummy snacks, of course!

### 4. Use enticing colors

I love a light blue or yellow to create a cozy, relaxing look. Use colors that you like so that you can spend lots of time there.

### 5. Give the kids a reading nook

There are lots of wonderful ideas on Pinterest to inspire you. I like the book nook that is built into the child's cupboard, lined with cushions. Or a reading space in their room where they can read anytime, with a collection of their favorite books.

### 6. Best light for reading

Natural light from nearby windows is great. You could add a reading lamp or even twinkling lights.

### 7. Get lots of interesting books

This is obvious, but you need lots of interesting books to read. Travel guides, fantasy, fiction, non-fiction, the list is endless. My personal favorites are Jane Austen and C. S. Lewis. I like to include books to learn something about schooling or my skill set.

### 8. Use a movable cart

You don't have space for bookshelves? Use a movable cart, then you can have the books wherever you are reading. And it doesn't take up much space.

### 9. Use part of your shelving

Get creative and put some shelving on your desk.

Making a cozy reading nook for our family is definitely worth it! Finding a spot for this little luxury - a place of escape from the humdrum and a little bit of paradise. It's a wonderful blessing to help create a space that encourages a love of reading and to help grow a love of learning in the next generation.



# MAXIMIZING SMALL SPACES



More and more people are choosing to live simply, minimizing the size of their homes and possessions. There are various reasons for this, from financial to purely a lifestyle choice. Living in a smaller space has many benefits. Financially, you save on rent or down payments. You subsequently save on insurance, maintenance costs, and utility bills as well. Smaller homes are also less time-consuming to maintain and less work to keep clean and tidy.

But living in a smaller home also requires rethinking the use of space.

## **Declutter your space**

Small spaces can look crowded and cluttered very quickly. Remove items that do not serve a purpose of either functionality or that really bring you joy. One can create the illusion of space and openness even if the rooms are smaller just by minimizing the amount of furniture and décor items you keep in the room. Having proper storage to keep additional items will also be beneficial to keep the room tidy. Limiting your open flat surface space will also assist in minimizing clutter.

This refers to tabletops and side tables, for instance. If there are many open, flat spaces you can easily just leave things out everywhere that can quickly make it look and feel cluttered.

When deciding on décor times, it does not need to be super minimalistic, you can still have several items but be more specific with how you display or use them. Having a smaller space forces you to really evaluate what is important and special to you and your family. For instance, hang only your most treasured artwork and display heirloom items that would previously be packed away. Start with what you love the most and slowly add until you feel comfortable, while still not overcrowding the space. This will be less for some and more for others.

When displaying artwork, using one larger statement piece helps create a focal point in the space. If possible, position the piece on the wall opposite the room's entry; this will draw the eye across the room, providing the illusion of a larger area.

### **Furniture**

When choosing furniture for a smaller space, you need to consider a few things.

### **Size**

The size of the furniture is important; oversized furniture will make the room seem smaller than it is. Having too many smaller furniture pieces will also crowd a room quickly. Finding a balance between this is important. A larger statement piece that is multi-functional might be a better choice.

### **Function**

Nowadays there are many multi-functional furniture options available. Many beds have drawers or can be lifted with additional storage underneath to pack away winter clothing, blankets, etc. Many innovative couches can double as storage or as additional guest beds. An ottoman that can open can function as a side table, an additional seating option, as well as a storage unit. The options are limitless.

### **Breathing room**

Leave some floor space open; do not fill every inch of space you have. Also, leaving space between furniture and the walls creates the illusion of space, the same is true for using furniture with legs. The area underneath the furniture helps to create the illusion of space; it also makes it easier to keep clean.

### **Color palette**

Without spending lots of money, you can create a feeling of space and openness with the colors you choose. Gone are the days of only white rooms to convey a feeling of space. Using lighter shades of color can be just as effective. You can then add a few pops of color to brighten the rooms. You can also maximize this effect by using paler but reflective colors that will help light move around the room.

### **Window treatments**

Keep the color palette in mind when you choose your window treatments. Light makes a room feel bigger; using sheer curtains will allow more natural light into your room, which will add to the feeling of spaciousness.

Hanging your curtains higher and extending them to the floor will make your room appear taller. Hanging them wider will also make your windows look larger and help to create the illusion of a bigger room. You can utilize block-out curtains or blinds for privacy at night while maximizing natural light in the day.

### **Lighting**

Add additional lights and lamps if the natural light is limited. Keep lamp shades sheer to enhance the effect. Use mirrors strategically to optimize natural light in rooms, placing them in a corner or on a strategic wall to reflect natural light through the room.

Utilizing previously unused spaces  
There are many ingenious new ways to add storage space to homes, especially in the kitchen. From small pantry-style drawers and cupboards to keep spices and sauces, to under-counter drawers on the floor to store brooms and mops. Rotating shelving as well as pullout sections adds even more functionality to existing spaces. With the explosion of tiny home living, there have been so many developments in space-saving solutions. You do not need to call in carpenters and engineers to rebuild your kitchen or cupboards, by just adding some clever storage options you can maximize the space you already have.



### **Baskets and shelving**

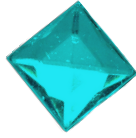
By adding baskets to cupboards, you can easily group and store items together. It takes up less space and you can store more. For example, use inexpensive baskets for towels, another for toilet paper, and another for extra body care products, all on one shelf in your vanity cupboard. This helps organize things and keep them tidy and optimizes the space used. This works for cleaning products in a kitchen, toiletries in a bathroom, and clothes in your bedroom. Add shelving in between the current shelving in your cupboards; this works well for shorter glasses, mugs, and cups. This can also work for a spice shelf. You can also do this in your bedroom to optimize the shelving in your cupboards. Instead of cupboards use drawers for crockery and mugs. In the drawers, use dividers to utilize the space optimally.

### **Use of vertical space**

Vertical space can be utilized as additional storage by adding shelving or hanging space for utensils or as a command station for the family. Adding some hooks for coats, handbags, and school bags will leave floor space open, and keep things organized and functional. Adding hooks to cupboards and behind doors can add storage space to your kitchen, bathrooms, and bedrooms. Shoe organizers can be used for things like toys or hair accessories. You are only limited by your imagination.

### **Your space**

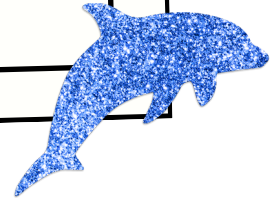
Ultimately you must be comfortable, the room must function well for you and your family, and be practical. By being intentional about how you decorate your small room you can create a feeling of comfort and space irrespective of the size.



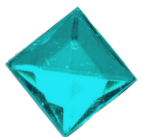
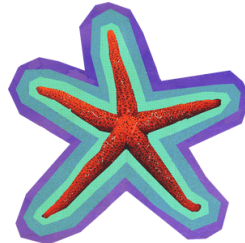
**Exploring Your Interests:**



**How to Find Your Passion  
in High School**



**by Ruby Jasmine Rice**



When we talk about finding your passion, I feel the need to preface that finding and following your passion on the career front and the hobby front of your life are two different things. And sometimes, at least for a while, are often better separated. I think society has tainted the word passion to mean it's something you follow around, and where you place your goal for a career and job that will support you or a family, when it is in fact only occasionally that following your passion in the early years of life leads to success in the career and job market. So before you think that what I'm going to discuss today is about the type of passion that will lead to financial success by the time you're 27, the best advice I can give you in that area of life is one of my favorite quotes from Mike Rowe, the host of the Discovery Channel TV show, Dirty Jobs: "Don't follow your passion, but always bring it with you." If we're talking about specific careers and financial success, it is always much better to follow opportunities than it is to blindly follow your love, say for acting, sports, or art because it is a lot harder to find financial success in those industries, when there are a myriad of opportunities out there for good-paying careers that might just slip out of sight if you blindly follow your passions. That is just a cautionary word of advice before I discuss the topic at hand. Many good things can come out of exploring and finding different passions, as there's nothing better for a well-rounded life than hobbies, activities, and passions that can feed your soul with joy. It's just better not to completely follow them around like butterflies expecting them to immediately support you financially! But how do you find out exactly what you're passionate about? There is no one-size-fits-all trick to finding your passion, but there are plenty of things you can do to take advantage of the wonderful teenage years where creativity and time to explore your options are hopefully blooming.

We live in a time where our options are numerous, and time even more flourishing as long as you don't waste it away on social media. Which is something to curb if you want to find your passion. Letting your mind idle its way through the day without feeding it with ideas in some way or not giving yourself a healthy dose of boredom to possibly ignite some creativity is not going to help you find your passion. The internet is very helpful and is a very useful tool for exploring ideas and hobbies that you don't have the in-person opportunity to explore, but mindlessly scrolling through social media won't really help you explore new things. It's important to let curiosity take hold, and to explore things with a mind ready to learn. Because you won't find your passion by fiat. We aren't born with a list of likes and dislikes, so you won't know whether you like doing something or not unless you do it! So be prepared to try new things, even things that you don't immediately like the sound of. Go in with the mindset of just having fun and learning; exploring passions does not have to be as serious as intense focusing and mastering a new skill, in fact, that can often suck the passion right out of you. So be curious, and open to new ideas and new activities. You never know where you might find that spark of joy and creativity that could lead you down a wonderful path of joy.



An open mind is the very first thing to start with, but now what are you supposed to do? Well, your options are going to vary depending on where you live, but the best option is to find things near you to try. Find classes and clubs either at your school or near you where you live, join a bowling league, writing or art class, take horseback riding lessons, or music lessons, find a chess club or hiking club. Most of the time if you live near any substantial town, you will have at least a few in-person options to try out. I grew up trying many different things; my mom would suggest options based on activities and clubs she knew were available near us and I would pick from there one or two options I might want to try. By the time I had graduated high school, I had done swim team, piano lessons, writing classes, art classes, cooking classes, ice skating, riding lessons, and bird watching. As much as it's important to try new things, it's also good to remember that you don't have to continue doing something if you don't like it, as long as you have at least tried it for a decent period of time. I didn't really enjoy doing swim team anymore after having done it for several years, but I kept doing it for a few more years after I reached a point of dislike just because my best friend was doing it and still loved it. In retrospect, I wish I had quit doing it sooner just so I could move on to trying other things. Who knows what else I would have been able to try if I had quit doing swimming a couple of years earlier? You are only young with boundless time and energy for so long. So as much as it's important to give every activity and new thing a chance, it's also important to know when it's not for you and to be okay with "giving up." It isn't really giving up; you're just exploring new things! But it can sometimes feel like giving up, especially if it's something that you like the idea of, but you just don't have the knack for it, that sometimes specific hobbies require if you want to be good at them.

But what if you don't have a ton of in-person options where you live? Well, there are still ways to explore new things! This is what the internet is for in my opinion because you can explore so many things with just a few clicks. And ordering tools or supplies to try new hobbies on your own is often just another few clicks away as well. I also found books were a great way to learn about different interests whether it was books on gardening, or raising livestock, or learning art and calligraphy techniques, all it takes is a library trip and you can bring home a myriad of books to learn different skills or hobbies. The sky is the limit as far as discovering what you might be passionate about when using resources like the internet or books! You can find videos on everything from learning how to crochet to learning how to weld on the internet. So if you don't have hands-on classes or activities to try near you, it's definitely not a bad secondary option!

The most important thing is still to let your curiosity lead you. You can't discover your passions in life if you aren't curious about the world and what you might like. There are so many things you could potentially be passionate about, and your time to explore new things and new potential passions is not limited to your teenage years. If you keep an open mind and are curious about the world, who knows what hobbies and passions you will discover in the course of your entire life? You're never going to be too old to try new things, learn something new, and find new hobbies and passions in life.



# BUILDING GOOD HABITS

by Sharon Darling

## HOW TO RAISE WELL-MANNERED

# KIDS

Manners and good habits mean different things to different people. How we build them within our families might be a little or a lot different depending on the culture, family, needs, country, and other factors that are important to us.

Some examples could be washing your hands before you eat and touching food, closing your mouth while you eat, being polite, not being disrespectful, not being rude, using outdoor voices outside, and saying please and thank you; the list can go on and on.

If you look up definitions, you will find that manners consist of a person's way of behaving toward others, social behavior, and habits that show respect for others' needs, comfort, and feelings.

We can display these in good and not-so-good ways that affect others and ourselves in positive or negative ways.

Our Creator has given us the keys to raising well-mannered kids. I believe that if we know what is important to Him, it will lead us to be able to live out a life where others will notice the courtesy and good conduct that brings glory to the Father and His Son. After all, we are overall either being a good ambassador for Him or not.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 states Fear YHWH and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of man. In Proverbs 31, the woman described is called blessed by her family, and she fears YHWH. These give me pause, and I am reminded of Lev. 19:18, Deut. 6:1, 3 - 4, and Matt. 22: 3-40. The two greatest commandments are to love God and love your neighbor as yourself. On these two hang all the law and prophets.

Our lives revolve around what we do, say, and think. They either show love and respect towards Him and others or they do not. The same can be said about our neighbors. Love is an action word that reveals our hearts. Thank the Father for His grace, mercy, forgiveness, and salvation He has freely given us.

### **Our Responsibility**

We have a responsibility to take care of His creation and represent His Name in ways that are pleasing to Him and bring glory to His name. He wants us to bear fruit worthy of repentance. Our habits and manners are manifested throughout our day-to-day interactions. How we treat and talk to others is a big part of them.

Are we holding ourselves to the same standards we hold everyone else to? Especially regarding our family. Are we being just or unjust in our measuring? We have the parable of the unforgiving servant as one example of how important this is to our Creator. Notice he was called wicked then reminded of the mercy and forgiveness he was shown but did not grant to a fellow servant. This shows the importance of "forgive us as we forgive others," and in Micah 6:8, we see He desires mercy and justice from us.

It is easier for our children to grow in character when they observe us strive to do so as well. We cannot live or teach our children what we do not know. We have to be in our Bibles and in prayer a lot and not justify ourselves for why we do not do something. He shows us things in His perfect timing and the way that is best for us. We cannot be demanding more from others faster and deeper than we ourselves have - that is unjust. We can do this without tolerating sin and bad attitudes. We need wisdom, discernment, and remembering there is a time for everything as in Ecc. 3:1-8. We are not the ones who open our eyes, minds, and hearts. That is the Father's job. We should be very careful how we go about doing this even within our family. The fruit of the Spirit is extended towards us from the Father more than we might like to admit, and we need to be extending them to others as well. They need us to treat them the same way we expect to be treated and what the Father expects from us. Matt. 7:12-14 reminds us of that commandment.

We set the pace and are an example for good behavior. They are watching and learning from us. When we stumble and mess up (which will happen) they need to see us living out not being full of pride, but repenting, forgiving, being merciful, showing grace, striving to be just, and much more. Children learn what they live, and hopefully, we can make their walk with our Creator and their future relationships easier. May they choose to do and be better than we did and are.

Here are some topics to consider to teach our children so that when they grow up, they will not depart from it - Prov. 22:6. This is not an exhaustive list but is a start to building desirable habits and manners:

- The fruit of the Spirit
- The fear of the Lord is...
- The 10 commandments
- The Sermon on the Mount
- The weightier matters
- Love God/YHWH/The Lord
- Love your neighbor
- Love one another
- Blessed are/is
- Be careful to keep/do/observe
- Remember
- Repent(ance)
- Justice
- Mercy
- Deeds/works/fruit
- Righteousness
- Obedience

What is inside our hearts is what comes out. It takes a lifetime to develop these traits. We need to remember that our children need these from us as well. If we meet them with a "hammer" every time they make a mistake, we could be making it much harder for them. Keeping in mind our growth with our manners, and conduct, and how long some of it took us will help us be able to work with our children in ways that can bear good fruit. They will mess up; they will embarrass us at times, have poor table manners, behave rudely, give an attitude, not listen to us, be unkind, and chew food with their mouth open, to name a few. It can drive us crazy sometimes, but it would be wise to remember that we still sometimes do them to others and our Creator. There are many Proverbs and scriptures that guide us in how to handle those not-so-rosy moments. Patience is necessary and can be hard to extend sometimes. We have a Creator we can go to, Who gave us His Word to dive into. Not every child, family, and circumstance is the same, and the ages dictate a lot of what we teach and how we will handle those interactions.

What we are doing now will have a direct impact on our grandchildren. The better we do, the better it can be for them. We should not take that lightly. How we treat others matters to the Father.

For our children to have a better chance at building good habits and manners, they need to see us model them. If we do not want them to yell, we should not. If we want to see them be forgiving and get along with their siblings, they need to see our example of living that way. Again, they learn what they live, and it is unjust to expect behavior from them that we do not display. It is impossible and unrealistic to expect that we will do this exactly right all the time but when we fall short- the actions, reactions, and words spoken produce good or bad fruit. They and we need lots of practice. We can make it fun to teach them the things that are important to us - through tea parties, playing games, reading together, library trips, making crafts, singing songs - the list is endless.

- Are we willing to apologize with genuine repentance?
- Are we forgiving?
- Are we merciful?
- Are we just?
- Do we extend grace?
- Do we expect perfection from children who are just that, children and not little adults?

We know better, and they are still learning and have not had as long as we have to work on these characteristics. Are we actually creating an environment where they are always met with the proverbial hammer which can lead to them fearing now and later on in life that the Father is just waiting with a stick to smack them back down? He is not, and neither should we.

### **The Goal**

Oh, to hear "Well done my good and faithful servant". May we never stop seeking His kingdom - Matt. 6:33 and diligently talk to children - Deut. 6:7. That is huge in how they learn and grow. The day - to - day interactions that are not only happening when they fall short and get in trouble and talked at. Let us walk in the Spirit and concern ourselves also with the weightier matters. What is important to the Father and Messiah ought to be important to us. Let us not neglect these things and produce good fruit that is pleasing to Them.

# Creative



Always wishing  
for better things tomorrow  
Pushing the button  
To fast-forward our lives

'One day', a silent mantra  
Whispered with hope  
Anticipation for wished-for blessings  
That might never come

Hating the flies and mosquitoes  
In the heat of summer  
Oblivious to the sunshine  
The cool nights  
The watermelon on the lawn  
The bees on the flowers  
The much-needed rain  
That it brings

In winter we bemoan  
Our aching, freezing joints  
We hanker for the blessings  
We wished away before.  
We sit in our homes  
Without sparing a glance  
For the naked, stripped trees  
Black silhouettes  
Against a pure, white sky

by Maché Myburgh

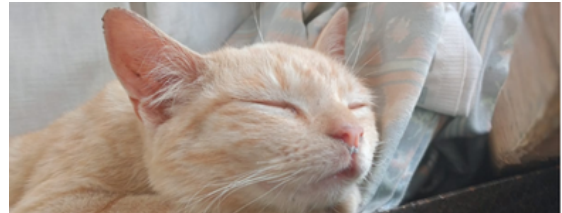
GINGA DA CAT by Bie

Those people...  
They look at me.  
Especially the ignorant  
Red head.  
She lifts me up.  
Me, clinging on for dear life

What does she take me for?  
A goofy, cheese grater, toothless  
Ginger cat.  
On gloomy days,  
All she has to do  
Is lift me up,

Then loses it,  
She giggles  
And giggles  
And giggles  
And giggles some more  
Slowly killing me on the inside.

These humans...  
The punks that they are.  
Their tiny brains  
Cannot comprehend  
How great my intel truly is.



*The Fox* by Bie  
(full art print available [here](#))





# ALIENS IN THE KITCHEN

## EPISODE 2

