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JUNE ARCHIVED "WEEKLY DISH"

For the week beginning Tuesday, June 24th, 2008.

Organizing isn't just about physical space and mental space. It's about financial space too. The other day I was at a local store in Nevada City looking for a wedding card. Never the less, I was wondering around and found a purse that I instantly fell in love with. The only problem, the price tag read \$216! "Yikes!" I instantly said in my mind. But then that "yikes" turned into a series of voices trying to rationalize the fact that "I need this purse", or so I thought! The fact of the matter is that our minds and the wonderful world of retail love to play tricks on us. Of course we want what we want. And of course the retail stores also want us to want what we want. Honestly, I've been contemplating going back and buying that purse until I read this article,

Putting Prices Into Focus ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/06/21/AR2008062100149.html?hpid=smartliving)

[dyn/content/article/2008/06/21/AR2008062100149.html?hpid=smartliving](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/06/21/AR2008062100149.html?hpid=smartliving)), sent to me by my father. Read it and you'll agree...

So the next time your trying to rationalize an expensive ticket item, remember that your finances need to be organized, as well as your physical and mental spaces.

Enough said.

For the week beginning Tuesday, June 17th, 2008.

How many times have you found yourself looking for something in the pantry or overstock supply cabinet that you know you have, but just can't locate? Here's a simple, easy, and quick way to put all the hunting around to rest. I've created a Pantry Inventory log. Use it to keep track of what you have and what you don't. It's a good idea to tape it to the inside cabinet door and keep a pen with it. As you use an item check it off the inventory list. When you buy more of an item, add it to the list. It's just that simple! (To get a copy of the Pantry Inventory Log send me an email!)

For the week beginning Tuesday, June 10th, 2008.

This past weekend I celebrated my son's 1st birthday by having our close friends and family over for a BBQ. When it got close to time to eat, multiple people were in the kitchen trying to prepare the food. It was then that I realize (and paused for a sigh of relief) that function and flow in the kitchen is absolutely necessary, especially when entertaining. Here are some quick tips and thoughts that passed through my mind and will help you to quickly get your kitchen flowing the way it should:

1. When you're cooking at the stove try and imagine what all you would use there. Some things you should have within ARMS REACH include: all cooking utensils, pots & pans, potholders, and spices & seasonings.
2. When you're unloading the dishwasher you shouldn't have to take more than 3 steps to put any one dish away. Plates, bowls, cups, mugs, and silverware should be the closest to the dishwasher, as you probably use these most often.
3. For heaven sakes, keep your refrigerator organized. It's so much easier to find something when you need it! Some common categories that should work in everybody's household include: (and yes, labels do work in the fridge too :O) Dairy, Condiments, Jams & Spreads, Dressings & Toppings, Drinks, Left-Over's, Children's Food (this works especially good for infants that often eat other things than we do), and Breads.
4. Organize your pantry to include an entertaining section. Entertaining dishes are often stowed away in the kitchen where they're rarely used and take up valuable space. I've found it much more functional to keep them in the pantry. If you have awkward shelves that don't store these items well, invest in baskets or pull out bins...and make sure you label!
5. Keep an "over-stock" area somewhere close to your kitchen. Anything you can imagine can go here. This works especially well if you're a Costco or Sam's Club shopper. Some items I can think of include: Ziploc Baggies, Tin Foil, Napkins, Paper towels, Hand & Dish Soap, Cooking Oil, Plastic Utensils, etc. You can also include your over-stock cleaning supplies for the kitchen as well, but just make sure they're separated from the food.

The next time you're having people over and know they'll be in your kitchen helping prepare & clean up the food, make sure you fist run through this quick list. You'll be amazed and happy that your kitchen is flowing and functioning they way it should!

For the week beginning Tuesday, June 3rd, 2008.

This time of year always makes me want to be outdoors! What better way to enjoy the summer weather than to bring your inside out! By making a porch, deck, or garden area into a "gathering" place, you too can instantly enjoy the outdoors right out your front (or back) door. Here is a short and sweet article by HGTV.com (http://www.hgtv.com/hgtv/dc_design_porch_sunroom/article/0,,HGTV_3380_3896965,00.html) that gives "how-to's" on creating your perfect oasis!

Creating an Outdoor Room

Budget-friendly inspiration for planning and decorating your outdoor space

Whether you have a big backyard or a tiny patio, the key to designing for outdoor living is implementing your plan in steps, says Elyse Santoro, a Miami-based interior designer/decorator. "It doesn't have to happen all at once, and it doesn't have to be overwhelming or cost a fortune," she says. Start increasing your home's square footage today with our budget-friendly outdoor decorating tips.

Where to Put Your Outdoor Room

First, go *inside* your house and check out the views looking out. Placing the room in a good relationship to the house helps give the feeling that your outdoor room is "an extension of your home," Santoro says. "Make sure... you have easy access to get there," she says, whether or not it's physically connected to the house.

An outdoor room can include anything from an attached, screened-in porch to a gazebo to a landscaped area with a bench. If it's an independent area, such as a gazebo, create a passageway with foliage or hardscaping to visually connect it to the house. "You want to erase the fact that you've gone outside," says Atlanta-based landscape designer Patricia Thernell. She advises using the same flooring material outside as inside, or using plants to frame the doorway to your outdoor room.

Defining Your Outdoor Space

"The best way to define an outdoor room is by the activity that will take place in it," says Mary Donovan, an interior and landscape designer in Atlanta. Donovan interviews homeowners on what they plan to do in their outdoor spaces. Often the answer includes several purposes such as entertaining, family dining, playing games and reading. Figure out if you need one large space or several smaller rooms, each with its own purpose.

Multiple outdoor rooms don't necessarily require acres of land, Donovan says. Postage-stamp sized front lawns and narrow side yards can be landscaped to be rooms in themselves and not just passageways. "It

can be a shady quiet, meandering space with hydrangeas, hostas, moss and a dripping wall fountain, and other plants trained to grow vertically up against the house or on a lattice," Donovan says.

An outdoor room has to be functional, but it also has to be engaging or you'll never use it. Santoro asks clients to think about places they've traveled to that they absolutely love. "If they say they love Tuscany or the vineyards in northern California, I ask them to remember what it felt like there and to create their outdoor space with elements of that place."

Decorating Your Outdoor Room

Water Features

Landscape designers, interior decorators and architects all agree: Water is one of the most important elements in an outdoor room. The sound of water "really creates a serene setting," says Thernell. Even if you're creating a room for entertaining and dining rather than meditating, "it's still nice to hear the splash when you're sitting around the table." But you don't have to spring for a pond or waterfall. A container water garden or a tabletop fountain works perfectly, says Santoro.

Flooring

Since flooring defines a space, put down some kind of hardscaping, whether it's a deck or a stone floor or a concrete slab. If your outdoor room has a floor of grass, "you'll never go out there," says Santoro. "If there's no floor it doesn't feel like a room." Concrete flooring can be stamped to resemble flagstone or brick, or stained in myriad colors. Plus, it's less expensive than a stone floor.

Fireplaces

A cozy fire or fireplace is becoming a staple for outdoor rooms, because a hearth can extend the season of your outdoor room by several months. Consider two-sided fireplaces or portable fire pits.

Plants

Plants soften hard edges (such as concrete flooring) and add a sense of life, warmth and comfort. Santoro, who's also an expert in feng shui, likes jade plants, miniature orange trees and potted philodendron in sheltered areas, and pines and bamboo to define outdoor areas. Or, choose plants based on the feelings you want to evoke in the space. For example, a meditative outdoor room works best in shade, surrounded with ferns and hosta with ligustrum to define borders. Left to grow naturally, a ligustrum hedge looks woodsy and informal, or you can trim it to define a more formal outdoor room.

