

YOU GO GRILL!

Gadgets and a tasty sauce that will improve your BBQ experience



KARL LOHNES
CREATING SPACES

Grilling season is officially upon us! It's a great excuse to take the heat outside, while basking in the nice weather and mingling with friends and family.

Whether you're cooking meats and veggies, a pizza or a sweet smoky treat, the barbecue can handle it all — no need to turn on the oven.

I've gathered helpful tools that elevate the outdoor chef's experience so you can focus on making wow-worthy meals. There's even a cleaning assistant involved. Check out a few of my faves — and happy

summer grilling!

A WATCHFUL EYE

Who hasn't been pre-occupied by a badminton game — or a cocktail or two — only to discover you've burnt dinner? Fortunately, this nifty device helps monitor your meat so it comes out perfectly.

The Meater Plus (\$150, Meater.com) wireless meat thermometer pings your phone when the food is ready. The internal probe measures doneness.

Plus, it's got an external probe to let you know if your grill surroundings are too hot. Another round of badminton or a drink, or both?

SERVE UP GOOD TASTE

When you find a good one, you



Never char or serve your meat raw again. Meater Plus, \$150. Visit <https://store-ca.meater.com>

buy a case! I'm always on the hunt for an exceptional summer condiment or marinade for grilling.

The WATC (Weekend At The Cottage) Original BBQ Sauce (\$10, weekendatthecottage.com) is a tasty winner in my grill books.

The punchy tomato-based sauce works as a marinade with every meat and seafood and is a flavourful condiment. (I use it in lieu of ketchup for fries and hash browns.)

It's made in Canada with all-natural ingredients, no preservatives, colour or additives and it's gluten-free. Dip it, spread it or grill it — it's all-summer delicious!

THE OUTDOOR KITCHEN

Whether cooking with a portable hibachi, disposable barbecue or electric grill, the Gymax Outdoor Kitchen Foldable Grilling Station (\$140, Walmart) keeps everything at hand.

The sturdy lightweight aluminium frame folds for easy transportation when camping, travelling or setting up a grilling station away from home.

With a generous top-surface area, two side tables, lower shelf and zippered bag, it's easy to set up an outdoor kitchen no matter where you are.

The steel windscreen design

blocks wind and retains heat for faster cooking. Bonus: It's the perfect size for a balcony. When not grilling, use it as a cute outdoor entertaining beverage centre.

THE CLEANUP CREW

Scrubbing a dirty grill after use the next day is the pits. Luckily, there is a robot that can do the work for you. Yes, just like those zippy hands-free saucer-shaped vacuum cleaners, the Grillbot Automatic Grill Cleaner (\$205, Amazon.ca) is essentially a Roomba for your barbecue.

Place it on a dirty grill, turn it on and it automatically gets scrubbing and cleaning. It features three electric motors that power its wire brushes and propel it against your grill.

A computer chip inside controls movement, speed and the direction of the brushes so you don't have to stick around until the job is done. The Grillbot will sound an alarm to let you know it's finished!

Now that there's a robot for the floors and grill, I'm waiting for someone to invent the one that cleans the bathtub.

Do you have a decor dilemma or want more decor inspiration? Follow Karl on Instagram at [Karl_Lohnes](https://www.instagram.com/Karl_Lohnes).

The evolution of cottage chic

Design trend is for those looking for joy in the simple things of life

BREN PETRUNICK

Despite its descriptor, an "effortless" interior isn't necessarily without effort, but once you've nailed this laid-back style, you'll never look back.

There's good reason that people seek out the retreat of remote, rural living — not only for its cozy, comfortable style, but for the tranquil vibe it inspires as well.

This trend has been building for some time now, through "cottagecore" décor, and becoming even more pronounced in the wake of the pandemic.

Fast-forward to today, and "cottage chic" continues to be a highly sought-after aesthetic, although it has evolved into a more refined version of its former self.

Here's how this trend has transitioned over the years, and how it's playing out in lake houses, urban apartments, and everything in

between.

ORGANIC INFLUENCES

Whether you're incorporating organic materials into your décor, or nature is finding its way into your home in other ways, outdoor inspiration instantly softens a space, creating a sense of comfort and connection.

While earthy materials such as wood, stone and natural fibres will always have a place in the heart and home, interior designers are moving toward less-literal forms of nature, by means of subtle colour, pattern and texture.

This approach is more about the essence of nature, leaning into earthy paint and textiles, floral- and leafy patterns, and matte and rough finishes featured in all their imperfect glory.

TIP: Warm, dark colours and matte textures tend to absorb light and create a sense of warmth by



Bren Petrunick says "cottage chic" isn't just a design trend, it has truly evolved into a lifestyle that prioritizes our connections to our environment.

pulling you in. You can ease this effect by "adding air" to the room through the use of white.

MIX AND MINGLE

Let's make one thing clear — cottage-chic is not to be confused with "shabby-chic." Quite the opposite, this is an eclectic though thoughtful

collection of furniture and found objects, carefully curated and considered over time. At least, that's the look you're going for.

Whether you're amassing your furniture all at once, or doing so piece by piece through the years, layering different styles and materials lends your space a "lived-in" look and feel.

Feel free to combine a few vintage pieces with your more modern collection, or offset a casual suite of furnishings with an elaborate antique. Layering can be achieved with colour, too.

For example, the above-mentioned earthy colour palette can be complemented with bold black or a vibrant accent colour. Not only does this bring depth to your design, but the contrasting elements also create a fabulous focal point.

LOW MAINTENANCE

Let me let you in on a little secret: "low maintenance" doesn't only refer to the upkeep of your environment. When you truly embrace the idea of less work, you'll also find you have more time to do what you love with the ones you love, which can be a wonderfully freeing approach to life.

Incidentally, it's why many people escape to the cottage, when can manage to get away from the daily grind. So, why not eliminate "the

grind" at the source (or, at least one of them)?

Whether you're renovating your home, redecorating a room, or just updating a piece of furniture, be mindful of your low-maintenance aspirations.

Look for materials that require less upkeep, are easy to clean, and withstand wear and tear like a champ. This means you'll spend less time caring for and cleaning these items, and they won't have to be replaced in the near future, freeing up your time and budget for other things.

"Cottage-chic" isn't just an aesthetic trend; it has truly evolved into a lifestyle that prioritizes our connections to our environment, our roots, ourselves and the people we choose to surround ourselves with.

Let's face it: life can get complicated. So, don't forget to take a step back and a deep breath every once in a while, and look for joy in the simple things.

If you can bring that into your home, you'll never have to travel too far to find your "great escape" when you need it the most.

Bren Petrunick is creative founder of award winning Simply White Interiors, a Niagara-based design firm known for providing stylish and uniquely personal interiors. Visit swidesign.com or @simplywhite.