

## All the Puttery Treats, All In One Place.



### Save Our Tea Towels.

Cut up your old ones and make a patchwork tablecloth.

Thread them onto cafe rods for sweet little curtains.

Upholster your kitchen chairs with scrumptious stripy cook's tea-towels.

Sew three or four together in a loop, then thread onto a paper towel holder, for a permanent rolling hand towel.

Sew two together, add a ribbon drawstring and use as a peg-bag.

Make a cushion from one too delicate to use.

Cut them into triangles and make bunting.

Line baskets with them.

Hell, you could even dry the dishes with your favorite!

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### **Scrumptious Treats For Autumn.**

Start squirreling away some groceries for the times later on in the season when it is just too cosy to leave your house and face the fluorescent horror of the supermarket. Add gingham tops to jars full of homemade jams and display on your counter tops. Autumn is all about abundance...

Change all the bulbs in the house to low wattage, peachy coloured ones and enjoy the soft glow of the early evening light...

Spend baking day this week filling your freezer with warming soups. Nothing is more homely than having a big vat of chunky vegetable soup on the go: the smell alone is enough to make you never want to leave the house. Serve with heavy multigrained homemade bread and lunch in the glow of candlelight.

Subtly change the signature scent your house wears to something a little less fresh than that you chose in the summer. Add amber, musk, orange, eucalyptus, pine, cinnamon or other spices to your base fragrance (mine's lavender and I use amber, musk and cinnamon) to gently mark the change of season. Bake thin slices of fruit for hours at a time to fragrance the house for a special occasion, or burn incense for the sheer smoky scent of it.

Harvest the apples on your trees and spend an afternoon making puree, chutneys and pies. Leave a basket in the garden for collecting the fruit. In fact Autumn is the time for going kind of basket crazy: leave them by the front door for wet shoes. Line them with a crisp floral teatowels and fill with the apples you have collected. Tip red fruit into old fashioned pottery mixing bowls and bring a little autumnal colour into your kitchen. Buy colourful seasonal vegetables at the market and create autumnal still life's and re-invent baking day for Autumn, caramalise onions and serve rich mustard mash and roasted peppers with gourmet sausages...

Get out into the garden and sweep away every last trace of Summer: then make a ritual of it every morning, to have your breakfast on the step, and brush away the leaves crowding your deck (just don't get too carried away, leaves are the most gorgeous of nature's carpets!). Paint your broom handle moss green, powder blue or baby pink to inspire you and trim bare branches and take into the house to use as sculptural still life's or to hang across a window and display a little collection of sepia photographs or seasonal foliage..

Coffee is deliciously Autumnal isn't it? Get yourself to a fabulous coffee emporium and choose a signature coffee for the season. Vanilla anyone? Then search out an old enamel coffee pot and make a date with yourself to have coffee and homemade shortbread when your morning routine is done and dusted. Add opera music and a letter from a friend for the perfect Brocante morning...

Old films just smack of cosy afternoons curled up on the sofa. Go through your collection and choose a little pile you haven't watched for a while, or better yet, sign up to one of the online DVD hire companies and get old films in the mail, as and when they unexpectedly arrive. Failing that choose a deliciously old fashioned radio station and listen to the afternoon play as you potter around the house. I use Sky radio (on the TV) to select from a variety of BBC radio channels most afternoons...

Seek out a length of tweed or boucle wool and drape over the back of your sofa. Go treasure hunting for welsh blankets, crocheted square throws or the rich paisley brushed wool shawls that are going to be huge this Winter. Keep to one colour palette and pile into baskets in the living room and snug. Add lots and lots of blankets to the bottom of your bed and drape the landing banister with patchwork quilts.

Remember Autumn doesn't have to be pumpkin coloured (though it is so evocative isn't it?). Damson, plum, moss green, maroon, honey, and even a certain shade of petrol blue will all bring the richness of autumn into your home, and even just the teeniest accents will change the atmosphere dramatically. Tie curtains back with long lengths of rich velvet ribbon, or thread it though crocheted or lace cushions or throws for glimpse of Autumnal hues.

Sunflowers are scrumptiously autumnal to me. There is a huge field just around the corner here positively beaming with them. Mix them with red berries, twisted willow and peacock feathers for a lovely seasonal ring. Hang them upside down in the kitchen and dry them amongst bundles of herbs.

Start winterising your home: change sheer nets for lined curtains, check insulation, reseal windows, sew yourself the vintage housekeeper's equivalent of the sausage dog to prevent door drafts. Order yourself a scrumptious sheepskin liner for your bed. Change your cotton sheets to flannel or cosy brushed cotton. Cover tables with vintage chenille cloths or small quilts (very Provence!), hang scarves around the banister or in the hallway and go mad with scatter cushions (you can never have too many!). Hang cosy gingham in the kitchen and put out lots of colourful tea towels for visual warmth etc, etc...

Allocate a fabulously snuggly jumper or cardigan as your house jumper. Leave it folded in the basket next to your armchair for long cold nights. Men's oversized jumpers work best. Go root through his wardrobe now. In kids rooms dig out winter jumpers and hang on their wardrobes as a visual reminder of seasonal change. Change lightweight dressing gowns for snuggly flannel, and tartan jarmies and slipper socks.

Get into the habit of making home from school/work time scrumptiously cosy for the kids/partner, or even just yourself. Choose a home time candle, bake biscuits and serve hot chocolate. Seek out all the board games you own and add to your rainy day cupboard. On very cold days get them into jimjams and slippers the minute they step through the door. Memories are made of long, cosy evenings on the living room floor playing snakes and ladders.

Make a ritual of taking a daytime pine scented bath just before lunch, then wrap up snuggly and drink soup for lunch in front of the fire. Leave the bath water for a while

after you get out and close the bathroom door behind you to make the room smell divine. Then open all the windows downstairs and get out into the fresh air to shake off the end of summer blues...

Start collecting twigs and berries and branches and cones and conkers and add them to your seasonal pot pourris, wreaths or displays. Fill baskets with logs and put next to the fire. (Even if it's electric.) Dry huge bundles of dried lavender, basil and sage to use as smudge sticks or to throw on the fire late at night.

Wrap your Christmas list books in ribbon, add a couple of glitzy pens, a box of deliciously spoiling chocolates, a few pairs of snuggly socks, (yey its sock time!!), a favorite novel, and some magazines and put with your house jumper in the basket next to your armchair. Get yourself an oversized vintage velvet cushion, choose a cranberry coloured juice glass and a large decadent mug for long Autumny drinks and hibernate in your very own corner of the house.

Change the wreath on your front door to something fabulously Autumnal. Remember it doesn't have to be all leaves and pumpkins. Wrap in tattered lengths of tweed and add a huge velvety corsage, or cover in berries and add lengths of rich brocade ribbon...

Overhaul your doorstep. Give it a coat of tough varnish, then either buy a new mat, or give the old one a thorough brush, shake and vacuum, then flutter a few coins onto the ground and cover with your mat to welcome wealth into your home...

This is candle season. When it isn't cold enough for the fire, use a mantelpiece glittering with candles to trick the mind, simmer cinnamon on the stove, and drink red wine and really good cheese. Gather all you've got: every candle, and holder and take a look at your stock. Throw out what's past its best and then go candle shopping- buy them in all shapes and sizes from tea lights to big fat pillar candles, but remember you don't have to buy expensive scented candles: scent can be layered in so many other ways (Tuck oil soaked cotton wool puffs behind hot radiators for a start). Ikeas range of standard candles is extremely reliable and cheap enough to buy in abundance.

Enjoy! Autumn is fun! Go puddle splashing, leaf kicking or play conkers with the kids. Take an Autumn picnic to the park and drink hot chocolate on the bare sands of the seaside...

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### **Pretty Things To Do With Vintage Postcards.**

Punch holes through the top of a pretty card, thread ribbon through the holes, tie in a bow and hang from the peg rail in the kitchen.

Clip then into the edges of your mirror frames.

Glue them into your illustrated discovery journal.

Frame them individually in twinkly frames and hang lots together on a dull wall.

Scan them and use them as calling cards on your email messages.

String a collection onto pretty ribbon and use as decorative bunting.

Use one you love as a bookmark.

Photocopy them and use them for decoupageing any flat surface.

Send them to people you love!

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### **Puttery Treats For Summer Mornings.**

Fill a basket with mis-matched china, vintage lemonade bottles and a pretty tablecloth ready for impromptu picnics...

Spritz areas prone to ant invasion with an equal mix of white vinegar and water. Keep a bottle handy for disinfecting decking and outdoor tables.

Pop unprecious flowery saucers under little terracotta pots around the garden for a spot of vintage decoration.

Sew yourself an oilcloth tote, fill it with sun-cream, towels, flannels and kids hats and hang it somewhere sheltered so protection is always on hand...

Oh I know it isn't fun (and can hardly be considered a treat!) but spend an hour or two disinfecting all outdoor bins and recycling boxes because there is nothing stinkier than household waste smoldering in the midday sun.

Steep garden herbs in water Laura Elsewhere style for a natural route to glossy hair...

Junk shop portraits look divine leaning against garden walls and providing a back drop to a collection of gloriously decadent plants....

Cover pulp fiction, chick lit or cheap historical fiction with pvc backing paper in one of the scrumptiously retro patterns they sell in Woolworths, and then and only then are you permitted to leave them around the house in delicious little stacks or carry them into the garden where they are at mercy of all manner of spills and sun cream (Otherwise they must live under your bed and receive their marching orders the second you turn the last page...)

Make blueberry and raspberry smoothies and freeze them on lolly-ice sticks. Yum.

Sit in the shade and turn lonesome vintage pillowcases into adorable hand sewn little girls dresses.

Mix up a big batch of home-made coleslaw.

Paint lolly-ice sticks in a pretty palette of pastels, store them in an old tin and use them as plant markers...

Make some paper pin wheels to decorate the garden and keep the birds away from your precious plants.

Add ribbon or twine loops to all your hand held garden tools so you can hang them somewhere convenient.

Mix three drops of peppermint oil into water and decant into a spray bottle for use as a cooling insect repellent in the garden.

Tack a fringe to your garden parasol. Takes minutes. Looks fabulous.

Make a habit of hanging quilts and duvets over the washing line to air in the morning...

Swing a vintage birdcage from the branches of a tree and light a candle in it early evening time...

Decant witch hazel into a pretty jar and keep close in summer heat. Nothing cools hot skin like it.

Age or fade fabric by leaving it out in the sun for the summer. Leave it over the line or peg it to the branches of a tree.

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### **Keep On Keeping On.**

Find a blackboard and write yourself a daily maxim; a favorite quote or a line from a poem that makes you smile. Make a commitment to yourself to change it regularly.

Re-arrange your bookcase. The busyness of it has become commonplace in your mind's eye. Find a way to hush it. Chuck some paperbacks in the recycling bin (You are never going to read them again). Colour co-ordinate your hardbacks. Stack big books on their side and use them to prop scrumptious little treasures on, like a favorite postcard on a teeny easel. An apparently abandoned pretty little cup and saucer. A tea light on a rose patterned plate...

Use the stacks and stacks of vintage linens I know we are all hoarding. Stretch scraps of vintage embroidery over canvas and prop them one leaning against the other on your mantelpiece. Cover a pin board in a tablecloth. Peg a line of pretty hankies across your

kitchen window. Use crocheted table runners to scoop back your curtains. Decide to have a fresh pillowcase daily. Just for the hell of it. (It will be a teeny bliss you will come to adore). Use your bestest tea towels till they are threadbare because that is what they are for- to bring pleasure to something dull...

Move one item from every surface in the house. Now. Frame things. Casually lean a pretty empty frame over a favorite ornament. Create vignette of like objects. Add a natural element to every display in the house (A perfect fig, a shell, a bundle of ribbon tied twigs?). Remember to vary the heights of items in any given vignette.

There is a surface in your house you see more than any other. Where is it? The mantelpiece? The sideboard the TV sits on? The windowsill above the kitchen sink? Your bedside table? Wherever it is, decide now to completely re-invent it. Remove every object on it. Polish it to a shine and then give it new life. Imagine you are setting up a still life for a painter. Add quirky, silly temporary touches... an orange, or a bowl of apples. A little bundle of handwritten letters and a pen. A branch of blossom from the garden. Put a mirror behind the display to double its deliciousness....

Create an inspiration board. Display it somewhere you will see it regularly. Make it as pretty as possible. Criss-cross dotty ribbon with glitzy paste brooches holding it in place, and pile it with anything you adore: magazine tear outs, cards from friends, things that make you happy, scraps of fabric, vintage jewellery, old photographs, dried herbs, kids paintings....anything, anything at all. Then resolve to add something new every evening, so you are teaching yourself to find inspiration daily. Oh and lean a gilt frame over the whole caboodle for added vintage bling...

Wear a beautiful piece of jewellery while you empty the dishwasher. Prop a little junkshop picture behind the stove.

Create a little altar to your soul wherever it is you find yourself blinking at your reflection most frequently. Steal the prettiest lamp in the house and put it next to your mirror. Put a pink tinged bulb in it and decide to see yourself through rose tinted glasses ever after. Stuff a picture of you at your most beautiful into the frame of the mirror. Fill pressed glass bonbon dishes with cotton wool buds, pads and erm, maybe a secret little stash of lemon bonbons? Add a row of tea lights in Moroccan tea glasses and voila, a beautiful cosy place to really see yourself. To contemplate your face without suffering the harsh cruelty of fluorescent lighting and day glo bathroom mirrors. A place you won't find yourself scrunching up your eyes in order to avoid the oh too harsh truth about wrinkles, unexplained blotchiness and nose hair...

Put something living in every room in the house. Oh I know I always say it, but really: if you do only one thing on this list, make it this one, because nothing makes you really see a room more than something that demands your attention for its very life force...

Change your brand of soap powder or fabric conditioner. Mix up a new blend of air freshening spray. Buy a bar of Pears soap and use it at the kitchen sink. Buy lilies and put them in your entrance hall. Douse yourself in lavender scented Johnson's baby powder.

Grow basil from seed on your kitchen windowsill. Seek out an exotic type like cinnamon basil and thrill (and confuse!) your senses...

Frame the prettiest, most beautifully illustrated set of carded vintage buttons and lean them on the lamp next to your bed.

Rip your most favorite page out of your scrapbook or illustrated discovery journal (trust me it ain't sacrilegious!) and put it on the fridge. Remind yourself of your dreams and goals daily so they don't get lost in the humdrum of another day...

Start planning a decorating project. Focus all your decorative ambition on it even if it making it a reality is light years away. Keep an eye out for treasures for it. Choose an item you adore to inspire your scheme and carry a little book of ideas around in your bag. Sit in the room concerned and think about every aspect of its use. If you can dream it you can make it happen. One day...

Move the painting above your bed into the kitchen. Throw a snuggly fuzzy cardigan (too yummy to hide in a wardrobe) over the arm of your hall chair. Root through your larder and fill glass jars with dried whatever, and then fasten vintage paper scraps to the outside of each with a velvet ribbon flourish. (Who says you can't have a bit of fripperie on your kitchen shelves?)

Stir cardamom pods into warm milk, pour it into your favorite mug, then sit cosy in your living room and really try to see it. What's working? What isn't? What's looking tired? Should this or that be put away for the season and brought out again after a decorative vacation? Would anybody notice/mind if you moved that chair into the spare bedroom?

Press flowers between the pages of old books. Appreciate their beauty in a different way. After all there is something kind of wonderful about finding the love token that is a faded flower in a forgotten book...

Banish ugly recycling boxes from the house and use a collection of old straw shopping baskets instead. You don't have to endure council issued ugliness.

Have a row of scented geraniums in a window with no view. Scrumptiously retro country. Circa 1979.

Add just one new cushion cover to the collection on your sofa and make the entire room seem scrumptiously fresh.

Add a touch of yellow into every room, for the tiniest touch of spring. Even if it's only an old lemon rose postcard. Replace your yellow tchoikes with damson bits of this and that in the Autumn...

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**Lovely Puttery Treats For Your Bookcase...**

Take the books off each shelf one by one, and using a feather duster, dust the shelves and the books themselves, ever so gently.

Paste Bookplates into the left hand inside cover of your most precious books.

Cover ludicrously ugly, but essential books in pretty vintage paper.

Take off battered book covers and display older books in all their dusty coloured loveliness as part of tabletop displays throughout the house.

Store the paper covers themselves flat and if they are particularly lovely, frame them and hang them near your library or bookcase.

Revolve the books you have by your bedside, in the loo, in the kitchen and by your favorite armchair so there is always something new to inspire you.

Re-arrange your bookcase, in alphabetical order, subject matter, or for a real visual treat, in rows of like colours.

Intermingle tiny little objet, jeweled photo frames and sparkly bits of this and that with your books.

Take yourself on a creative excursion for a new bookmark. Vintage postcards are divine.

Buy yourself a reading pillow. Stuff a little basket with bookmarks, reading glasses, post-it notes, a little notebook, some pens, a dictionary and a little box of violet creams, choose a book you love and retire to bed early...

Paint the back of your bookcase in a dramatic shade for glimpses of colour and line the shelves on which the books sit with vintage paper cut with a rick rack edge.

On special occasions, light up your bookcase with oodles of teeny little glass tea holders, glittering prettily amongst the matt covers of your vintage book collection.

When you have finished puttering, choose an old favorite, make tea the old fashioned way and put your feet up for an hour or two of fabulous company.

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### **Halloween.**

Brush the path leading up to your house. Scrub your doorstep, leave your broom leaning in your porch and light a candle on your path to how good spirits the way into your home...

Turn out every light in the house, but leave the curtains of the room you are sitting in wide open, all the better for spotting any spooky passers by. And light just one candle.

Perhaps in the pumpkin you carved with the children. See how it feels to experience darkness. To not rely on electricity or the glow of the television.

Open a window in every room to allow free access to the spirit of magic. Ring a bell to welcome the angels and scare away yucky things...

Serve something suitably spooky, but elegant all the same. Cook black squid ink pasta (or add a few drops of black food colouring to a pan of tagliatellie) with scallops, or as I will be doing, with pancetta and parsnips. Drink deep, dark, syrupy red wine and gorge on a sliver of pumpkin pie...

Simmer a mixture of nutmeg and cardamom and nutmeg on the stove to warm and scent the house, or burn frankincense and myrrh to offer peace and rest to uneasy souls, and leave bowls of hazelnuts around the kitchen as an offering to the spirit of magic, as hazelnuts are commonly believed to hold the wisdom of the future...

Take a long candlelit bath in winter spiced red water. Then create an altar on your bedside table. Choose one perfect flower, (a yellow marigold is thought to welcome the souls of lost ghost's home...) a candle, (purple for pain, white for hope and pink for celebration) an apple, an image of something you dream of, your journal, some coins and a handful of hazelnuts. Close the door on your bedroom and let magic get to work...

Dress in something scrumptiously spooky. Waft about the house in a long black negligee. then accessorise it in demented Brocante fashion with a flannel dressing gown, and some yummy, snuggly socks so that as it nears midnight you can open the back door and make a wish on the moon and stars...

Wear amber around your neck as a talisman against evil for your children...

Arrange bowls of apples (said to tell the future on Halloween night-particularly if you are willing to sleep through the discomfort of having one under your pillow!), nuts, and marshmallows on a small table, and feast on toffee apples and tangerines...

Make some Mexican hot chocolate (unsweetened chocolate with cinnamon, vanilla and a dash of salt). The secret is to make sure that your chocolate is frothed to a frenzy, because the Mexicans believe that the spirit of magic exists in the froth...

Serve in huge mugs, with a cinnamon stick to stir and snuggle up in front of the dying embers of the fire with The Legend of Sleepy Hollow...

Read each other ghost stories out loud, and peel an apple as you read- the person with the longest unbroken length of peel will live the longest...) or when you have eaten and bathed, curl up on the sofa and watch the spookiest movie you own in the pitch black of night...

Bring journaling night forward and use tonight to create a collage of your dreams for the future. Or write a letter to yourself, a letter stuffed full of hopes for the future, then wrap it in a plait of purple ribbon and tuck it away somewhere, where only magic can find it....

And if you are really up to it, stand in front of the mirror in the witching hour, as you brush your hair and look into your very own future, then make a wish as you blow out your candle...

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### **Bling.**

Dangle crystals from pretty ribbons and hang in your windows to catch the light...

Tie back curtains with extra wide pale coloured ribbon tied into huge floppy bows  
(Ribbon is going to be huge over the next year!)

Change knobs and door handles to glass or crystal versions, Rachel Ashwell style.

Get pastel coloured baubles out of Christmas storage and add them to bowls of rustic pot pourri for glitzy contrast.

Add scrumptious feathers to flower arrangements...

Look for gypsy style scarves with deep fringes and divine scarlet roses and drape across heavy furniture...

Fill bowls with vintage buttons or sea glass.

Revive tired cushions with old paste brooches, glitzy little buttons or diamante belt buckles.

Dangle gorgeous necklaces from picture frames, door knobs or ornaments...

Go vintage clothes shopping and buy something so utterly glamorous you couldn't possibly wear it, then hang it from a padded hanger in your boudoir...

Gather your cutest, twinkliest little bags and display on a wall together or hang them on the stair banister or from the backs of chairs.

Wrap cushions up in ribbon, parcel style and tie in pretty bows.

Buy multi coloured crystals and add them to your light fittings, tie them around muslin bags filled with lavender and dangle from your bath taps or thread them onto the skinniest ribbon you can find and dangle them from plants or bare twig style arrangements...

Just think of it as house jewellery...

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### **Christmassy Treats.**

- \* Hang a little bag on the Christmas tree and ask everyone to write their favorite Christmas memories in it, to be told over Christmas dinner...
- \* Tie Christmas cards in bundles and display in a bowl (thus saving the necessity to display anything hideous!)
- \* Hide Christmas presents all over the house so your children have to go on a treasure hunt...
- \* Save a few presents to be opened before they go to bed on Christmas day...
- \* Make a Gingerbread Baby House.
- \* Make French Christmas crackers (more like favours), by wrapping tiny little gifts in vintage handkerchiefs, scooping up and tying with a ribbon...
- \* Wrap tiny little gifts for each member of the family and put them at their place on the Christmas table...
- \* Throw a Christmas Eve candlelit tea for the kids after the Children's service: I am serving cinnamon flavoured warm milk, a selection of cheese, some peach chutney, gingerbread men and one tiny gift in front of the fire. Invitation only. New pyjamas essential.
- \* Organise a vintage hospitality table. Choose a sideboard and pile it with vintage saucers holding candy canes, tiny teaspoon's and fir cones. Put baubles and those scrumptiously wrapped amoretto on three tiered cake stands. Wrap linen napkins in velvet ribbon and lay them on a stack of your favorite plates, next to a small plate of sugar dusted mince pies. Fill jars with mini gingerbread men, biscotti and star shaped biscuits. Add glasses, a choice bottle of something Christmassy, a few emergency wrapped bottles or gifts, some kids Christmas chocolate, and a few whimsical decorations, some fruit, dried fruit and nuts- and voila you have a table of scrumptious offerings for everyone from your milk man to your next door neighbour...
- \* Add a touch of whimsy with some vintage kids toys mixed in with your more serious grown up decorations...

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### **More Christmassy Treats.**

Sit down next to the tree this evening and open one of the teeniest little parcels addressed to you. You are a grown up now. It's allowed.

Leave a candy cane, little bar of chocolate, Christmas cracker or titchy treat outside your kid's door every morning between now and Christmas morning.

Gather all the family games you own and leave them in a basket ready for impromptu festive fun...

Iron your Christmas morning jim-jams with cologne, wrap in tissue paper sprayed with something Christmassy, and tuck into a drawer with a bundle of cloves, cinnamon and dried oranges.

Wrap a selection of small gifts- little Christmas cakes, bottles of mulled wine, brown paper bags full of bulbs to force, or mini Christmas puddings, ready to grab for hostess gifts, tips for tradesmen, treats for carol singers, or gifts for unexpected present bearing visitors...

Polish your vintage cutlery and tie into bundles with pretty ribbon ready to decorate the Christmas table...

Fold vintage wallpaper into party hat sized cones, add a frill of fine tinsel, a ribbon tie and a festive greeting or tiny vintage photo and stack on the fireplace ready to be worn while sipping bucks fizz in your dressing gown on Christmas morning.

Can't find crackers you like? Buy the plainest ones you can find and wrap their centres in vintage paper. Add co-coordinating ribbon and whatever little glue able fripperies your heart desires, but refuse to take responsibility for the bad jokes inside...

Wrap little bundles of tangerines and gold chocolate coins in tissue paper and stash in your children coat pockets, just before you leave for church on Christmas eve.

Write a love letter to your partner dated Christmas day and resolve to make it a yearly ritual.

Hang small stockings on the back of every chair at the Christmas table, and make opening the tiniest of presents inside a ritual between courses.

Arrange to send your Mum a bouquet of gorgeous greenery on Christmas Eve. There is nothing purer than flowers...

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### **Sniffles.**

Bed socks. You must have bed socks. Ok so they are not remotely sexy but they can look effortlessly vintage chic with a too big for you white Victorian nightie and a snuggly cardigan. Hunt some out, stitch yourself a little sock bag and hang it from your bed-post.

The Blanket Cardigan. Fold the top quarter of a blanket over and stitch 35cms in from each side to make some makeshift armholes. Adorn as desired et voila! A pretty blanket that will stay sitting round your shoulders and guaranteeing warmth through another episode of Ugly Betty. So you look like a Granny. What the hell, you are warm.

Herbal Cold Tea. At the slightest snuffle of a cold, make yourself some herbal cold tea, then take to your bed and refuse to budge.

Candles. Now I have no idea whether I am right or wrong here, but I will argue till I'm blue in the face that lighting lots and lots of candles warms you up. My Dad says I am talking nonsense, but whether the effects are purely psychological or not, I find that lighting, cinnamon, clove or other wintery spiced candles makes me feel cosier. As does a red blanket or two. And the scrumptiously cosy red floral bedding I am currently retiring to...

Mustard Foot Bath. Warm feet, warm heart. Or something likes that. Mustard oils are absorbed through the skin and eliminated via your lungs, promoting a beneficial anti-bacterial action and causing skin irritation mild enough to make you feel warm. Warm towels and socks on the radiator as your feet soak then snuggle up your tootsies and I guarantee you'll feel better...

Bake Bread. Nothing makes me feel more homely than the smell of bread baking. Make soda bread and serve it with crispy bacon and mushrooms swimming in garlicky oil. Set the bread maker to wake you with the delicious aroma of hot flaky bread ready to be served with big bowls full of hot chocolate. Or eat makeshift suppers of warm ciabatta sprinkled with olive oil and sea salt, melted brie and red wine to warm you up from the inside out.

Hibernate For The Weekend. While my Mum has something of a dickey fit if I stay in the house for longer than twenty four hours at a time, I am a great believer in the healing powers of hibernation. Don't feel like going out much? Don't. Fill the pantry with staples. Arrange to have a box of organic veg delivered. Keep a vat of scrummy soup on the go. Go the library and take out a huge pile of books. Don't bother going out for the daily paper. Don't spend hours on the phone. Stay in till you feel better and enjoy the peace of your own or your families company.

Curtains. Close every curtain in the house as soon as the afternoon sun dies. Both in an effort to conserve heat and to trick your mind into thinking that the house is warmer than it is. It may not be terribly green but keeping a lamp on in every room and every passage way- in fact setting timers so they switch themselves on as dimly as possible as soon as dusk settles, will reinforce the feeling of welcome and warmth in your home and you will not experience the disconcerting jar of switching overheard lights on as you go about the house in the early evening...

Draft Excluders. Can't be bothered stitching vintage fabric wrapped draft excluders? Fold a blanket in half and roll it into a sausage, then tie both ends Christmas cracker style with a length of thick velvet ribbon and press your home-made door snugglers up against the drafts creeping through every entrance way in the house.

Thermal Vests. Now the problem with thermal underwear is this: once you move into it for the Winter you have to expect to freeze should you decide to venture out without it till around about July. But oh my it is just so yummy. Buy a selection with lacy edges pretty

enough to peep out of layers of fine knit woollies and make hand washing them in lavender and letting them dry on padded hangers a quick, but really rather scrumptious evening ritual.

Nursery Suppers. Give up dinner for a few nights and instead offer the kids a very old fashioned high tea when they come home dithering from school and a light nursery supper (boiled egg and soldiers?) an hour before they go to bed...

Hand cream. Stand a tub of hand cream in a bowl of boiling water while you wash the dishes then treat yourself to a warming hand massage when you remove your Marigolds...

Water Bowls. Fill pretty little bowls full of water and a few drops of aromatherapy oil and leave them in the vicinity of every radiator in the house ready to counteract the dreadfully skin wrinkling effects of central heating.

Early To Bed. Set the scene right and your bedroom is the snuggliest place to be when it is very, very chilly. Line the sheet you lie on with a wool blanket so the bed feels warm on your skin, switch the radio to Classic Fm, spritz your pillow with eucalyptus, pile an extra quilt or two on top of the bed (I do adore burying myself in a muddle of cosy blankets) take a cup of chamomile to bed and snuggle up with an old fashioned love story or a thoroughly modern man.

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### **Spring.**

Bake a Gateau Breton and eat it with the first decent (the smaller the better) strawberries of the season.

Paint your broom handle the colour of an Old Cotswold Legbar Hens egg. (And watch the hencam while you are there!)

Fold a pretty tea towel in half and sew together. Make half inch hems either end or thread elastic through, before adding a ribbon loop and feeling virtuous because now you have a pretty place to store them, you have no excuse not to recycle any plastic carrier bags that make it through your door.

Line a few deep flat baskets in oilcloth and put them in the boot of your car ready for bringing home all the scrumptious bits of this and that you will find on your Summer treasure hunts...

Make yourself a dolly peg lady. Wrap her in a vintage hankie. Add a paste brooch and lips with a cupid shaped bow and declare her Queen of The Laundry Room.

Spray your watering can ointment pink. Distress it till it looks fifty years old and make watering your plants an early evening ritual to savour.

Bake individual Spanish omelettes loaded with chorizo and leftover potato, (in a muffin tin) and serve them with a huge green salad and chilled white wine, for an early taste of Summer.

Chop up some old vintage scraps of embroidery and string together some bunting to hang along your washing line. It's there. You might as well make it pretty. Oh and while we are on the subject keep an eye out for 50's floral plastic covered hangers to leave swinging on your washing line for drying shirts and blouses without those bothersome peg imprints...

Demote a blanket to garden duty and leave it folded in a basket near the back door for chilly Spring evenings outside. Allocate a garden pinny and hang it from a ribbon tied laundry peg on your doorknob.

Cover a scrapbook/photo album in something heartbreakingly gorgeous and resolve to record every scrumptious moment of another glorious Summer the old fashioned way...

Recover your ironing board in a fabric that makes you smile. Out of pure laziness my cover is simply drawing pinned over the board. On warm days there is no reason why the whole caboodle, iron, linen water, extension lead et al can't be dragged into the garden so you hang clothes straight onto hangers and let them waft about in the breeze, while you enjoy the gentle joy of sun on your face and watch kids unlikely to do themselves a damage while you are keeping your beady eye on them..

Sew yourself some new tea towels. Choose any cotton, linen or linen union fabric and if you don't have a sewing machine, hand stitch the edges et voila! instant freshness for your kitchen.

Line window ledges with crocheted doilies to keep your precious little seedlings warm on chilly nights.

Hang a Springtime wreath on your front door and watch passers by smile or tie big sashes of ribbon in happy bows around your chair backs and celebrate Spring all by yourself.

Plant teeny succulents in vintage teacups and colanders, and old tins, and teapots and child sized watering cans, and ummm, anything pretty really, then use them to fill the gaps between bigger containers in your garden.

Fill a great big white tin jug or bucket with gorgeous pink blossom, grasses and strands of ivy and place it on a tea stained crocheted tablecloth on your garden table.

Sew rick rack onto your little girl's ankle socks. Or your favorite gingham pinny. Or a pile of pure white hand towels. Soooo Springy...

Loop a lacy tablecloth or shawl across your more utilitarian shower curtain.

Sew yourself a fabric envelope, use a vintage button to fasten it and fill it with good quality white notepaper, envelopes, a little collection of pretty postcards, some stamps

and a pen that isn't an effort to write with, then climb into bed early in the evening and write somebody you love a Happy Spring card or pour your heart out in a letter you will never send.

Chill fruit tea in the fridge as you do your housework, then sit down with a pretty little cup and the morning paper as reward for scrubbing the bath so wonderfully well you can see your reflection in it.

Plant cress in broken eggshells and display in a fine little collection of glass eggcups on a sunny windowsill.

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### **Ribbon.**

Loop short lengths together to make a ribbon chain and drape it up your banister, or decorate a basket by weaving a ribbon border.

Unpick an ugly lampshade and then thread ribbon round and the bare frame to re-invent it.

Sew onto the edges of pillowcases or hand towels.

Thread charms onto a few lengths then either wear around your neck or dangle from your headboard for good luck.

Use as drawer pulls. (Unscrew existing fittings, feed ribbon through holes and tie in a knot on the inside of drawer)

Add loops of pretty ribbon to tea-towels to hang them up.

Create ribbon "clothes-lines" across windows and use to peg your kid's drawings up.

Plait together and use as tiebacks: or find the finest ribbon you can to do the same thing to girly fragile effect...

Use to hang keys off wardrobes or on peg rails, or as a key ring in your bag (long as you like!)

Thread loops and loops of ribbon off a chandelier to soften it. Add twinkly crystals to some...

Add ribbon loops to utilitarian objects like dustpan's and brooms...

Tie around the pages of a book to mark your place, or stiffen and use to frame a picture.

Make ribbon rosettes or gorgeous ribbon roses (be very careful and use sparingly: too much and your home will reek reminiscently of peaches and cream and ruched curtains.)

Award yourself a ribbon rosette.

Make a ritual out of tying your old love letters together, bundling your children's first drawings or making pretty piles of scrap fabric prettily wrapped.

Use a marker pen to write your dearest wish on to a length of ribbon and tie it somewhere meaningful, or wrap it around a special book (Romancing the Ordinary anyone?)

Let the kids tie a welcome home ribbon on to a door wreath each evening.

Use short lengths as napkin rings.

Criss cross inside your larder door and use as your housekeeping bulletin board (Hang your HouseKeepers Creed there!)

Wrap around your wrist in the spirit of the charity bands currently popular and use to quietly, and privately, commemorate the memory of a loved one or remind you of a personal goal or promise....

Thread an old watch face onto a piece of grosgrain ribbon and wear around your wrist, dangle a pocket watch from a long pretty piece of ribbon, or wrap a decorative ribbon around your waist.

Punch holes into photographs and hang individually from lengths of ribbon.

Thread loops through little use teacups and hang in your kitchen.

Now go tie yourself a bow.

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### **That Back To School Feeling.**

Gather all your most precious Summer clothes, wash in scented water, sprinkle with peppercorns to discourage moths and then store between layers of tissue in a vintage suitcase on top of your wardrobe...

Sharpen every pencil you own. Then find a pretty little tumbler to put them in and leave them wherever you usually find yourself grasping for something to write with.

Start a new diary. Find a blank journal and wrap it in a scrap of something beautiful or collage with vintage photos. Tie with a length of old lace, find a postcard that makes you smile to use as a marker et voila! A place to store your dreams...

Stock up your cupboards with wintery spices, yeast and bakers grade flour, the darkest most enticing brown sugar, dried orange peel, and all those other things that just spell cosy autumnal afternoons in the kitchen.

Put a few pieces of aluminium foil into a stock pan full of water, and boil. Now add your collection of vintage silver cutlery and allow to simmer. Then spend a meditative hour or two gently buffing your silverware to a beautiful shine, before displaying it in something worthy of its shiny distressed glory...

Make a block of coffee soap: melt old fashioned household soap flakes, or grate a small bar of white soap into a pan and heat. Add four tablespoons of rolled oats and four tablespoons of finely ground coffee and allow setting in a mould. Then display on a tiny flowery saucer and use to banish yucky smells on your hands after baking...

Make a ready brek tray. Fill enormous glass jars with porridge, rolled oats and homemade muesli, along with a jug for warm milk, enough deep cereal bowls for the whole family, a crystal bowl full of sugar, and a pretty plate for fruit and leave on the kitchen table for impromptu cosy breakfasts...

Create coming home stations for the kids to dump their stuff as they run in from school. A couple of deep labeled baskets? Hooks tagged with their name? Be strict with them about what is allowed to live there.

Get organised! Gather every piece of mail, bill, letter or coupon you have not got around to dealing with and sit down with a glass of wine and resolve to deal with it there and then, one way or another. One night- that is all it takes to stop the burden of paperwork weighing heavily on your mind and quite frankly no-one would blame you if you suddenly felt the urge to inspire more regular sessions by purchasing the kind of files, pens and paperclips that make your heart sin. Yes, I hereby give you permission to spend money on pretty stationery. It is I think essential for our welfare in September...

Sometimes the most refreshing changes are the teeniest. Swap tired old bits of soap for new blocks, replace blackened candles with fresh ones, remove at least one item from every surface in the house, throw a quilt over the back of your armchair for late night snuggles, buy a new toothbrush, get thee to the recycling station with every mostly empty shampoo, conditioner, bubble bath, or cordial bottle you own, (there is no room for dregs in this housekeepers life!!), and change the photograph in the frame beside your bed.

Get online and order all the catalogues you are going to need for the Winter: from traditional toys for stocking fillers, seed catalogues for next years planting, by post only boutiques for the occasional treats and Christmas catalogues to wile away an hour or six dreaming of just how perfect you are going to make the festive season this year...

Start knitting snuggly hot water bottle covers and scrumptiously silly bed socks for when the world gets that little bit cosier in the coming months.

Get in the garden and cut some lengths of ivy. Add to boiling hot water and use to soak dark coloured delicats.

Wrap bundles of firewood in newspaper and string and soak in pine scented oil. Then store in a large box or tin in a dark place till the nights draw in...

Empty out your comfort drawer and start to fill it week by week with cosy autumnal treats. Re-line it with yummy paper, spray with scrumptious scented linen water, layer it again with all your old comfort favorites and leave space for new snuggly treats: a self heating face mask? Teeny tiny bottle of brandy? Rose scented Turkish delight? A card to send to your loved one when you have finally got the time to tell him how you feel? A smiley summery photograph of yourself for rubbishy days? Really decent cocoa? A book of poetry to make you cry...

Make brushing your path a morning ritual.

Buy yourself a pair of flannel pyjamas, or change your summery cotton sheets for wintery flannel because there is seriously nothing cosier...

Order personalised stationery (how utterly elegant!) for next to nothing at Vista Print and delight your friends by inviting them for an "after the school run, really rather formal brunch" on the most innocuous of Tuesday mornings...

Mix up a brand new batch of Brocante Store Cupboard Recipes ready for the Seasonal Scrub coming very soon...

Bake batch loads of cookie dough and freeze ready to be whipped into the oven at a moments notice when the kids are on their way home from school. The scent of chocolate chip memories will forever after be associated with home...

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### **Delicious Doilies.**

Aside from using them for all manner of crockery resting purposes, I've got them in the bathroom and the bedroom, and they decorate my kitchen a treat: looking particularly divine under my kitchen herbs...

Thread them on to ribbon and string across your windows so the sun makes pretty patterns on your walls.

Sew together to make tablemats.

Use them in the fridge (Who doesn't want a pretty fridge?)

Stitch two the same together and stuff with lavender.

Scrunch them up to make gorgeous crocheted roses.

Wrap soap in them and display in a bowl in the bathroom.

Save them to decorate your tree at Christmas.

Wrap presents in them.

Thread ribbon around their edges and pull together to make pretty drawstring gift bags.

String them up and use them as curtain tiebacks.

Wrap tiny little cakes in them on a party table.

Use as jam jar covers.

Use as shelf trims.

Use soft ones as napkins at the table.

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### **Mince Pies and Feather Duster Day.**

If you can't bear mince pies, how about a mincemeat cake? If only because it will make your house smell festively divine as it bakes...

Failing that take a packet of shop bought mince pies and heat them gently in the oven for the same delicious aroma.

Simmer some mulled apple cider in the crockpot...

Make Christmas tunes your housekeeping music of choice as you waft about with your feather duster...

Make your family smile by popping a couple of jingle bells inside the loo roll holder...

Fill little bowls with sugared almonds, nuts, wrapped sweets and candy canes and display on a tray in the living room, with nutcrackers and a few baubles...

Light candles everywhere you go. Add tea lights to bookshelves. Resolve to eat breakfast in the glow of the fairy lights for the rest of the week...

Make a hot chocolate tray: fill a tray with everything you need to make the most scrumptious warm drinks- cocoa, chocolate flakes, tiny marshmallows, oranges, flavoured essences (vanilla, coffee, orange?), brandy, cinnamon sticks, sugar, a tiny little whisk, your hot chocolate jug, huge cosy mugs, biscotti and amorette...

Dig out all the Christmas cd's and DVDs you own and put them in a basket near the TV, for impromptu festive viewing...

Put a Christmassy book on your bedside and a stack of Christmassy magazines in the bathroom...

Fill a basket with snuggly socks and warm blankets...

Wrap tiny tangerines in scraps of lace and display in a pretty bowl.

Rub cinnamon oil into any bare wood.

Open the windows, turn up the heat and let a little air into the house...

Add citrus scented oil to your dishwasher. Add a couple of drops of neroli, or pine scented oil to your BrocanteHome Surface Cleaner.

Put pine cones into a plastic bag, add a few drops of scented oil and shake. Leave to fragrance and then leave them lying anywhere you sit for more than a few moments: by the phone? Next to your computer?

Tie jingle bells onto a length of velvet ribbon and tie onto the handle of each door in the house for the tinkly sound of an angel getting her wings throughout the Christmas season...

Simmer orange slices with a pinch of all spice on the stove...

Launder and iron all the jammies and dressing gowns your family own, then hang scrumptiously clean, on padded hangers in their bedrooms, with a tiny little net pomander of cinnamon and other spices tied to the neck of the hanger...

Pop a tiny little ivy or vase of red roses in the fridge...

Iron a new set of scrumptiously clean tea towels and put them out in the kitchen (crisp white linen anyone? Festive red gingham?)

Press your Christmas Day pinny: you will be wearing one won't you??

Wile away a half hour or two hand washing your best glasses, then add them to a tray of spirits ready for unexpected callers...

Unwrap a Christmas present today. Go on, I dare you....

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### **Brocante-ing Your Bag...**

Tip it out and throw away anything obviously junk worthy.

Wipe out the inside and then take a good look at it. Is it past it's sell by date? Kind of ugly. Too old? Too new? Too heavy? Do you need a new bag? Go eBay something beautiful!!

Do you carry make up around? Is it manky? Do you use all of it on a daily basis? Really? I don't mean in a life or death, gotta see the teacher kind of way, but in a "need a touch up" kind of way. If not, cull it to the essentials, find a tiny vintage little purse and pop it inside. Keep an eye out for those cute little vintage lipstick holders with the mirrors on the side...

Do you think it would be sad if we colour coded the contents of our handbags? No, me neither. How's about raspberry and tobacco? Or coffee and cream? Everything pink? Yes please...

Now I don't know about you, but I need a notebook. Something tiny and pretty and pleasing. Not a reporters notepad please. Something fancy, wrapped in a ribbon to which you've attached a pen. Create a tiny little scrappy page or seven that represents your home: stick in fabric samples, paint colours, little representative images...

Brocante your mobile phone: Use it to store all essential info, so you don't need an address book in your bag. My friend Clare keeps a photo of her back garden on hers, so she can instantly transport herself back to her favorite place in the world...

Survival in an ugly world is guaranteed if we carry around a few little lifesavers: a couple of herbal teabags, some violet pastilles, Bach remedies, a vial of lavender oil etc, etc. Think gentile and ladylike...

It goes without saying that a few vintage handkerchiefs are essential...

Wrap a few photographs in ribbon and pop into a zip lock bag, or take the glass out of a teeny little diamante frame and carry your sweetheart around in style...

Old fashioned compact mirrors are ubiquitous at antique fairs and add a tiny bit of glitz to your life every time you look inside...

Pinning vintage paste brooches to your bag is oh so chic, but if it isn't possible, pin a little collection to the lining inside and smile at the glamour of it every time you open your bag...

Tie your house keys inside your bag with a plait of ribbon or braid. Use a tiny little fake flower as a key ring adornment, or keep an eye out for tiny bracelet charms and start a key ring charm...

Throw in a knot of your favorite fabric to which a few drops of your signature scent have been added, and blast a little spray of scent into your bag, every time you spray yourself...

Think pretty!

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**Puttery Treats For Winter.**

Make the decision to only go where you really must: this is a month for taking stock, for not cluttering our minds with new projects, unnecessary consumerism or idle gossip. So practise saying No. No Thank You, but really you are oh so kind for asking...

Wander around the house and gather up all your half finished crafty bits of this and that. Music you find too difficult to listen to when your mind is busy. Books you've always meant to read. And each day make a conscious effort to do them, read them, and listen to them. Perhaps there is a reason they are half finished. Maybe you will finally find the space and time to admit you don't enjoy them or maybe, just maybe, the sheer numbness of Fevrier will bring with it a new, enduring passion.

Get up very, very early. Just you. Creep downstairs, light candles and drink coffee in the dark, melancholy silence of an early Winter morning.

Or wait until everybody has left for school or work, then prepare yourself a really lovely breakfast tray. Carry it upstairs, get undressed and get back into bed. No one else but you has to know...

Call in the blues. Gather miserable c.d's and heartbreaking films together and spend a couple of hours wallowing in sorrow. Sounds miserable. Makes you feel great.

Strip back the bed and lay a huge fleecy blanket between the mattress cover and the sheet. Then if you are truly chilled to the bone, lay another blanket on top of the sheet, so you're fragile, gooseflesh never has to endure the bitter chill of cotton or linen...

Give the cold sheets a quick blast with a very hot hairdryer before you slip under the quilt...

Choose a pretty tin and make up some Fireside Coffee Mix. Light every candle you own as soon as dusk settles.

Wrap up warm and get into the garden to sweep away the debris of Winter on your doorstep, plant pretty Primulas in terracotta pots, inside and out and bring a little colour into what could be the most lifeless of all months.

Buy daffodils every time you buy milk. Really.

Knit socks. Take afternoon naps. And polish your furniture in that strange afternoon Winter light designed to reveal every airborne speck of dust...

Buy really good, organic butter and feast on the piece of heaven that is a buttery crumpet. At least twice a week. Or twice a day if the mood takes you.

Hand wash your favorite snuggly blanket, rinse it in something scrumptiously fragrant, then dry it in front of the fire as it's scent fills the air and the windows of your living room steam up deliciously. There is nothing quite so scrumptiously Wintery or homely as steamy windows...

Get into your pyjama's every day at four o'clock and refuse to leave the house thereafter.

Create a kindling basket full of pinecones, cinnamon sticks and herb bundles. Or stuff old toilet roll holders full of twigs, herb's, moss and waxed fire starters, then wrap in brown paper and tie with string.

Bake a lot of deliciously old fashioned cakes and take afternoon tea in your jim jams. I always think the most welcoming of houses always have home made cake tucked in a flowery tin somewhere.

Go on a treasure hunt for a vintage tea cosy. Or some of those fuzzy little boiled egg cosies. Have steaming tea and a boiled egg with soldiers for breakfast. Or lunch. Or even dinner.

Press your collection of vintage hankies. Then put them in a tin lined with eucalyptus scented paper. Add a little pot of Vicks and some vitamin C drops. Just in case...

Feel a bit sorry for yourself. Then go put a hyacinth next to your bed so it's deliciously heady fragrance is the first thing to greet you every morning.

Then snuggle up in all the cosy blankets you own, read lots of trashy novels, drink syrupy, treackly red wine, bake cheese and bacon scones, wear slippers, take lots of afternoon naps and wish as hard as you can for the joy that is March..