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Come to the Table: Food blogger spills secrets of imperfect hosting

FYOUR GOAL is to make and keep friends, then forget Pin-L terest perfection.

That's the message food blogger Abby Turner relates in her new book, "The Living Table: Recipes and Devotions for Everyday Get Togethers" (DaySpring, April 2021).

"Make your home too party perfect and no one will have you over to their place," she told me last week, when I called to congratulate her on her book. "If you invite people into an authentic home with the mess of life, you aren't intimidating."

Well, heck, then come on over!

In 208 deliciously photographed pages (where the food and its presentation look pretty perfect to me), Turner nudges us all toward approachable hospitality, as she doles out oodles of recipes for life's big and small occasions from game night to bridal brunch — with a heavy helping of Bible lessons on the side.

What drew me to her book. however, was not the recipes nor the devotionals, but rather the philosophy of the table as the heart of the home. Forget the hearth; the table is where we catch up, crack up, open up, dream up, speak up and eat up.

And it's where Turner would like more people to gather more often with less stress.

But social media has turned off many would-be hosts, she said. Do the candles really need to match the cocktail napkins? Do the dishes all need to be the same? Do I need to wait to buy a table with a leaf?

No. no and no.

"These misperceptions have scared many away from inviting others into their homes and enjoying the connection that happens



AT HOME WITH Marni Jameson

when people sit down around the table over food," Turner says.

It's a sentiment she echoes in her blog, "A Table Top Affair," as well as through her popular Instagram and Pinterest posts: Keep gatherings simple, the recipes easy and the focus on the people, not the presentation.

Turner, who is single and 32, and who lives with her two Papillons in Bentonville, Arkansas, where she has a day job working for Walmart in marketing, has figured this out by doing it. Here's what else she spilled during our conversation:

Marni: What inspired you to become a food blogger and to write "The Living Table"?

Abby: When I was in my 20s, I moved around a lot for my work in college athletics. While that was a fun experience, I had little time for creating community or friendships. My mom encouraged me to

host a dinner party, which I did, even though I only had a table for two. I had friends over, then more friends. That led to my wanting to share my recipes and hosting tips. I figured if I didn't know how to meet others, that probably others were out there also starving for community.

Marni: I thought I held a record of moving to six houses in four

years in the same area. But you lived in six different states in five years. What did that teach you?

Abby: When you move so frequently, you develop a formula to find your people, to find where you fit in. The first couple times were hardest. Then I realized that you don't have to meet people just

SEE MARNI, 4H





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Did you know?

Disinfecting garden tools can help ensure the long-term health of plants and vegetables. According to the University of Minnesota Extension, plant pathogens, including bacteria, fungi and viruses, cause diseases that can damage and even kill plants.

These pathogens can be transferred to bleach corrodes metal and can therefore and Prevention notes that isopropyl alplants and infect them through bits of soil and plant debris that get stuck on common gardening tools, including shovels and pruners.

render tools that require sharp edges ineffective.

A homemade solution that's nine parts water and one part bleach can be used to Avoid using strictly bleach to disinfect effectively clean shovels, spades and garden tools, as the UME notes that rakes. The Centers for Disease Control

cohol (rubbing alcohol) in concentrations of 70 percent or more can effectively disinfect surfaces for bacteria, fungi and viruses. Such a solution can be used to disinfect hand pruners and other small hand tools.



MARNI FROM PAGE 2H

like vou. Find ones who share an interest, like a love of sports, or museums, that's enough.

Marni: Talk to me about the table, and why it's such an elemental part of our homes.

Abby: The pandemic has made us especially aware that we are not designed to do life alone. We realized more than ever that something so powerful happens when we sit at the table with others. It's where we connect and share our brokenness and vulnerabilities. Bringing people into your mess is life, and the table is central to that journey. It doesn't matter whether you eat in the dining room or picnic on the lawn. The power is in coming together and connecting.

Marni: What are some of your fa-

vorite hosting tricks? Abby: One of my go-to tabletop

tips is my all-occasion centerpiece. Get a wooden flower box, the kind people hang outside windows. Fill it with a faux boxwood garland or moss, to create a base with structure. Then top it off with small pumpkins in the fall, cravons for back to school, Easter eggs in spring.

Another go-to is the wooden board. If you see a charcuterie board on sale, buy it. If it has a lip, buy it, even if it's not on sale. They are so versatile. I use them for serving everything from breakfast items to desserts. They make anything you serve look so cute. I have 25 to 30 charcuterie boards that would rival anyone's collection.

Marni: Besides concerns about making their homes party perfect, what else prevents people from opening their doors?

Abby: The worry that nobody will

come. I used to worry about that, too. Now I say, are you kidding? Here's the shocker: People want to connect. They want to be invited.

Marni: What do you wish more people knew?

Abby: That you don't have to be Martha Stewart or Rachael Ray to do this. Lean on your grocery stores. They have so many prepared items ready to go. Don't spend a lot of time in the kitchen. And don't worry if your plates don't match. When everything is matching, you risk giving the impression of perfection. If someone asks me for a coaster, I have done too nice a job.

Marni Jameson is the author of six home and lifestyle books, including "Downsizing the Family Home – What to Save, What to Let Go," and "Downsizing the Blended Home -When Two Households Become One." She can be contacted at www.marniiameson.com.



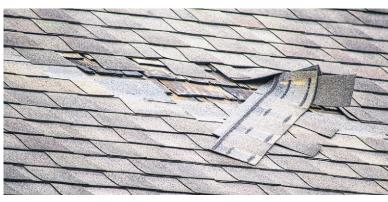
Drawn to the table — "Stop wasting time waiting for the perfect family, house or table, and start opening your home, cooking for friends and building your tribe one gathering at a time," says author Abby Turner. Photo courtesy of Molly Anne Sandefur/The Living Table.



What causes curled shingles?

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

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



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

Some shingles may be curling because they're defective. Fortified Roofing, a New Jersey-based

roofing company that specializes in the repairing and replacing of various roofing configurations, advises homeowners to contact a local roofing professional to diagnose the cause of the curling. Doing so quickly can prevent curled shingles from contributing to more widespread damage.

Moisture and poor ventilation may be contributing to curled shingles as well. Homeowners with attics in their home may see curled shingles on their roofs because moisture is building up in their poorly ventilated attics. In addition to causing damage such as curled shingles, a poorly ventilated attic allows moisture to build up, potentially contributing to mold growth. Mold presents a

host of additional problems, including some that can adversely affect the health of a home's inhabitants.

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

Curled shingles are unsightly and can pose a significant threat to a home if not addressed promptly. Homeowners can protect themselves and their roofs by working with skilled roofing professionals, who can diagnose issues like curled shingles and offer the right solutions.

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