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Make your home an autumn oasis

By Amanda Eck



Photo provided

I love when the sun starts to set a little earlier and my thoughts turn to warm blankets, comfort food, and lazy rainy Sundays (hoping to see some much needed rain this fall). Even though our family schedule seems to pick up during the autumn months - basketball practice, after school activities, etc. - we try to take time in the evenings to slow down. We even have an 8 p.m. no electronics rule when school starts (that includes Mom and Dad). This helps us as a family focus on spending time reading, playing board games, or sneaking in a cup of hot cocoa before bed. I truly enjoy making our home cozy and inviting so we can be reminded to take time and enjoy one another during the autumn season and rest up before the crazies of the holidays hit.

Here are five of my favorite ways to summon autumn's splendor:

1) Fall Foliage: Once the trees start to turn to shades of orange and red I love to trim a few branches and bring them in. Now here in the Bay Area that might not happen until November, so I do have a few faux branches on hand I use in September and October. Local craft stores like Hobby Lobby or Michael's are great places to shop for faux branches. Try to look for stems that are realistic and avoid fake flowers. Instead, look for branches with leaves, seed pods, or small acorns on them. And of course once the leaves start to change grab your clippers and head outside.

2) Candles: If you asked my husband he would tell you I am a candle hoarder. I love candles. I especially love yummy fall scented candles. Pumpkin spice, cinnamon, and anything that smells like coffee! I also keep a stash of unscented candles. They make great accents for dinner parties or scattered through out the house to bring in a warm glow as the sun starts to set. If I had my way, our home would only be lit by candles when the sun sets - no lamps for me!

3) Fresh gourds and mini pumpkins: I was at Safeway last week and they already had their mini pumpkins out, so grab them while you can. Place mini gourds and pumpkins on the entry table or on your coffee table gathered in a bowl. If orange is not your color, try using the white mini-boo pumpkins; they coordinate with any décor from contemporary to farmhouse. And don't forget your front porch; large pumpkins are not just for Halloween anymore.

4) Fuzzy throws: I love to bring out the blankets when the temps begin to dip in the evenings. Pottery Barn has some beautiful cashmere blankets in warm autumn colors. For a less expensive option HomeGoods carries an array of blankets this time of year. Throw one over the sofa, on your favorite chair, or at the foot of your bed. There is nothing more comforting than a fuzzy throw on a chilly afternoon.

5) Bake something: And last but not least - bake something yummy! Even if baking is not your thing, head to Trader Joe's and pick up a box of pumpkin bread. No one will ever know. Those who know me, know I don't enjoy cooking or baking, but for some reason when fall arrives I make an exception. All things pumpkin for this girl. I even add some organic canned pumpkin to my morning smoothie. If you're not into sweets, then pull out the Crockpot and try some new fall soup recipes. Pinterest is a great resource for Crockpot ideas.

I hope you enjoy my easy autumn tips and I wish you a wonderful, cozy week!

Amanda's Comfort Soup

(this can be made in the Crockpot or on the stove)

INGREDIENTS

2 cups of chopped celery

2-3 cups of chopped carrots

3-4 cloves of garlic (I use Trader Joe's frozen garlic)

4 cups of chicken or vegetable broth

2 cans of diced tomatoes

1 can of white beans

Chopped spinach or kale (optional)

Seasonings: sea salt, garlic powder, onion powder, Italian or any herb seasoning

1 package of cheese tortellini (in the refrigerated or frozen section)

DIRECTIONS

Sautee celery, carrots and garlic in olive oil until soft. Add all the other ingredients except tortellini (this will be added 5-10 minutes before serving). Bring to a boil then reduce heat to medium low for 30

minutes to 1 hour or set Crockpot for 4-5 hours on high.

Enjoy!



Photos provided



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As the Owner and Principal Designer of Lamorinda-based Amanda Carol Interiors, Amanda Eck believes your home's interior should be both approachable and well-appointed. She often asserts, "Beauty is a necessity." With a distinct sense of style that mixes contemporary and classic design she fashions spaces that are both elegant and inviting. Her design aesthetic is inspired by anything visual but especially fashion, architecture and art. Visit <http://amandacarolinteriors.com> for more design ideas.

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