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HOMEOWNER'S UPDATE

Black Is Back in Kitchen Decor

Bring on the drama and elegance by incorporating classic black in the kitchen — especially if you have a lot of natural light. An entirely black kitchen makes a bold, modern statement. To offset the dark color, pair black cabinets and walls with white countertops, natural wood floating shelves or a light-colored tile backsplash.

If your kitchen doesn't have a lot of natural light, consider only using black as an accent color on the island, a feature wall or open shelving areas. Round out this sleek culinary look with black pendant lighting and other black touches of modern decor.

From Poppy Seed to Cracked Pepper to Raven, browse the internet to check out all the rich hues now available. See which beautiful options speak to your sense of style. When you find what you love, go for it. Get back in black as little, or as much, as you like.

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Prep Your Houseplants for Cooler Weather

These simple tips will prepare your plants for the cooler months.

Relocate

Move your plants to west- and south-facing windows for optimal light. You can also invest in a grow light for your more sun-reliant greenery.

Less Is More

Plants obviously don't grow as much in the cooler months, so they need less sustenance and maintenance. Take a

break from fertilizers and reduce watering to keep plants vibrant and healthy throughout the season.

Prevent Pests

Potting soil doesn't dry as quickly in cooler temperatures, so plants may be more prone to gnats and other insects. You can avoid this by adding pest control to the soil. It's absorbed by the roots and can help protect your plants.

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Choosing the Right Firewood

We've all enjoyed the warm feel of a crackling fire, but have you ever given much thought to the type of wood you're burning? You may be surprised to learn that not all firewood is the same. The following tips can help you choose the best variety for your particular needs.

Hardwood comes from slow-growing, deciduous trees, such as oak, ash and birch. It's ideal for indoor burning since it produces less smoke and burns longer, hotter and cleaner than softwood.

Softwood, such as pine, is better suited for outdoor fires because it catches fire more easily and burns faster than hardwood. Hot embers tend to spark from softwood and can easily ignite wildfires. Use caution.

Wood pellets are suitable for stoves, grills, furnaces, and pizza ovens that require pellet fuel. Pellets are long-burning and more eco-friendly than traditional firewood. You can also recycle wood pellet ash as a garden fertilizer.

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Home Maintenance Checklist

Now's the time to prepare your home for the changing seasons. Here are a few helpful fall maintenance tips.

- **Clean your gutters.** Clear out any leaves and twigs to prevent them from damaging your gutters. Repair sagging gutters and fix or replace missing or loose downspout brackets or any other damaged pieces.
- **Clean your chimney.** Hire a professional to clean your chimney and remove dangerous creosote.
- **Weatherproof your doors and windows.** Use weatherstripping or caulk to seal gaps around your windows and doors.
- **Check your HVAC.** Hire a qualified professional to inspect your HVAC system every year. The inspector will specifically check for any safety issues and address maintenance concerns.
- **Change the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.** You should check these throughout the year. However, regular checks are especially important during the cooler months when the windows are usually closed and the air is drier.
- **Protect your floors.** Elements brought in from outdoors can quickly damage your floors. Place floor mats both inside and outside at every entrance. Store wet shoes in a waterproof tray at your entryways.
- **Reverse ceiling fans.** Switch fans to turn clockwise during cooler months. This can save money on utilities as it prevents warm air from being trapped at the ceiling level.
- **Treat your lawn.** Mowing and fertilizing your lawn now can help ensure a lush, green yard in the spring.
- **Check for overhanging branches.** Trim limbs hanging over your house to prevent damage during high winds and storms.

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German Cabbage & Apples

Ingredients

2 Tbsp. butter
2 red or yellow apples, cored, peeled and sliced
1 red onion, finely diced
2 lbs. red cabbage, thinly sliced
3 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar
1 cup apple cider
2 cloves
1 bay leaf
1 Tbsp. sugar
½ tsp. salt
¼ tsp. pepper
2-3 cinnamon sticks

Directions

In a large pot, melt butter over medium-high heat. Cook apples and onion for 2-3 minutes.

Add red cabbage and vinegar to apple mixture and combine. Stir in apple cider, cloves, bay leaf, sugar, salt, and pepper.

Reduce temperature to medium and cover pot. Simmer for 50-60 minutes, stirring occasionally until the cabbage is soft but not mushy. Remove bay leaf. Add more apple cider if mixture is dry. Scoop into a serving bowl and garnish with 2-3 cinnamon sticks. Serve hot.

Serves 6

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