

The **ebay** Home Makeover

buying confidently,
redecorating with style—
the complete guide to
transforming your home online



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Introduction

My first eBay experience was so exceptional that eBay became an immediate part of my daily life. A few years ago, I discovered some vintage cookie molds at a yard sale. There were three of them and I bought them for 10 cents each. I had a feeling when I bought them that they were worth a bit more than that, but I had no idea if they were worth \$5 or \$25. I didn't think much more about it until the day I realized that I could put one up on eBay to see what amount I could actually get for it. I thought my starting bid was a bit optimistic: it was \$9.99. A week later, the mold sold at auction for \$122.50! Not a bad return on a 10-cent investment. And not surprisingly, I have been hooked on eBay ever since.

Even if you're just the occasional online surfer, you can't have missed the Internet auction craze. Thanks to eBay, we've become a nation of collectors. And I'm one of them. My life-long love of flea markets has been transformed into a love of e-markets. I love surfing through auctions, looking for interesting pieces that will round out my décor. Even when I'm not looking for a specific item, I'll spend hours searching eBay listings to see if there's a bargain. There are often times that I didn't know I was looking for something until I actually found it online!

Clearly, I'm not alone. Since its founding in 1995, eBay has become the world's online marketplace. With a community that stretches around the world, eBay is a contemporary phenomenon. As of this printing, eBay had a reported 147 million registered users, more than 50,000 categories, and a record number of over 400 million listings. Among those listings are millions of items for home decorating—including some pieces that you may never have considered before.

And that's where this book comes in. Both a sourcebook and idea book, *The eBay Home Makeover* is a comprehensive guide to how to decorate your home from top to bottom all through eBay. There are tips and tricks from eBay professionals, easy-to-do makeover projects, and decorating advice from an interior design pro. In addition, there is a comprehensive buyer's guide with over 140 sources to show you where to go for the best deals on eBay.

LEFT: The Internet offers a wide variety of items to satisfy even the most demanding consumer. You can find everything from vases to large furniture pieces, usually at a fraction of the cost if purchased offline.



Throughout the book, there are elements designed to offer inspiration and advice to get you started. Look for:

* **do-it-yourself inspirations:** These idea sections are meant to encourage you to rethink and reinvent something that may be a steal but isn't, well, high style. I give you step-by-step illustrated instructions, and tell you what tools you'll need to complete the job. These projects are super-easy and none take more than a weekend. Several cost under \$100, but most come in under \$50. Plus, most projects offer alternative ideas, so readers can go a step further if they desire.

* **decorating tips:** Interior designer Tracy Bross offers advice on virtually every decorating subject in detailed, illustrated tip sections appearing throughout the book. Tracy brings her vast experience styling homes to provide expert insights and professional tips on how to combine all your furniture and design elements into a stylish décor. From how to make a room plan to how to paint furniture, these tips will make you a savvy decorator overnight.

* **dream room makeovers:** From leather club chairs to lava lamps... from Persian rugs to Pottery Barn sconces... eBay's five Dream Room Contest finalists have purchased it all! Best of all, they achieved these incredible transformations in only four weeks and with a budget of only \$2,500. See their rooms, read about their adventures, then check out our buyer's guide to see where you can purchase items to create your own "dream room"!

* **buyer's guide:** The Buyer's Guide showcases over 100 of eBay's best sources for home décor items. Many people don't realize that there are literally tons of retailers selling their merchandise through eBay every day. Each listing includes the seller's eBay ID, a detailed description of their products, plus coverage of the seller's eBay ratings and payment options—all to help you shop on eBay effectively.



Getting Started

Naturally, the number one thing you need to get started on eBay is an Internet connection. Once you have that essential, log onto eBay's home page at www.ebay.com. Now the fun really begins. . .

Buying on eBay couldn't be easier—just register, browse or search, bid or buy, and then pay. If you have any questions, visit eBay's Buy Hub. This is the main hub for all content on how to find items and to buy on eBay. Click "Buy" at the top of any eBay page.

- * **register:** Registration is required to buy or sell on eBay. It's easy and free! Register by clicking on the Register link at the top of any eBay page. First, you will be asked for basic contact information. This information remains private on eBay's secure servers. Accept the terms and conditions (you must be 18 years or older to register), create a user ID and password, and then look for your e-mail confirmation message. Follow the instructions within the message to confirm your registration.
- * **browse or search:** Browsing is clicking through lists of titles called Categories until you find something you're interested in. Click on individual categories to narrow your search. To search for an item, type a few keywords into the search box.
- * **bid or buy:** When you find an item you like, simply place a Bid or Buy It Now. When you place a bid, enter the maximum amount you are willing to pay for the item. eBay will bid on your behalf only if there is a competing bidder and only to your maximum amount. When you click Buy It Now, you agree to pay the stated Buy It Now price and avoid competing for the item. Keep in mind that once you bid on an item, that bid is binding.
- * **pay:** To see if you've won an auction, either go back to the item page, check your e-mail, or log onto My eBay. (Each member has his or her own personal My eBay page. Just click on the link on the top of any eBay page, and enter your User ID and password.) Any of these will provide you with a Pay Now link. If you selected a Buy It Now option, you will immediately be led to checkout.



Hanky Sheer Curtain

Not very long ago, women carried handkerchiefs in their handbags. Both of my grandmothers had large collections of them, many with beautiful lacework and monograms. The hankies were passed on to my mother, who still carries them instead of tissues. I, too, have my own cache, but because they're heirlooms, I'm always afraid that using them will ruin them.

When I came up with the idea for this project, I immediately started looking to buy them on eBay. They had to be affordable, and easy to come by. Imagine my surprise the first time I searched for the word "hanky" and more than 2800 active auctions came up! Buying what I needed was simple and fast, and I had everything in hand in a matter of days. (You might want to buy a few extras, just in case, because you never know how they'll look together till you lay the hankies out next to one another.)

The thing I love most about this panel is just how fragile and sheer it is. It doesn't obscure the light—it enhances it. The subtle and delicate stitches come alive, and a dozen simple handkerchiefs become a one-of-a-kind, custom curtain in under an hour.

How to buy them: Buying hankies in "lots" is cost-effective. Sellers tend to sell more detailed hankies solo, and they cost more. So buying several at a time can get you a lot for your money. Know the buzzwords: handkerchief linen and hand-rolled edges mean exactly what they say. Better hankies are made of linen. Either cotton or linen can be used for this project.

How to care for them: Vintage linens often come yellowed, but they're relatively easy to restore and care for. Handwash in either an oxygen-based powder detergent, or a detergent booster like Biz. Never, ever use chlorine bleach. To do: fill a dishpan with very hot water and as much detergent as the box says for a full load. Drop the linens in, and stir. The water will get dirty quickly, so rinse and repeat till the water stays clear. It may take a few hours, or a few days, but it's perfectly safe to leave them soaking until the stains are gone.

1



Choose hankies that are similar in size and color. I chose white-on-white as my color scheme so that I could use ones that were either lace-trimmed or embroidered.

2



Lay out the hankies to create a mock-up of your sheer. Move them around until you find the right mix: mine was three hankies across, and four down.

3



Sew the hankies together at both the corners and middles, with thread matching the colors of the fabric. A few stitches in each place are all you need to tack the sheer together.





Luminaria Alternatives

The word luminaria, which comes from the Spanish for "lamp," usually conjures up images of sand-weighted paper bags with designs pricked through them, a soft glow emanating from inside. Customarily, they're placed along the sides of a path at Christmastime, or for vigils and certain religious or spiritual ceremonies. With a little creativity, though, the luminaria can be reimagined in a variety of fun ways.

Vintage mason jars fill my home—some hold staples in my pantry, some work as vases, while others house a button collection—so envisioning them as luminaria was a no-brainer for me. The jars are unbelievably affordable, and come in both clear and blue hues.

The idea for the ladle came as I was gathering up my kitchenware for another project. As it hung near my stove, I immediately envisioned a candle sitting in the well.

When I tried to come up with new ways to turn retro items into lanterns, eggcups came to mind. I chose the ones with the chicken pattern because they're one of my favorite "finds." But I think they would have looked equally nice placed in a Fire King Jadeite egg-cup. (Auctions for these restaurant-ware items start around \$10.)

Finally, the graters. They're so much fun, and I just adore them. Kitchen items like this can cost a mere 50 cents. . . look at what that spare change will buy you.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Mason jars are my favorite luminaria to light. Whenever I have a party, I line my long hallway with them, placing them next to the baseboard. Such a great mood for an intimate gathering.

The well of this shabby chic enamel ladle serves as a resting place for a simple candle.

The openings in these rusty, rustic box-graters let a candle's glow shine through. I chose larger candles to sit inside, to make sure they gave off enough light for the grater's size.

Cute, country eggcups make for curious luminaria. Like the others, I simply dropped in a couple of votive candles.

How to buy luminaria alternatives: Each one of these has different criteria: ceramic eggcups should be without chips or cracked glaze; mason jars should be wide mouthed with working hardware; graters should sit sturdy without wobbling; ladles need a good place to hang.

How to care for them: Wash after each use to remove smoke stains and wax residue.

A few caveats: Luminarias get really, really hot. Always burn them on a fireproof surface. Even after you've blown out the flame, make sure they cool down all the way before picking them up. And keep them out of the reach of children and pets, for obvious reasons.



Rags to Riches

Fabrics are among my favorite things to collect. So it was no surprise to anyone when I began selling linens, textiles, and lace on eBay. These were the early days of eBay, when there weren't huge amounts of linens sold online, and prices for those that were went sky-high. I once sold a child's handkerchief for \$42 and a fleur-de-lis patterned damask tablecloth for over \$100. Sadly for me the seller, those days are gone. But happily for me the buyer, there are now so many fabrics, linens, and lace up for sale or auction at any given time that the prices have been driven way down. It couldn't be a better time to buy fabrics and linens online.

Nowadays, eBay is an inexpensive and satisfying way to buy both vintage and new fabric items. Sheets, napkins, pillowcases, hand towels... all are for sale in mass quantities. Vintage linens are especially ripe for the picking. Old linen bed sheets, tablecloths, and napkins were made to last, and are especially appealing if they bear embroidery that resonates with days past. Likewise, old curtains can be altered into slipcovers, pillows, and bedcovers. Napkins and tablecloths are also popular, as are old dishtowels. Even lace tablecloths can be reinvented as bed coverings.

The key is to think imaginatively. It doesn't take a magic wand to transform an old tablecloth



Vintage linens are charming, practical, and plentiful. Instead of looking for matching sets, mix-and-match colors and patterns to spice up a table setting. Old tea cloths and dishtowels can make colorful, oversized dinner and picnic napkins.

into an attractive window shade, or to turn an embroidered handkerchief into the perfect pillow top—all that's needed is a little creativity. If the fabric has a stain or tear, don't let that deter you. See if there is enough usable fabric to make a pillowcase or chair cushion. I am not suggesting cutting up priceless antiques, but instead I am encouraging you to find innovative ways to rescue and recycle vintage household textiles and give them new life.

In home decorating, the traditional and handmade is in. Pieces of our heritage are now welcome parts of our present day décor. By mixing and matching vintage and newer textiles in your fabric furnishing, you will give your home an irresistible sense of whimsy and originality, combined with a hint of nostalgia.

I hope you have as much fun exploring all the wonderful fabrics and textiles on eBay as I do.

The e-fabric Question:

With so many linens up for sale, how do you begin? Well, there are two ways: Search eBay, or, navigate eBay categories. If you're just browsing, the navigating approach is great, because the travel through all the categories lets you "window shop" until you find something you like. If you know exactly what you're looking for—a hanky with an "M" monogram, for example—eBay's search feature will direct you to all the "M" monogrammed hankies up for auction.

Search for the same item under several different names. Some sellers will say "handkerchief," some "hanky," some "hankie" and some even "kerchief," so search all the possible variations and alternative spellings. Tea towels are also known as "hand towels," "dishtowels," and often, a seller not completely familiar with linens will call them "placemats." Quilts are also called "patchwork," and curtains will also be called "valances," "drapes," or "drapery."

SEARCHING AND NAVIGATING FOR FABRIC

To search eBay, go to the eBay Home Page (<http://eBay.com>) and find "Search" in the upper left of the page, under the "Find" heading. Type in your search word (for example, "fabric" or "linens"); and click the "Search" button.

To navigate eBay's Textile category for vintage linens, for example, start on the Home Page, in the upper left, under the heading "Browse for an Item." Click on the arrow, scroll down the list, select "Antiques," then click "Go."



Pillow Makeovers

Even though it's old fashioned, my mother—and I, sometimes, in really hot weather—carry around handkerchiefs instead of tissues. We both have vast collections, but tend to use only the more utilitarian ones for fear of ruining a beautiful heirloom. Some are so precious that I like to display them—I consider them fabric art!

One of the best ways I've found to show off a treasured hanky is to sew it directly onto a pillow. This morning-glory patterned hanky is a hands-down favorite in my ever-growing collection. I love its rich colors and I adore the scalloped edges; it was just too pretty to keep in a drawer. This project takes less than 15 minutes, yet has a huge impact on your décor.

If you weren't lucky enough to inherit a cache of hankies, they're easy to come by online: thousands are auctioned off every week. The patterns run the gamut: florals, vacation spot themes, hobby themes, children's versions. . .you name it, you'll likely find it. Happily, these hankies are really inexpensive (prices start under \$5). And the best thing about them is that there are so many to choose from.



Hanky Pillow

To make: Wash hanky then press with a warm iron. Center hanky on chosen pillow; pin into place. With matching thread, hand sew edges of hanky to pillow. Don't make stitches too tight, or your hanky will buckle.



Tea Towel Pillows

To turn a tea towel into an envelope pillow sham like the one above, press the towel flat, then fold it like an envelope. Fold each long side in toward the middle, press the fold, then fold the bottom three-quarters of the way up over the folded sides. Stitch all the way up the sides to seam the edges. Slide the pillow form in at the top opening, then fold the top down to create a flap.



Simple Fabric Swaps

Fabric remnants and pieces make great pillow covers. To do this, cut the fabric to the size of the pillow, leaving 1" on each side for the seam allowance. Pin the right sides of fabric together, then sew the seams 1" in from the edge on three of sides. Turn the fabric right side out through the unsewn edge. Slip the pillow in, then blind-stitch the open edge to finish.





Retro Tablecloth Projects

I don't know why these wonderful retro tableclothes went out of style. . . They're colorful, whimsical, and just plain pretty. I love them, and have a pile I cherish and use all the time. They're certainly easy enough to come by: searching eBay for the words "vintage, printed tablecloth," yields several hundred auctions, most of which are offering cloths in the \$10 range. Not bad for tablecloths that only a few years ago sold for several times that, at the very least.

When I was selling linens on eBay, I'd regularly sell tablecloths like these for \$50-\$100. But sellers like me flooded the market. Hence, the prices went way down—much, much less than what you'll pay even in antique stores. Use this to your advantage when looking for linens for these projects; you don't have to spend a lot to get a lot.

The most coveted cloths to find? Those from the '40s that are printed with state maps. They're lots of fun, with artwork depicting cities and landmarks.

Other prize cloths include any with bold Mexican-themed patterns, most of which were created to complement Fiestaware and its many colorful knock offs.

How to buy tablecloths: Read the auction descriptions to find out the fabric. Most of these cloths are woven cotton, with the thickness of canvas but very, very soft. Ask about stains, rips, or tears—vintage items are rarely flawless, but buy the best you can.

How to care for them: Like any other period textile, tablecloths should be treated with TLC. If they're in perfect shape, I throw them into the washer with my delicates, and tumble dry on low. (If I'm washing anything with lace, it always gets hung to dry. If linens need some stain removal or color-boosting, I use my tried-and-true soaking method (see handkerchief curain). With patience, most stains are removable.

Table Linens

Table linens are located in the Dining & Bar category within Home & Garden, or you can explore the Antique and Collectible categories for unique vintage pieces. For holiday decorating, check eBay regularly for tablecloths and runners that fit the season. Shop early, or after a holiday to find great deals on Christmas and other holiday linens.



Curtains

The kitchen is the perfect place for bright, cheerful curtains like these, which were once a romantic tablecloth.

Placemats

The fun thing about these placemats was that I was able to use the tablecloth's interesting border as the bottom edge of the mats.





Here's a unique way to use a favorite woven wool blanket: as a tablecloth for a springtime brunch.

DO-IT-YOURSELF INSPIRATION



A Blanket Story

How to buy blankets and spreads: As already mentioned, you can get great deals on textiles you plan on transforming by purchasing "cutters." It's never cost-effective to buy perfect pieces if you're just going to end up cutting them up into pieces.

How to care for them: Cotton spreads and blankets can be machine washed, on a gentle cycle, and hung to dry. Wool varieties can be washed in the machine as well, but be sure the spin cycle isn't harsh. Otherwise, it's best to handwash woolens in a large tub. When storing spreads and blankets, be sure to keep them in a cool, dry place, with mothballs (or lavender and cedar sachets) to keep pesky bugs away. Never put anything into storage that hasn't been cleaned first: invisible stains can do damage if left alone. Don't fold items too tightly, to make sure your textiles don't get musty.

How to display them: If you choose to hang blankets or spreads, you'll want to sew a rod pocket onto the length of the back for hanging—this will make sure you don't stress the fibers in the fabrics.

It seems that along with everything else I collect, I've come to find myself with a large collection of blankets. I love all kinds of chenille bedspreads, colorful Beacon-style blankets, and patchwork quilts. They're a fun thing to collect because they're also practical: as my brother would say, "Everyone needs a blanket."

These are great items to buy online, because you have so many options to choose from. Whether you're seeking blankets to use creatively—or merely for sleeping under—you'll always find active auctions. Since there are so many blankets, bedspreads, and quilts out there, items like chenille bedspreads start at under \$10.

If you're looking to sew things (like the pillows shown on page 82), you'll save a lot of money by searching for what sellers refer to as "cutters." Cutters are blankets, spreads, or quilts that are in some way ripped, stained, or damaged, but still have enough life in them to be "cut" and transformed into something else. (That pillow I mentioned? It came from what was half a blanket I'd bought. Yes, half. That fact made it very affordable: It cost me less than \$5.)

DO-IT-YOURSELF INSPIRATION



Vintage Suitcase Bar

There are so many fun ways to use funky, vintage suitcases. You'll find many of them in this book, in fact, since I find these items to be stylish, cool, and very easy to reimagine as novel pieces of furniture.

One of my favorite ways to adapt a vintage suitcase is turning it into a very hip retro-style cocktail bar. I love the bygone era this project evokes: martini lunches, the Rat Pack, '50s mod, the days when single men were called bachelors and career women raised a few eyebrows. It also calls to mind another juicy piece of nostalgia: the traveling salesman and his portable bar (much-needed sustenance, I suppose, in the days before hotels offered minibars in every room).

You can take this idea several steps further, using larger suitcases to hold party food as well. (Use your best judgment here; clearly, wet and messy foods aren't a good choice. But stacked sandwiches and containers of breadsticks or nuts work just fine.)

Finally, when you're done entertaining, your suitcase bar can be used to store nonperishable bar supplies such as glassware. Be sure, also, when you close up these old suitcases, to place something inside to keep it smelling fresh: bars of fragrant soap, aromatic candles, or dryer sheets are all good to use.

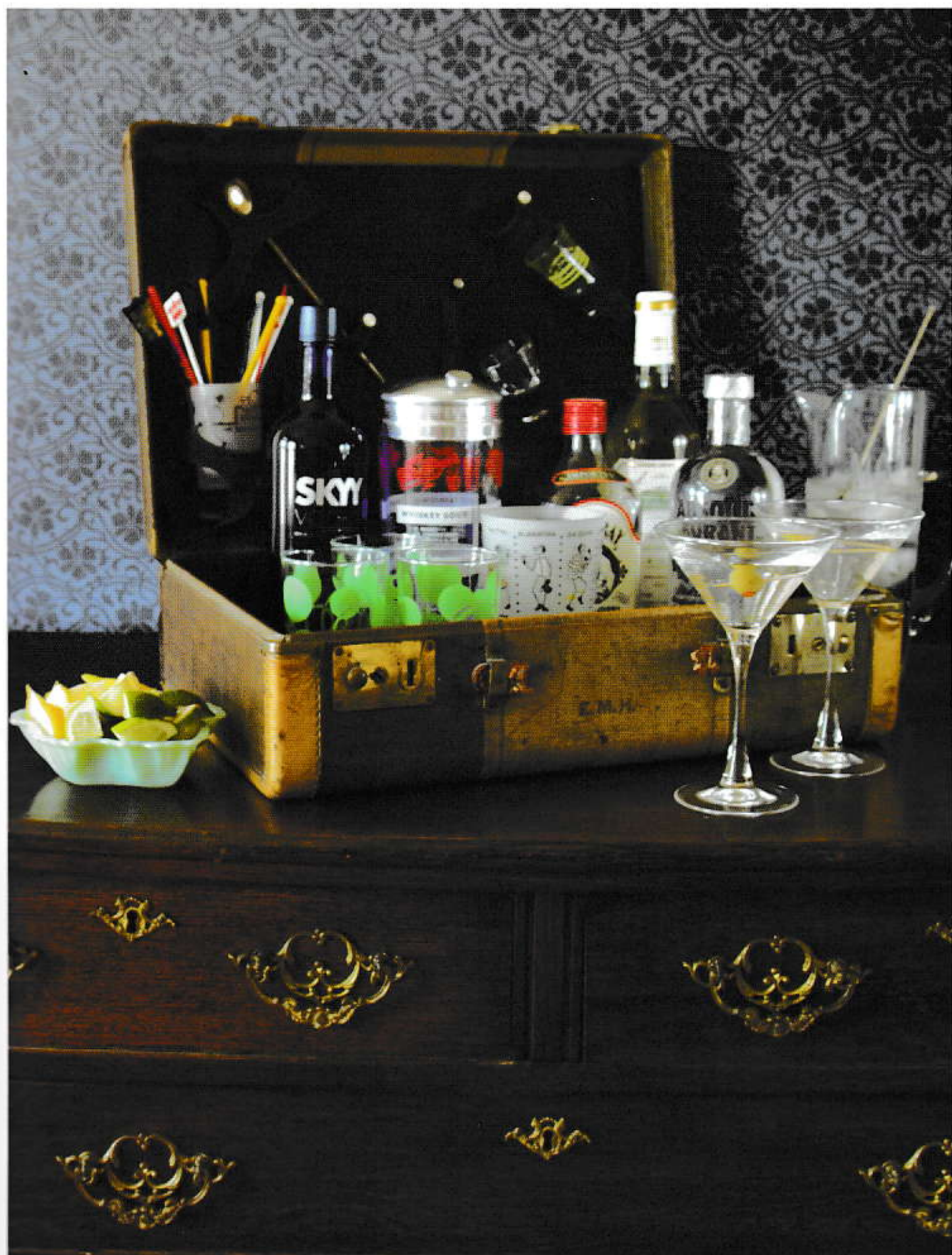
What to look for: Old suitcases are plentiful, and there are many types available. Ours is a simple, striped version without straps or handles. Some have leather or alligator trim and handles that evoke a more sophisticated, high-end look. Be sure the inside fabric is intact, not ripped, stained, or mildewy.

How to care for it: Most suitcases are musty inside; that's unavoidable. The best way to get rid of odors is to use a fabric freshening spray, then place the suitcase, wide open, in the sun for several afternoons. If this doesn't work, shake a lot of baking soda inside, let it sit overnight, then vacuum it out.



Turning this simple, vintage suitcase into a bar was about as easy as, well, opening it up. I lined the bottom with some aluminum foil, simply to keep spills at bay, then arranged my liquor bottles so they'd look attractive.

This suitcase has straps on the inside of the lid—perfect for holding shot glasses and extra stirrers.





1

Choose frames that will complement your prints or plates. I chose a simple, unfinished wooden frame so as not to compete with the beauty of each image.



2

Mats will make your prints look like they've been professionally framed. You can choose a neutral color, as I did, or find one that picks up one of the colors in your art.



3

Carefully place the mat on the frame, then lay the print, face down, on top. Before closing the frame, look at the right side to make sure neither the print nor mat has slipped out of place.



DO-IT-YOURSELF INSPIRATION



Create Your Own Art

I first saw framed textbook plates—these came from an 1800s ornithology textbook—in a decorating magazine, and I immediately fell in love with the idea. Since then, I've added to my collection through eBay, and if this kind of art does it for you, auctions are a great place to start collecting.

Creating art from unusual sources is as easy as finding a vintage calendar with a botanical print theme. You'll instantly have 12 pieces of art for your walls. Nobody will know where your "artwork" comes from, and if you mat the material, it makes everything look a lot more finished and valuable.

Some other sources for instant art: pictures or ads from magazines, postcards, stationery, artbooks (I always get mine at library book sales, where they never cost more than \$1 and I don't feel guilty cutting them up!), pages from children's books (for your kid's rooms), vintage sheet music (the images on the covers are fabulous) and album covers. Also look for antique family photographs and old maps. (I found a New York City subway map in a great aunt's apartment, circa 1948. After I framed mine, I saw an identical one in the window of a framing store for over \$200!)

The best part about decorating with old prints is that it's fast and easy, and you can create a collection in a very short time with relatively little money.



Creative Containers

A plain glass florist's vase? A ho-hum terra-cotta planter? Not in my house. I don't know when I started collecting containers, but I looked around one day and my home was filled with them. As you may have already noticed, I collect kitchenware. It's easy to find, either online or at yard sales, and like everything else here, is very affordable.

When my vintage tins aren't holding plants or flowers, they are their own display. They live in my kitchen, sitting in a row, above the cabinets. They bring a retro feel to the space, and I consider them art.

I did a recent Internet search and found many new pieces for my collection, some selling for as little as \$10. My ceramic coffee canister was once most likely part of a set. Old clay canister sets can be pricey, but sold solo, a canister can be very affordable—and make for a funky planter.

As for the oversized, aluminum watering can, I'll concede that it belongs to my mother. She really uses it to water her plants. I've seen a plethora of them online, in all shapes and sizes. I haven't bought my own yet for a really simple reason: I need to find a place for it first. Until then, I'll just borrow Mom's.

How to buy them: Once you start looking in earnest, interesting vintage containers are everywhere. Instead of using keywords like "pots," "vases," or "planters," search for "canisters," "cans," and "pots." Keep your costs low by purchasing well-worn items (i.e., buy ones that are old and chipped).

How to care for them: A rule of thumb for all vintage vessels: no dishwashers, ever. Handwash everything, and dry quickly to keep rust at bay. If you're using one as a vase, it doesn't have to be watertight—you can always place an unobtrusive jar inside to hold the water. If you're using one as a planter, keep it safe from rust and soil by either placing a potted plant inside, or lining the inside with foil or plastic wrap.

THIS PAGE:

Vintage ceramic kitchen canisters are creative containers for plants.

This Axelrod's Cottage Cheese can is one of the all-time favorites in my collection of metal cans.

OPPOSITE:

A rustic, old, aluminum watering can makes a wonderful country-style vase.

