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STYLE GUIDES

Expert advice on finding your flair — from head, to toe, to dinner table

BY KARA BASKIN | PHOTOS BY MICHAEL DISKIN

For me, September still means “back to school,” even though I haven’t been in school for years. In junior high and high school, I’d painstakingly compose my goals for the upcoming season in a diary, detailing soulful aspirations like “stop wearing turtlenecks,” “get a boyfriend,” and “sit at a better lunch table.” Now that I’m an adult, my fall wishes have matured a bit: now I want to throw a dinner party without poisoning someone and rework my wardrobe so I don’t look like Bette Midler all the time. Do you feel me, readers?

We all have areas that could use improvement. And whether you want better clothes or a cooler clique, most of these desires are ultimately about elevating your individual sense of style. With this in mind, I decided to consult a few experts in their respective fields — from fashion to food to home organization — for advice. Think of them as a small “dream team” ready to give us all a well-rounded education in personal style. They’ve provided quick and easy pointers for the fall, revealing how to dress your best, command the room at a cocktail party, and even decline your boss’s Facebook friendship with grace. (Like!)



HOME ORGANIZATION

My home is my sanctuary. It's where I take refuge from humanity and watch back-to-back episodes of *Celebrity Rehab* without guilt. It also resembles the set of *Grey Gardens*, even though I try to clean every Saturday.

Enter Kyle Elizabeth Freeman, the soothing mastermind behind Cloud 9 Organize & Redesign. She helps clients reimagine their spaces, leveraging items they already own — and she won't judge if you live in an abode (or a dorm room) that is, to put it charitably, the size of a freight elevator. Since you're going to be seeing a lot of it during the colder months ahead, Freeman offered up some simple ideas for making the time more tolerable.

She's a big proponent of mixing Craigslist finds with signature items, like lamps, rugs, and curtains, to add pizzazz. If the idea of bartering for a couch with a possible sociopath frightens you, Freeman has a solution: Crocodile Tears (crocodiletears-keyse.blogspot.com). This Boston-based site curates Craigslist's best, so you needn't scroll through endless photos of possibly stained loveseats. Other great spots for discount furniture and funky decor? She names Sunshine Lucy's (93 Holland Street, Somerville, 617.776.2011) and Eddie's Furniture (95 Elm Street, Somerville, 617.666.1457), both great sources for pre-loved décor. Freeman — whose home has been featured in many design magazines — admits, "65 to 70 percent of what's in my house is from Craigslist or low-end vintage stuff." And those of you sharing a room should check out Flor tiles from flor.com. There, you can design your own flooring with any combination of colors; Freeman says it can function as a handy dividing line.

Finally, when it comes time to clean, take things one step at a time to avoid paralysis. "The word 'makeover' can be daunting and create an all-or-nothing mentality for people on a budget," Freeman says. "Instead of starting with a whole room, just set a goal of one shelf, whether it stores books or knick-knacks. Take everything off the shelf and put it into piles of things you love and things you don't. Only put back what you love. Less is more when it comes to being able to really see what's left. This small project will very likely inspire you to tackle more and more spaces." And, thus zen-ified, you and I can focus on truly important autumn goals — like sitting at a better lunch table.

The Dream Team

Need to tap the experts for extra advice? Here's how to find them.

The Fashion Doctors
661-843-9554
thefashiondoctors.com

Oh My Gauche
75 Arlington Street, Suite
500, Boston
617.956.9900
ohmygaucheinc.com

Naz Kupelian Salon
311 Woburn Street,
Lexington
781-676-7791
nazkupeliansalon.com

Season to Taste
2447 Massachusetts
Avenue, Cambridge
617.826.9037
seasonatotastecatering.com

Cloud 9 Organize & Redesign
617-524-5815
cloud9or.com