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Welcome

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Gaynor Tracey, Birchington

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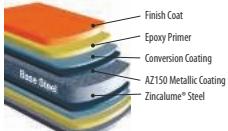
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KEEP THE VEG PLOT GOING

Crops to harvest in winter include parsnips (which taste better after a frost), kale, Brussels sprouts, leeks, winter cabbages and winter salad. If you didn't get around to planting winter veg and salad earlier in the year, you can grow pulses indoors, as well as microgreens, ready in just a few days. You can also plant for future feasts – garlic, fruit bushes and raspberries and rhubarb can all be planted in winter.

Fine pines

If you want your Christmas tree to stay in tip top condition over the festive season, there are three simple rules to follow. First, buy a healthy tree from a local nursery; second, choose a spot for your tree that's well away from any heat sources; and finally keep your tree properly hydrated. A medium-sized tree can easily get through two litres of water a day.



Garden NOTES

Winter can feel like a gloomy time in the garden. The flowers of high summer are a distant memory, the rain is here to stay and the change of the clocks has put paid to any hope of working in the evenings. However, there is still much to be done.



Super snowdrops

There's no need to buy expensive rarities to create a cracking display of snowdrops. *Galanthus nivalis* is the snowdrop you'll see growing wild in woods; it's vigorous and quick to establish and usually flowers in February. They do best in moist, well-drained soil in partial shade. Plant them deep; the top of the bulb should be about 8cm below the surface. Water well and don't remove spent foliage until it is completely withered. Nourish them in autumn and winter with a fertiliser. It will take several years before they settle in and develop into decent clumps. Propagate by lifting and dividing once the leaves have turned yellow.



OFF WITH THEIR HEADS!

As you prepare and prune your garden area for winter, sedums can be left unattended to. Sedums are hardy, tolerating frost and below freezing temperatures.

Upright sedums will die back to the ground, but the remaining stalks with spent flowers will offer colour and food for the birds. They also add shape and interest to the borders, and look especially striking when frosted or dusted with snow. This is also a good time to cut back bush, shrub and climbing roses.

SOW SOON...

The short, dull days after Christmas are when most gardeners peruse plant lists and seed catalogues and order for the coming year. It's also a good time to start sowing flower seeds in a conservatory or heated greenhouse. If you leave sowing until March or April you're missing the opportunity to get a head start. Flowers that can be sown in January or February include dianthus, antirrhinums, lobelia, begonia, geraniums, sweet peas and petunias. Once they have germinated move them to a cooler place so they grow more slowly and plant out when it's milder.



What to do now

- Dead-head autumn-flowering plants and prune summer-flowering shrubs.
- Keep off the grass - walking on it damage it.
- Protect plants from the cold by adding cloches to winter salads and wrapping half-hardy plants in fleece. Bring tender plants indoors.
- Dig garden beds. Digging now allows the frost to break up the soil, improving the structure.
- Put out feeders for garden birds.
- Create a compost heap.
- Plant bulbs.
- Plant garlic and fruit bushes.
- Winter prune apple trees.
- Divide snowdrops in January.

Don't forget the birds!

To keep your little visitors warm this winter, put out plenty of fat balls, seeds and nuts. They will give the birds the necessary energy to keep warm. Plus, they need water – so, keep the bath topped up. If you're pruning shrubs this winter, don't be too thorough and tidy as these can be used as shelter.



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USING YOUR FIRE PIT *in winter*

THE WINTER IS A TIME TO RETREAT TO THE WARMTH AND COSINESS OF THE HOUSE. BUT WHAT IF WE OPEN THOSE DOORS AND VENTURE OUTSIDE INTO THE MOONLIGHT...

The garden is often another room during the summer months, with the doors open we spend as much time in the garden as the house, sometimes more. But as the nights draw in we find we've closed the curtains and shut the garden outside by late afternoon. The patio that served us so many serene morning coffees and lively family bbqs in the warmer months can double up as a cosy spot for restful stargazing, hot-toddlies and quality time with the kids when you install or build a fire pit.

For around 200,000 years, humans have had the ability to control fire. It's little wonder that, to this day, we're still captivated by a fire's flames and it's easy to incorporate an open fire into the garden, with many options from tiny table top bio-fuel bowls to built-in fireplaces and cooking stoves. They can burn timber or run on electricity, gas or Bioethanol. They bring multi-functionality to a space but all have advantages and disadvantages.

Whether you have lots of space or just a small garden the location of a fire pit is worth

considering. A wood-burning fire will generate a lot of heat and smoke, so place it further away from your home and other structures. Gas or electric fire pits can be located closer to your home or even placed under a roof for more protection. Plan your seating to give your fire pit area a more comfortable feel, maybe you want to sink the seating or raise it. The area directly above the fire needs to be clear of hanging plants, trees and flammable items like shade sails.

A portable fire pit is a good option if you really want to utilise the space. There are lots of small fire pits, from lanterns to bowls that can be moved around the garden for maximum benefit. There are even fire pit tables where the tabletop is removed to reveal the fire pit beneath. This is a great idea where space maybe lacking as the patio can be used for dining before lighting the fire. You may wish to consider a closed fire or one with a spark screen

or guard if you have young children, pets or you are using the fire in a small space.

With the climate crisis being our priority at the moment consideration to the environment is of particular concern so we need to think about what fuel we will burn and how to choose sustainable, clean fuel.

Electric fires are great if you already have an electricity supply in the garden or would consider having an electrician put one in. Available in traditional and contemporary styles they have all the perks of a wood fire but without the smoke or mess. They can even be controlled by a remote. They emit plenty of heat but no toxic pollutants. You may feel they lack the atmosphere of a wood fire though.

Bioethanol fires are fairly new to the market but are growing in popularity. Bio ethanol is a totally renewable liquid fuel produced from agricultural by-products that burn clean, meaning you have no smoke and no sparks. It

Planting around your fire pit



Considering the planting around your fire pit is really important so that the area feels part of the garden but also using plants that will withstand the heat the fire may give off. Grasses are a great option, they are soft and offer a beautiful movement in the garden, they also exquisitely catch the light at sun rise and sunset. They are tough and able to stand high temperatures as are many mediterranean plants like Lavender, Sage and Yukka, which will actually benefit from the high temperatures. Herbs are a lovely plant to have close to seating as you brush against them to release their scent or pluck off to use in the cooking. Plants should always be a minimum of one metre away from the pit.

is a natural, renewable and green energy source made by fermenting plant by-products and yeast. There are many attractive Bioethanol fires for the garden from small, inexpensive table top fires to large focal-point pieces.

Most garden fire pits are designed to burn logs. Wood is a renewable source of energy as long as we continue to plant trees and let them grow. However, if we are cutting down more wood than we allow to grow, it may be renewable but it is not necessarily sustainable. While burning wood is not quite carbon neutral, it does emit less carbon than fossil fuels and when it comes from a sustainably managed source it also acts as a sink for carbon. When buying logs, look out for BSL certified wood, Sustainable, Kiln Dried / Seasoned Firewood to show that it comes from a sustainably managed source and that it is dry so will burn cleaner, creating less smoke and air pollution. Be responsible when using outdoor fires - Never burn wet wood, unseasoned wood or wood that has been painted or treated and check your neighbours windows are closed and washing is inside before lighting up. Always store logs in a dry place, away from moisture.

Nothing beats the warmth and atmosphere of a real fire and cooking on them is fun too, if you've never tried a S'more before here is your chance, check out our recipe. Traditionally a North American campfire snack they were recently propelled to the heights of The Great British Bake off after Paul Hollywood set the bakers the task of recreating them in the tent.

*To talk about building an area for a fire pit in your garden just get in touch
sarah@thegardencreative.com,
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S'MORES RECIPE



- * Light your fire pit and wait till it's burning even and hot.
- * Take a digestive biscuit and Top with a piece of chocolate. Keep another biscuit handy.
- * Skewer a marshmallow on a long stick or skewer and hold over the heat of the fire. Toast, turning occasionally, until the marshmallow puffs and turns golden brown.
- * Place the marshmallow on top of the biscuit containing the chocolate piece and, using the remaining biscuit, squish the marshmallow down and pull off the skewer.
- * Hold the sandwich together between your fingers for a few seconds and let the heat of the roasted marshmallow melt the chocolate.
- * Eat while it is warm and gooey and perfect.



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NEPTUNE

AN EXPERT'S EYE ON LIGHTING

A FAVOURITE SUBJECT AMONGST INTERIOR DESIGNERS AND WRITERS ALIKE, THERE'S A LOT TO SAY (AND A LOT THAT YOU CAN READ) WHEN IT COMES TO LIGHTING YOUR HOME.

To help you wade through all the advice, we asked interiors and lifestyle journalist, Claudia Baillie to bring together all the knowledge she's garnered over the years into one, whole-home guide.

I've been writing about design and interiors for a long time now, and one of the most rewarding aspects of the job is interviewing experts about what has turned out to be a huge range of varied and fascinating topics. Some of the most interesting conversations have been about lighting, and below you'll find the most useful tips I've learnt over the years.

THROUGHOUT YOUR HOME

The overarching advice is that it's a good idea to install dimmers in almost every room of the house; this creates flexibility and allows you to change the mood in an instant. Try to install lights on more than one circuit too, as this gives more control.

LIVING AND DINING ROOMS

Combining feature pendants with table and floor lamps as well as wall sconces creates layers of light. This

makes a space feel much cosier and will ensure there are no gloomy corners.

One pendant looks good, but several grouped together creates real impact, especially in a larger room or over a dining table. Choose the same or similar designs and hang at different heights to form a decorative cluster.

Not all light sources need to be seen; discreet, low-level lighting that washes up walls is a great way to enhance atmosphere, and illuminating shelving or under wall cabinets using concealed LEDs provides additional lighting that adds depth to a space.

HALLWAYS

A statement light creates an incredible first impression and, in an area where you don't spend lots of time, you can afford to be bold with your design choice. If the ceiling is low though, avoid pendant lights as this can make a space feel smaller – instead, use a table, floor or wall lamp to make your statement.

In a long space, install switches at both ends so you're never left in the dark. Illuminate the first section of a corridor, then leave a shadow, then place another light beyond that. This will draw you



through the space and make it feel more inviting.

And know that layering light works well in the hallway as well; highlight artwork and decorative architraves with directional lights, and use table lamps to create a gentle glow.

KITCHENS

Ceiling and spotlights are certainly necessary, but they can cast shadows over your preparation area and they don't always create a particularly cosy atmosphere either, so don't rely on them as your only light source. Try incorporating low-level LEDs under wall units or even behind glass splashbacks which will give an even wash of light.

Directional light is a good option too, and

wall-mounted angled lamps or even a desk lamp on your work surface can work as well as any fancy scheme.

Pendants will come into their own in zoning your kitchen: hang a row above a table or kitchen island to define an eating area. Choosing rattan or fabric shades or a more curvaceous shape will introduce a softer element to an angular kitchen too.

BATHROOMS

Task lighting is essential; backlight a mirror or use wall-mounted lights either side to highlight your face.

LED lighting can be used to illuminate shelves, steps,





recesses or other design features, and a strip under a mirror cabinet can give the illusion that it's floating. The key is to conceal the light so it casts a low-level glow.

Highlight a wall of textured tiles to create an interesting focal point or use spotlights installed into the floor to up-light behind the bath if yours is freestanding, which will add to the feeling of space.

The most important thing when lighting a bathroom is that fittings must have the correct IP (ingress protection) rating so they're safe in wet areas – like Neptune's Hanover wall lights.

BEDROOMS

Most bedrooms have a ceiling light, which is great for general tasks, but it may also flatten the ambience. A combination of task, mood and general lighting will create a softer feel and greater flexibility.

Bold bedside lamps with sculptural bases and decorative shades can add real character to a room, or hang a pair of interesting pendants either side of a bed in place of a central pendant. Angled task lamps are great for bedtime reading and can be directed at the wall for a more diffused light.

Lighting can look amazing integrated into fitted joinery; use LED strips above and below a wardrobe. Up-lighters can be used as well to illuminate architectural features or the texture of interesting fabrics, adding richness and depth.

OUTSIDE AND IN THE GARDEN

Place outdoor lights strategically so they illuminate a tree or a sculptural plant, and think about leaving some dark areas as shadows add atmosphere. Try to conceal the fittings so all you see is the radiant light. Discreet rope lights under the lip of benches or decking define edges and give a gentle glow.

If you have large glass doors, illuminate the far wall or fence with an up-lighter. This means you'll see the light rather than a reflection in the glass, avoiding a 'black hole' effect.

Windproof hurricane lamps can add as much atmosphere as complicated lighting systems. Hang different sized lanterns and remove single bricks from walls to create nooks for tea lights.



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- Fix brush seal strips to sides. For draughty sash windows measure the bottom of the lower sash and mark the measurement on brush strip. Saw to size with a fine-toothed hacksaw. Smooth the cut end, apply wood glue and pin into place. Secure each end. If the beading on the frame is too narrow to accept the strips, pin them to the sash instead. To provide clearance for the bottom sash to move freely past the top sash, you may need to chisel out a section from the top bar of the bottom sash.
- Knocking in small pins can be fiddly – try holding them in the teeth of a comb. To avoid splitting the wood when attaching to beading, blunt the pin end. Hold each pin upside on a solid surface and tap the point with a hammer.
- Apply a coat of primer before painting with at least two coats.
- Gaps between the walls and frames of windows can let in draughts as well as allow rain to penetrate and harbour mould. On a dry day, fill the gap with flexible decorator's caulk. Wait until partially set and smooth with the end of a pencil dipped in water.



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CREATING A FOCAL POINT

CREATING A FOCAL POINT IN A ROOM CAN BE A FANTASTIC WAY OF TYING TOGETHER YOUR DÉCOR AND REALLY PUTTING YOUR STAMP ON YOUR PROPERTY.



Georgian cast iron mantel, The English Chimneypiece, english-chimneypiece.co.uk

Your chosen focal point should be the first thing you see when entering the room, and should be eye catching and unique. Of course your focal point doesn't have to be an addition to the room: a focal point can be an architectural feature, such as a fireplace, bay window, or even the view outside the window.

FINDING YOUR FOCAL POINT

Take a look around your room to determine its most outstanding area. This will be where you create your focal point. As mentioned above, it may be an architectural feature, or it may be the biggest wall in the room, the lightest (or darkest) corner, or even simply the first area that hits your eye on entering.

You can of course have more than one focal point in a room, in order to lead the eye in a specific pattern. However, you should keep these minimal as too many will negate the whole concept.

WALL HANGINGS

How you choose to adorn your walls says a lot about you and your style. A statement art piece or relief sculpture can really capture your personality. Do you love the period aesthetic of your home? Then consider hanging a painting in a style contemporary to its construction. You could hunt down a piece that illustrates the local countryside or a famous event that took place nearby (house built in Suffolk in the early 1800s? – the Hay Wain it is.)

If you can't find anything that's quite right however, why not make your own? Many people explored their creative side during lockdown and there are videos galore online that demonstrate how to make beautiful art with absolutely no experience! One good idea is to create an abstract painting using a tester pot of the paint on your walls, along with a couple of complementary colours. This way you get a unique artwork that goes perfectly with your décor.



Another excellent choice of wall hanging is a mirror. Feature mirrors should be as big as possible as, even in a small room, they will work beautifully because they will reflect the light and keep it from looking cluttered. Perhaps a driftwood frame for a seaside home, or an ornate Moroccan design for an exotic feel?

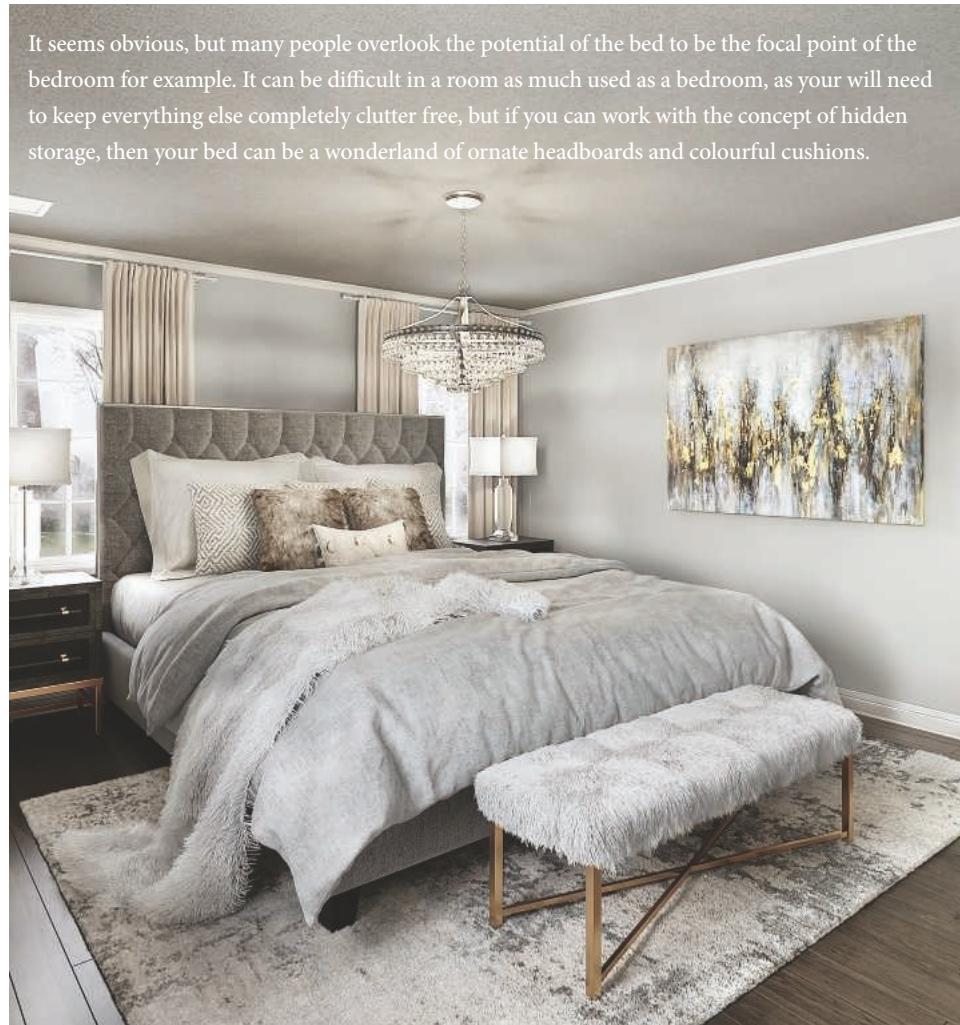
Even the wall itself can be the focal point, with a strong accent colour that stands out from the rest of the room.

FURNITURE AND DÉCOR

Of course you could choose to allow your walls to sink into the background and instead focus your attention on standing décor. Furniture can not only be a wonderful focal point, but also an extremely practical addition to a room.

In a living room you might choose to focus attention on a piece of statement lighting such as a chandelier, a cabinet or even TV stand, keeping mementos to a minimum. Or perhaps

It seems obvious, but many people overlook the potential of the bed to be the focal point of the bedroom for example. It can be difficult in a room as much used as a bedroom, as you will need to keep everything else completely clutter free, but if you can work with the concept of hidden storage, then your bed can be a wonderland of ornate headboards and colourful cushions.





Rug, weavergreen.com

FLOORING

Your focal point doesn't even have to be at eye level. Eye-catching flooring or a bold rug can be just as effective as art or furniture. The wonderful thing about a focal rug is that you could choose to have two or three and swap them out depending on the season, to create a whole new feel in your room.

your mementos are your focal point? And an illuminated glass cabinet is what you need to really show them off.

As well as art on your wall you can choose to place art on your floor. A larger than life sculpture or artwork may seem farfetched, but there's no better talking point. This is particularly true if your art has an interesting providence.

KITCHENS

Opt for a statement extractor, piece of lighting or bright cabinetry in a contrasting or dramatic colour to create a focal point in your kitchen.

When it comes to focal points, the opportunities are truly endless, so browse art galleries, antiques markets, homeware shops and even your friend's houses for inspiration – and let your imagination run wild.



Schmidt Kitchens, home-design.schmidt



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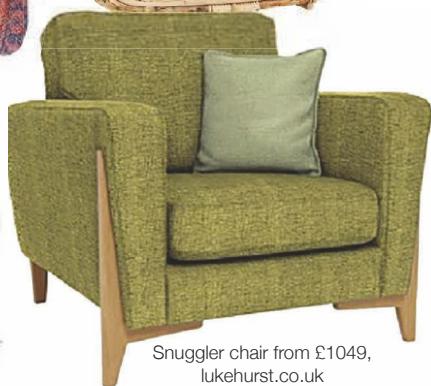
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CHOOSING A TUB for your period home

WHEN IT COMES TO FUNCTION, IT CAN BE SAID THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT ROOM IN THE HOUSE, AFTER THE KITCHEN, IS THE BATHROOM.



Mayfair freestanding roll top slipper bath, bathroommountain.co.uk

Unlike the living room and bedroom, for example, the bathroom cannot be entirely focused on décor, as it's vital that plumbing, heating and general usability are top-notch. This can of course be particularly important in period homes, where it's not enough to simply recreate the feel of the original – you also have to make room for all mod cons, including your tub!

In fact, depending on the age of your home, it may be that it never even had a bathroom to begin with, and so you find yourself trying to fit something into a room for which it was not originally intended.

VICTORIANA

Bathrooms were only introduced in the late 1800s and, even then, would only have been in large houses and not in Victorian terraces



Rimini cast iron bath, jwcpr.com

or older properties, which many period home owners now call their own.

Victorian bathrooms, when first introduced, tended to be fairly plain, with a pedestal sink, and a toilet with high level cistern. In terms of baths, your choices tended to consist of roll top, or panelled models.

The Victorians also favoured encasing exposed piping and fittings in wooden cladding, making the room less utilitarian and giving a more upmarket feel.

If you would like your bathroom to adhere to the Victorian aesthetic, then you will want to choose a bath that tends towards the minimal. A plain white roll top bath with ornate claw feet makes an incredible statement in an

otherwise minimalist bathroom and creates an incomparable sense of luxury.

However, that doesn't mean that you need to forego mod cons altogether. Even the latest Jacuzzi or spa tub can be made to fit your chosen aesthetic with some wooden panelling and, done right, will easily fool the casual observer into thinking that you've gone 'full period-style' in the smallest room.

COTTAGECORE

If you do want to keep the historical feel in your home, then the simpler the better, but who says the bathroom needs to stick to the rules?

For many people, the juxtaposition of period architecture with contemporary design can



Nickel bath, The Bathroom Shop, Tenterden, www.the-bathroomshop.com

be truly stunning. After all, if the Elizabethan builders of your home didn't have a bathroom, then who's to say how you should decorate your new addition.

In this case minimalism is still the byword for many modern styles, albeit with the introduction of stainless steel features and mood lighting.

However, perhaps your home lends itself more to cottagecore? Big news in the world of

interior design in recent years, cottagecore takes an aesthetic born of country living and uses it to create a rural idyll within your property.

Think Darling Buds of May, or a pared down Cath Kidston, and add floral motifs around an oversized bath to create a cosy feel.

Again, these tubs can feature all the jets, lights and even speakers you want without looking out of place, as the 'gubbins' tend to be fairly well-hidden.



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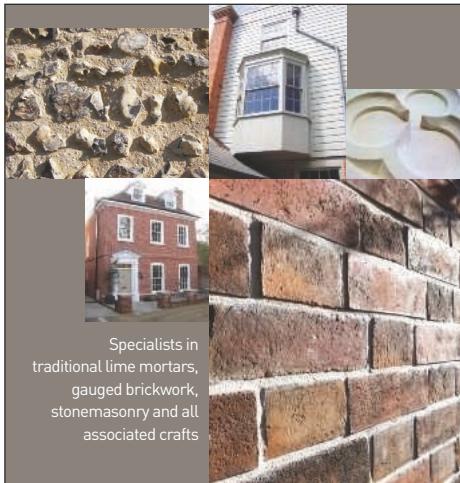


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Before and after Churchill statue plinth, Westerham, Kent

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"I see wonderful things"... Were Egyptologist Howard Carter's words on first opening the tomb of Tutankhamun in 1922.

The boy King's final resting place was festooned with beautiful artefacts both ritual and domestic, showing us that human beings have always had the desire to surround ourselves with art.

Today we may not try to take our collections with us when we pass, but our attachment to our own 'beautiful things' is no less powerful or important.

From the marbles or toys we collected as children, to the art and antiques we treasure as adults, our collections can mean a great deal to us as individuals and are a succinct expression of our personalities and passions.

Not only this, but certain antiques and collectables are also a sound financial investment. As the Romans would say: "Ars longa, vita brevis" – life is short, but art lasts forever – and a good art collection can pay for itself time and time again.



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Marchand Antiques

DECORATIVE ANTIQUE FURNITURE AND ACCESSORIES

Husband and Wife team Mark and Jackie Lock set up Marchand Antiques in 1994, they started the business very small by 'running' antiques from the back of an old Volvo Estate, selling to established dealers with retail premises in London, Sussex and Kent. They soon developed a reputation for finding high quality, on trend antiques and the business began to expand very quickly.

With a growing demand, they decided to take a small space in Alfie's Antique Market in London's Church Street, NW8. Renowned as an antiques hub for local and international trade buyers, private clients and international interior designers. The business grew at such a pace, Mark and Jackie decided to take the plunge and open their own shop on Church Street where they continued to grow their brand and reputation, working with private clients, interior designers, hoteliers and a vast list of celebrity clientele including Musicians, A-list Hollywood stars, directors and producers to name a few.

In recent years Mark and Jackie noticed that their most regular clients were visiting the shop less and buying from their website: www.marchandantiques.co.uk and Instagram account: *marchand_antiques* and after trading on Church Street for 25 years, they decided to move the operation online, working from home in St Mary's Platt near Sevenoaks where they have lived for 15 years. Keeping it in the family, their daughter



Francesca joined the team looking after their website, social media and photography.

As well as selling online, Marchand Antiques organise private sales and viewings from their home in St Mary's Platt and for clients further afield they have large display spaces in Lorford's Antiques in Tetbury, Gloucestershire and Blanchard Collective in Marlborough, Wiltshire.

They have seen the Antiques market change considerably over the years with the earlier days involving endless travelling trips to buy stock from France, Belgium, Italy, Sweden and Spain but with the internet growing and confidence



trading, Mark and Jackie have noticed a considerable change in Antique trends and tastes. In the early days, the fashion was quite fixed with the traditional country house look of Brown wood furniture, pottery and artworks along with French style Louis XV and Louis XVI furniture being the driving trends. This was followed by the French 1940's and mid-century designs and then fashion took a turn to the industrial style furniture which was very much suited to the Loft apartment style. In recent years style swiftly turned to the 1970s designs which led to vintage offerings from the later decades of the 20th century.

Things are now changing once again and no particular style seems to be dominating the Antiques trade, interior designers for both private homes and commercial hotels, restaurants and showrooms are going more for a mixed environment

using quality pieces from all of the styles and periods giving a more evolved look rather than one genre.

Marchand are happy to source pieces personally for clients and consider buying items they may no longer require.

**For more information contact Mark
07889 540789; marchandantiques@gmail.com**

with online buying, their trips became more infrequent, and they began to purchase more online from their trusted dealers across Europe with whom they had built a long-term trading relationship. This allowed them more time to focus on restorations and build relationships with dealers in the UK who have now become the main source of their stock.

Over the three decades they have been

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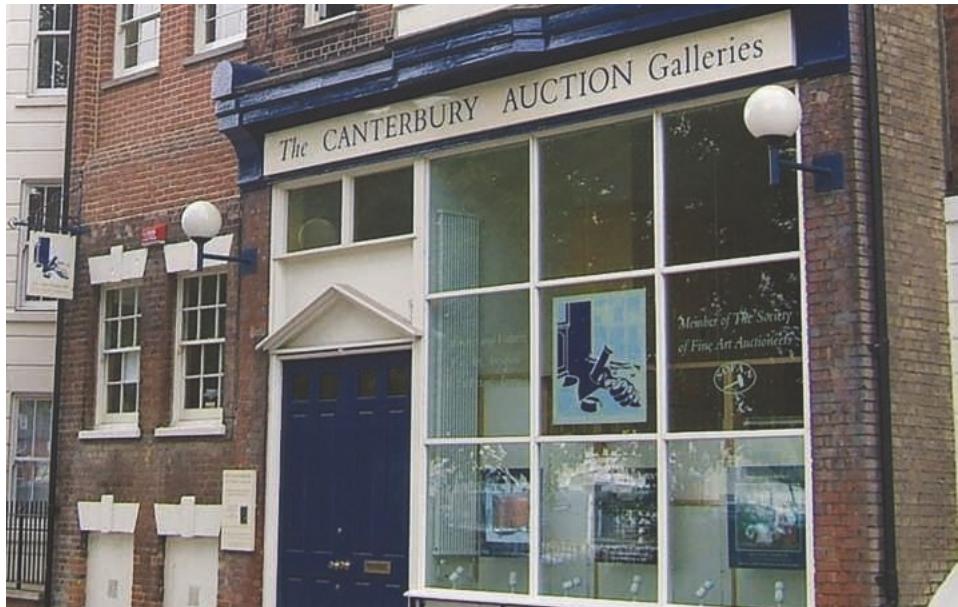
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The art of fossicking*

We all love hunting in brocante markets and antique shops. And just as much fun nowadays is scrolling through treasure on online auction websites. Here's why...



It's one of the pleasures of a trip away: discovering a little antique shop or market full of fascinating items and finding a perfect gift, wonderful curio (in my case, a quirky old ship in a bottle) or even a large investment piece of furniture or jewellery.

But why wait for a holiday to feel the pleasure of browsing through beautiful things and feeling the thrill of spotting the very vase, necklace, artwork, lamp – whatever! – that you know would be just perfect for you?

A whole world of treasure awaits online in the form of online antique auctions, bringing all the joy of hunting through brocante shops to

your computer screen. Just the thing to brighten up a dark winter's night.

Most of us know about eBay and how its auctions work but are put off by the sheer amount of scams, fakes and other pitfalls of dealing with individual sellers that you simply don't know.

In which case, online antiques auctions will be a relief. Because you're buying from auction houses for whom reputation and expertise is everything, these auctions are a lot more trustworthy. The items for sale will have been vetted by a specialist so you can bid with confidence.

* 1. To search for gold, especially in abandoned mines. 2. To rummage, especially for possible profit.



There are 'platforms' that host upcoming catalogues and live auctions from hundreds of auction houses around the UK: thesaleroom.com and easyliveauctions.com are two of the best known. Many auctioneers – usually the larger ones at the higher end of the market – have developed their own software for browsing and bidding on their dedicated websites.

Either way, many of us are aware that antiques auctions exist online but somehow feel they are for Lovejoy-like experts only, or for international clients to bid a few casual million for the latest Banksy.

Not so. Everything that you'd find in the real world – from a bric-a-brac market to a posh antique emporium – will be there, in all price ranges. Best of all, there are huge bargains to be had and you'll be bidding on a level playing field with dealers.

The real surge in online auctioneering came during Covid lockdowns, when fairs and traditional auctions had to shut down. The growth in interest carried on from there as more people became familiar with the easy process and now it's a global market, with buyers and sellers from anywhere in the world right there on your screen.

How does it work?

If you're me, you just while away a dreamy hour or two simply scrolling through fascinating catalogues, rich with gorgeous and unusual things! Put, say, 'baguette diamond' into the search field and away you go...

Items will come with an estimated value, but that IS only a guide – the price can go up or way down, unless there's a reserve on it. Auction houses will have viewing days where you can

go and see your lot in person (unless there's another Covid lockdown). But if that's not possible for you, auctioneers are happy to email you a more detailed condition report, such as measurements or more photos.

As soon as you find something you want to bid on, register in good time before the sale either with the auctioneer or on the platform.

There will be instructions on the easy process, or just give them a ring – you'll need to register a bank card. Decide whether you want to place a bid on the item (often called an 'autobid') as a starting point, but often it's worth waiting to see where bidding starts. Who knows, you could be the only person interested in that particular lot?

On sale day, gather your courage and log in to your account (reading the Ts & Cs carefully before you tick the box).

When the auction starts, a pop-up window

will show each lot as it comes up, live, and you'll be able to hear the auctioneer too. When your lot comes up, you'll be able to see bids coming in so be ready to bid quickly as the sale progresses. Your heart will be racing – the excitement is all part of the fun!

How much does it cost?

As we mentioned, read all the terms and conditions carefully as each auction house will differ. There are always fees that apply to the hammer price, such as 'commission' or 'buyer's premium' charges (as they would in a normal auction) or charges from the aggregator site if you're using one. Expect to pay anything between 10% and 30% in fees and VAT per successful bid.

Buying at an online antiques auction is fun, exciting and great for the bargain hunter, so start scrolling and see if you can track down some gold in them thar catalogues!



La danse aux boules – painted metal on a marble base by Maurice and Marcel Denis (Early 20th Century).
10 inches high. Sold for £600.



'My Face is My Fortune' was the title of this Cecil Aldin (1870-1935) Etching.

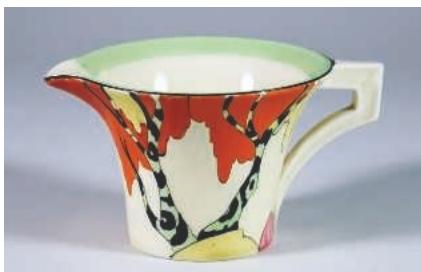
Treasure hunt

From investment jewellery to interior pieces and gifts, all these items were sold online recently by Canterbury Auction Galleries in Kent. See www.thecanterburyauctiongalleries.com for the next sale and bid live at thesaleroom.com or <http://thegalleries.live>.

Oranges and lemons alert! A gorgeous, yellow-flecked glass vase, 12ins high by Bertil Vallien (1938-2018) and a glass orange-flecked bowl for Swedish design shop, Kosta Boda. Sold for £100.



Honolulu, a delightful little daffodil jug by the always-adored Clarice Cliff, 3ins high. Sold for £160.



Plus... a 14 inch Carlton Ware 'Guinness' table lamp in the shape of a seal balancing a ball on its nose was full of quirky charm. Sold for £180.

Just gorgeous: An incredibly detailed and colourful Silver and Enamel Box from Stockwell & Co. London. Made in 1913, it measured just under 5ins in diameter. Sold for £1,900.



For fans of The Crown. A contemporary gold cluster ring set with delicious rubies and a centre solitaire diamond. Sold for £820.



Also... Both collectable and fabulous. A ladies' 18ct gold Rolex Oyster 'Datejust' wristwatch, with diamonds for numbers and sparkles round the bezel. Sold for £4,300.



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As well as homeware and furniture, the store offers myriad items for the garden, plus records,

books, military memorabilia and much, much more. It's open seven days a week with High Street parking and car parks within easy walking distance.

There are many plans going forward into 2023, one of which includes adding a tearoom.

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GEMMA HARWOOD

GEMMA HARWOOD IS AN ESTABLISHED KENT-BASED ARTIST, HAVING EXHIBITED AT THE FAIRFAX GALLERY IN THE PANTILES, TUNBRIDGE WELLS FOR MANY YEARS.

As well as displaying her work, the Gallery have also represented Gemma at numerous exhibitions in London, Hong Kong and New York. Gemma also had work displayed at the National Portrait Gallery London as a finalist in the BP Portrait Awards. While the portrait used the more traditional medium of oil on canvas, Gemma has gone on to develop her unique "Map Tree" compositions.

These highly specialised compositions use an ordinance survey map to create a tree featuring areas of interest, such as village and town names, on the leaves of the tree. To create her artwork, Gemma forms three-dimensional leaf shapes from the map.

The leaves are positioned in the shape of a tree while also retaining the geographical locations of each place in an artistic and creative viewpoint.

Gemma then uses a clear two-part art resin which holds the composition together and brings up the colour and detail in the map, like a dew drop on a leaf.

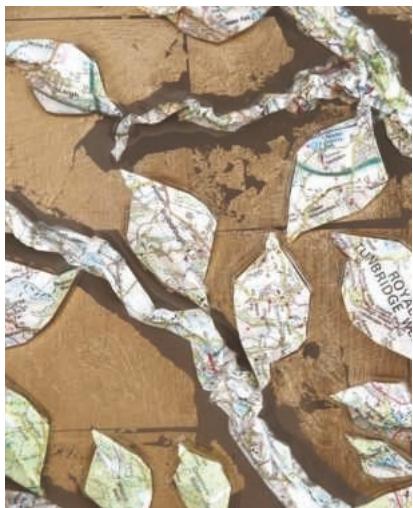
Gemma works on high-quality bespoke

handmade wooden panels supplied by Artists Surfaces based in Kent. They create a stable non-warp surface for her Map Trees. The background can either be a bespoke colour, metal leaf or even a stunning 22 carat gold leaf with a contrasting base colour beneath to enhance the perspective.

For her UK compositions, the original Ordnance Survey map works well, and as the bigger towns have a larger font, they are more prominent on the composition, with the leaf size partly dictated by the length of the town name. The mixture of town and countryside creates the colours of the leaf and the tree, which is carefully balanced against a contrasting



'Golden Weald OS Map & 22ct Gold on Panel 90 x 122cm'



Detail of 'Golden Weald'

background. Gemma has also created US versions for exhibiting in New York.

Gemma's constructions have an ideal size parameter between 60 x 60cm and 120 x 120cm. The limitation of scaling the composition down is the size of the leaves; one of the lovely elements of the work is that the viewer can see the names of towns and villages on the maps.

Gemma creates Map Tree compositions based on Kent and Sussex locations for the Fairfax Gallery, Tunbridge Wells. Clients who do not have a connection with the Kent & Sussex area or want something bespoke can arrange this through the Fairfax Gallery. In this way, clients can list the names of towns, villages or even more exact points on the map to ensure the leaves have places of particular importance,

such as where they lived, got married, and went to school, including when this involves several parts of the country.

Gemma's work can be viewed at The Fairfax Gallery, Tunbridge Wells, or on their website at fairfaxgallery.com. Commissions can be arranged by contacting the gallery at 01892 525525.



Graham Clarke



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A guide to divorce finances

by Helen Carey FPFS, Chartered Financial Planner

How assets are divided in a divorce can be a hotly contested issue. Deciding how to separate your finances will include the division of the equity in your home, savings, investments, pensions, personal belongings, and consideration of ongoing maintenance. The following information is applicable to divorces in England and Wales.

The formal agreement you make on your finances as part of a divorce, is known as the 'financial settlement'. Agreeing to a financial settlement is important because even when you're divorced, you still retain the ability to make financial claims against your ex-spouse, and there's no time limit for making these. The only way to prevent this is by having a solicitor draft a consent order, which will document your financial agreement. This will be submitted to the Court for approval and then made legally binding.

WHAT IS FAIR?

It is not the case that in every divorce the assets are divided 50/50. An equal division of assets

may be appropriate in some cases but not others.

First consideration must always be given to the needs of dependent children. In practical terms, this usually means that accommodation must be provided for the children and, therefore, the parent who looks after the children for the majority of the time.

Beyond this, the main aim in reaching a fair settlement is that both parties are left in a position of equal standing. The role each party played in the marriage is not considered an important factor when agreeing a financial settlement. Instead, the focus will be on future needs, obligations, and responsibilities.

WHAT IS A COURT ORDER

IN A DIVORCE?

The Court has the power to make a variety of orders, including the following:

- Spousal maintenance - The Court can order one party to pay to the other maintenance, usually specified as a fixed sum each month, for a specified period of time.
- Payment of a lump sum - The Court can order one party to pay the other a lump sum or a series of lump sums.
- Transfer of property - The Court can order the transfer of all forms of property, although the most common is the former matrimonial home.
- Pension sharing - The Court can order the division of pension policies, with the aim of equalising what each party will receive at retirement.

WILL THERE BE TAX TO PAY?

- The following taxes may be relevant, and early legal and financial advice is essential in understanding how these may apply:
- Income Tax – This is generally limited to any income-producing assets that are transferred as part of the financial settlement, including pensions when in payment.
- Stamp Duty Land Tax ('Stamp Duty') - If property is to be transferred, then it will be exempt from Stamp Duty provided the transfer has been ordered by the Court. Stamp Duty will be payable on the purchase of any new properties.
- Capital Gains Tax (CGT) - In general terms, the transfer of assets between spouses after



the tax year of separation will be treated as gifts and therefore liable to CGT. However private residence relief may be available in respect of the family home.

- Pensions and the Lifetime Allowance (LTA) - The LTA tax charge can be as much as 55% of benefits in excess of the LTA, so it is vital this is considered as part of any pension sharing exercise.

CONCLUSION

Every divorce is different. We strongly recommend independent legal and financial advice is sought as early as possible to ensure no party is unduly impacted.

Visit avtrinity.com, email info@avtrinity.com, or call 01892 612500 for independent financial advice. An initial meeting is on us.

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The information in this article is general in nature and does not constitute legal, tax, investment, or any other form of personalised advice.



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At Sutton Valence Preparatory School, the Forest School is a child-centred, inspirational learning approach that offers opportunities for holistic growth. It is a programme that supports play, exploration and supported risk-taking. During the Forest School activities, our children develop confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences such as den building and making toast on an open fire which the children lit in a traditional fashion.

The process helps and facilitates more than knowledge gathering. It supports our children to develop socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically and intellectually as well as creating a safe, non-judgemental nurturing environment for learners to take risks. Forest School inspires a deep and meaningful connection to the world and an understanding of how a learner develops within it; something we believe is key for our children in the world they are living in.

Our approach to risk means that learners constantly expand on their abilities by solving real-world issues, building self-belief and

resilience. There are risks in everything we do, and we grow by overcoming them. Forest School, therefore, supports the children to become healthy, resilient, creative and independent learners.

We aspire to create curiosity and interest and to learn the life skills we believe the children need to achieve their potential. Forest School provides opportunities for all children to achieve success that isn't capped, so therefore creating their own progression path through natural challenges. The children develop their communication skills, developing their language skills and ability to listen to their peers. Some become the natural leaders in a task and others develop their creative ideas or solve the problems in a task.

Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for being, development and learning. We promote the holistic development of all involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners. Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

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Wilkinson's Barn, Pluckley

Located in a tucked away, tranquil position in the heart of the Kent countryside, this beautiful unlisted 4-bedroom thatched barn is everything you could wish for in a truly rural retreat, and yet is within easy reach of the sought-after village of Pluckley and just a walk to the mainline station.

Originally a cart barn, this stunning and most unique building has undergone an incredibly sympathetic refurbishment by the

current owners, which has resulted in a very special home where there is a wonderful blend of period charm and modern living and a “wow” round every corner.

In addition, this property boasts: beautiful gardens that surround the house which are totally in keeping with the feel of the property; a newly built cart style double garage with electric roller doors; a driveway providing off-street parking, and access to some of the



most picturesque countryside the Weald has to offer. The towns of Tenterden and Ashford are 8 miles distant.

High speed link to St Pancras from Ashford A gated access leads onto a gravel driveway where there is a good amounts of off-street

parking. The oak framed cart style double garage is situated at the start of the drive and has power and light connected, remote controlled electric roller doors and a part-boarded storage area to the roof. NB: There is an electric charging point for all Type 2 cars.



The barn itself is surrounded by beautiful gardens which are completely in keeping with the character of the property. A south facing decked patio at the back of the house is a sunny place to sit and relax. Mature beech hedges make this already tranquil spot incredibly private and being at the end of a no-through lane, there are few passers-by to disturb the peace.

Wilkinson's Barn is situated in a very quiet, secluded setting towards the end of a no-through country lane on the edge of the historic village of Pluckley. The village itself offers local amenities including the well-known Black Horse public house, a butcher's shop, general store, post office, ancient church, primary school, village hall and recreation ground.

Pluckley mainline station is only a short walk away, as is the Dering Arms public house. The Cinque Port town of Tenterden and market town of Ashford are close by, both offering a comprehensive range of shopping, health and

leisure facilities. There is a wide selection of schools in the area in both the state and private sector, and the property comes within the catchment for the local Grammar schools.

*Strictly by appointment with Warner Gray.
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The details

Stunning detached unlisted period thatched property | Deceptively spacious 4 bedroom / 3 bathroom accommodation | Fully refurbished to exacting standards throughout | Beautiful gardens surrounding the house with countryside views | Cart style double garage with driveway parking | Short walk to Pluckley main line station and local pub



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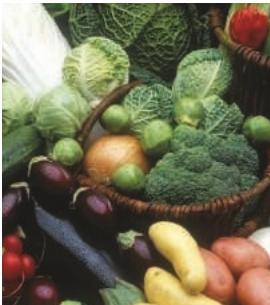


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My favourite way to eat these is with dollops of salsa verde on top or stirred through. Like this I'll happily eat a bowl of them on their own or as a side to roast chicken or fish. Otherwise, try piling them onto toast, adding to chunky soups with veggies and/or pasta, mashing them with more oil to top crostini.

STAGIONI

Contemporary Italian cooking to celebrate the seasons

Stagioni, meaning ‘seasons’ in Italian, will take you on a journey through the culinary year with recipes for every craving and occasion. Chef and food writer Olivia Cavalli brings together traditional recipes and contemporary creations with an enthusiastic aim to put the best produce of each moment centre stage.

**SERVES
4-6**

YOU WILL NEED

2 fat garlic cloves
240ml/8fl oz extra virgin olive oil, plus more for serving
2-3 large tomatoes
Handful of sage leaves, 2 sprigs of rosemary or both
1kg/2lb 4oz fresh borlotti beans in their pods (approx. 500-550g/1½lb raw podded beans) or approx. 300g/10½oz dried beans (soaked overnight)
Fine salt
Salsa Verde
20g/¾oz parsley, large handful of rocket, basil or mint leaves
3 anchovies in oil
1-2 tsp capers (optional)
about 4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1½ tbsp red wine vinegar
Fine salt (optional)

BRAISED BORLOTTI WITH SALSA VERDE

METHOD

Bash the garlic cloves with the side of a knife and peel off the skin. Keeping them whole, put in a medium pan with the oil and heat on a medium flame for 5-8 minutes until very lightly golden and fragrant. Dice the tomatoes up roughly and add to the pan. Tear the sage leaves roughly and add them too, then stir and cook for a further 5 minutes.

Add the borlotti beans, then pour enough water in to just cover them. Bring to the boil then immediately reduce to a medium simmer and leave to cook, uncovered, for 75-90 minutes, topping up with water whenever needed so the beans are always just covered. The time varies depending on the freshness of the beans (dried tend to need longer) so just keep tasting them. They should be lovely and soft but retaining their shape with a few bursting from their skins, on the edge of mushy.

At the end of cooking time, the water and oil should have thickened and become saucy. Season with around 1 tsp of salt, or to taste, and stir through a glug of extra virgin olive oil before serving with salsa verde.

SALSA VERDE

Remove any coarse stalks from the parsley. Place the parsley, rocket or herbs on a chopping board and use a sharp knife to chop very finely. Put the anchovies on top and chop until well-blended, then repeat with the capers, if using. Transfer to a bowl and whisk in the oil and vinegar. Taste, adding a touch of salt or a little more vinegar, if desired. It should be a thick-ish but drizzle-able sauce.

SERVES
4-6

MUSHROOM FRITTATA

YOU WILL NEED

Approx. 300g/10½oz mixed mushrooms (cleaned, trimmed and cut into 3mm slices)

2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

1 small garlic clove, grated or minced very finely

1 tbsp finely chopped parsley

6 eggs

Approx. 70g/2½oz Parmesan, finely grated

2 heaped tbsp butter

Fine salt

METHOD

Use a large frying pan that's suitable for using under the grill and set it over a high heat. Make sure the pan is big enough so that the mushrooms can lie in one layer or spread them across two pans.

Throw the mushrooms in when the pan is hot, add a good pinch of salt and leave to cook for around 3-4 minutes without touching – this helps them to colour and release their juices. When you see them turning golden, reduce the heat to medium and continue cooking for another 3-4 minutes, stirring continuously, until the pan looks quite dry.

Add the oil, garlic and parsley and cook for another minute, stirring continuously until the garlic is fragrant, being careful not to let it burn. Remove from the heat and set aside.

Preheat your grill to medium. Whisk the eggs thoroughly in a bowl and season well with salt. Add the prepared mushrooms and Parmesan and whisk to combine.

Melt the butter in a pan over a medium-low heat. When it begins to foam, tip the eggs in, swirling the pan gently. Turn the heat down to low and cook for around 5 minutes, until the bottom has set. Put the pan under the grill for 2-3 minutes until the top has just set. Remove from the heat, slide onto a plate and serve.



WIN A COPY OF STAGIONI

For your chance to win a copy of *Stagioni*, please email your name, address and telephone number to:

dawn@conservationnews.co.uk

Closing date: Friday 24th February

Extracted from: *Stagioni: Contemporary Italian Cooking to Celebrate the Seasons* by Olivia Cavalli (Pavilion, HarperCollins Publishers). Image credit - by Sophie Davidson



Frying mushrooms in a dry pan might sound odd but it's a reliable way to avoid that slimy texture that often puts people off. Mixing a few varieties of mushrooms will give the best flavour and if you can find fresh porcini and don't mind paying a bit more, you'll thank yourself later.

COCKTAIL HOUR

There are thousands, if not millions, of cocktails in the world, with all sorts of flavours and names. But most of them are really, in essence, just twists on a handful of classic drinks.

The Cocktail Edit is built around the 12 classics I make the most, the Martini, the Negroni, the Manhattan and so on – the drinks you'll most certainly know. Each chapter encompasses one of these, as well as six variations on the theme; some of them are related classics, some are contemporary, a few are recipes by me.

Alice Lascelles



WIN A COPY OF THE COCKTAIL EDIT

For your chance to win a copy of *The Cocktail Edit*, please email your name, address and telephone number to:
dawn@conservationnews.co.uk

Closing date: Friday 24th February

Extracted from: *The Cocktail Edit* by Alice Lascelles (Quadrille).
Photography: Laura Edwards



WHITE NEGRONI

If you like the taste of Campari, the French gentian liqueur Suze will almost certainly be up your street. It has less of the smoky-sweet/rhubarb notes, and more parched herbs and citrus peel. But its texture and bittersweetness are of the same intensity. A fun substitute for Campari, not just for the taste, but for the golden colour, too.

25ml gin

25ml Suze

25ml Cocchi Americano

GLASS: rocks

GARNISH: grapefruit twist

METHOD: stir on ice



THE MARTINI

You could make a thousand Martinis and never make the same one twice. And that's why, I think, this incremental drink so endlessly fascinates.

I'm strongly of the view that a Martini should be stirred, rather than shaken. You want it poised, dense and silky, rather than perturbed.

50ml gin

10ml dry Vermouth

1 dash orange bitters (optional)

GLASS: cocktail glass

GARNISH: twist and/or olive

METHOD: stir and strain



TUCKED AWAY IN BUSTLING HEADCORN HIGH STREET IS THE INCREDIBLE TAP 17 MICRO BAR OWNED BY KELLI AND PAUL AND TWO OTHER LOCALS.

Thhasn't been there long – it opened its doors for the first time in May 2021 and, quite honestly, it's never looked back. It went from strength to strength with locals flocking in as well as people from further afield to enjoy the lively, but cosy atmosphere.

This isn't just another bar, it's not even just another pub, or just a place where you can relax with a drink or two and listen to a wide range of music – it's much more than that.

The size of the place is tiny – minute in fact – seating downstairs is probably limited to about 15 people, but this makes the cosiness and



Cozy nights ON TAP

incredibly friendly atmosphere more appealing. When you enter, it seems as if everyone knows everyone and it's like being with one big group – so if you go alone or with others you are sure to leave with more friends than when you started!

There are seats in the garden, which in the warm weather was lovely, but for the now cooler days and evenings there is an upstairs seating area decorated in a rustic, homely style so you can almost feel you are in your own home.

Paul's dream to open a bar that sold craft beer was at the heart of the venture and in 2021 that opportunity came when the premises at 17 High Street became available. They sell a wide range of craft beers of various strengths, with styles ranging from pale to dark and flavours such as Rhubarb Streisand and Five Dollar

Shake – a music theme being very much part of the underlying ethos of this place – and also six different draught beers.

But they sell some excellent wines as well: supporting our English wine heritage they stock a selection of Chapel Down including the excellent Bacchus, but also the increasingly popular Picpoul from the Languedoc region of France, as well as an Australian Chardonnay which is lovely – not too oaked but lots of flavour as well as a Sauvignon Blanc – and a New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc. On the reds they currently sell a Tempranillo from Spain, an Argentinian Malbec, a Shiraz and that ever-popular Portuguese favourite Porta 6. You'll be pleased to know that the prices are reasonable too – with something for everyone!

If you are feeling a little peckish, Tap 17 offers a range of cold tapas, but there is also an arrangement with local pop-up food wagons – one of which called Bun Buddy sells gourmet burgers – and they hope to develop connections with more local pop-up suppliers. This is different – enjoy a drink or two – pop

TAP 17 micro bar

outside for a burger, bring it inside, and continue to enjoy your evening with friends. Wednesday nights and Saturday afternoons are the times for live music. There is not really any single style – Kelli calls it eclectic, from jazz to folk to favourite pop and rock songs – again something for everyone. As well as regular music they are putting on a range of events such as Monday quiz nights, cocktail nights, cheese and wine tastings, general wine tastings and there will be a Christmas market and carols with mulled wine and mince pies – never a dull moment! It's definitely worth a visit before the end of the year.

Opening times:

Monday to Thursday 12 noon – 10pm

Friday and Saturday 12 noon – 11pm

Sunday 12 noon – 7pm

For the latest events or to book a table please call Tap 17 on 01622 891429, see their Facebook page, or email info@tap17.co.uk

Rowena Hawtin (DIPWSET) has been involved in wine for over 30 years and runs regular wine tastings in Kent both face-to-face and online. Please see this website for the latest events: www.discoverthevine.co.uk



CURIOSER AND CURIOUSER!

BRINGING SEASONAL FEAST TO EVENTS, FUNCTIONS AND WEDDINGS

The Curious has grown and evolved over the last seven years, starting out as an eatery with its own allotment to a multipurpose event space and catering company that aims to take guests through the looking glass to a magical world of truly unique dining experiences, with community, sustainability and fantastic food at its heart.

Supper Clubs and a variety of in-house events keep our event space busy, while our catering business is kept on its toes with an eclectic mix of celebrations. Owned by sisters Lesley and Nicole and run with a great team, including Chef Ollie, this is very much a family business, filled with people who are passionate about what they do.

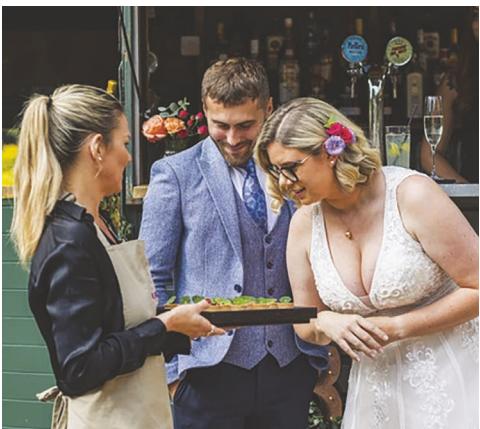
The journey began with a dream to open an eatery and bring people together. Growing up in Botswana and traveling and working around the world the sisters' brought a variety of skills and ideas to the table. Ollie joined them soon after, bringing invaluable experience from Tom Kerridge's kitchen at The Hand and Flowers and from Richard Branson's private Island where Nicole and Ollie worked together.

Using their collective skills and enthusiasm for what they do, they enjoy working with people to curate a perfect experience and make their celebration super special. Each dish has its own story and background that is unique to each client. From elegantly plated food in the middle of the woods to bubbling cauldrons over a wood fire, The Curious is always looking for new and immersive dining experiences while also enjoying the classic, simple elegance of



traditional dishes. They take a fanciful approach to hosting each event with an extremely imaginative outlook with particular attention to detail.

The use of local suppliers, seasonal produce and our own allotment assists us on our sustainability journey. We are extremely lucky to have a host of fantastic local producers and suppliers to choose from in Kent. Sustainability is very important to us here at The Curious and we are always striving to make changes, however small to inch closer and closer to a sustainable future as a business. We were very proud to be finalists in the Taste of Kent Sustainable Food and Drink Business of the Year in 2021 and winner of the Kent Life Customer Service Award in 2020. www.thecuriouseatery.co.uk



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