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## HOMEOWNER'S UPDATE

### Extend the Lifespan of Your Appliances

Home appliances are everyday necessities, but constant repairs or replacements can be costly. Keep these tips and tricks in mind to ensure your home appliances can go the distance.

#### Refrigerator and Freezer

Clear out your refrigerator and freezer every couple of months, wipe down all surfaces and dispose of old leftovers to keep bacteria at bay. Clean the coils with a damp cloth or a coil brush to keep your fridge cooling consistently. Don't forget to clean behind your fridge as well to keep dust from accumulating.

#### Oven

Clean your oven about every three months to avoid igniting a fire from grease buildup. Take advantage of your oven's self-cleaning setting, or use an oven cleaner if you have an older model. You can also make a DIY solution of baking soda, water and vinegar. Avoid placing foil on the bottom of your oven, as this can cause heat damage.

#### Dishwasher

Rinse off sauces and large pieces of food before placing plates and bowls in the dishwasher to avoid clogging filters and pumps. Ensure silverware and cooking utensils are facing away from the door and seals to prevent costly repairs.

#### Washer and Dryer

Try not to overload your washer. Check your owner's manual if you're unsure how much is too much. Also, avoid fire hazards by cleaning your dryer's lint trap regularly and its exhaust system once a year.

#### Filters

Whether on a furnace, air conditioner, range, dishwasher, or refrigerator, cleaning and replacing filters as needed will help your appliances operate more efficiently.

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### Minor Home Upgrades for Major Impact

Also in this issue...

**Minor Home Upgrades  
for Major Impact**

**Gardening Tips To  
Keep You in the Green**

**Refresh Your Closet in  
Six Simple Steps**

**Classic Bruschetta**

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Small changes can pack a big punch when it comes to home improvement. A simple modification may completely redefine an interior space. Consider these DIY projects for your home.

**Establish a focal point.** Search for a statement piece of art, such as a unique painting or sculpture. A vintage or one-of-a-kind item can add charm to your space while capturing your individual style.

**Upgrade doors.** Give interior doors a makeover with a fresh coat of paint. If doors are damaged or worn, consider installing new ones. Complete the look with stylish handles in a modern finish.

**Replace hardware.** Create a cohesive feel in your kitchen or bathrooms by installing coordinating knobs, pulls and other hardware. Opt for pieces that complement the existing style of your decor for a seamless and polished look that ties the room together.

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## Gardening Tips To Keep You in the Green

Nurturing a lush garden can come with a hefty price tag. But with a little planning and resourcefulness, your garden — and your wallet — can thrive. Try these clever mid-season gardening tips to save some green.

- Dollar stores, online swap sites, garage sales, and thrift stores are great sources for gardening supplies.
- Use grass clippings and leaves for mulch, or check with your community or local tree services to track down free mulch. If you need to buy mulch or soil, purchasing in bulk is usually more economical.
- Midsummer often brings hot weather, which increases watering needs. A soaker hose delivers water to the base of plants, reducing evaporation and wasted water.
- Rather than purchasing expensive chemical pesticides, try a cost-effective homemade solution. In a spray bottle, mix 1½ teaspoons of mild liquid soap with 1 quart of water. Spray directly on affected plant surfaces.
- At the end of the growing season, you can collect seeds from dried flowers and save them for next year. Or simply leave them alone and let them go to seed naturally.

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## Refresh Your Closet in Six Simple Steps

Whether you have a huge walk-in closet or a small storage nook, an overstuffed space can be overwhelming. Follow these steps to organize your hangers, hooks and hampers.

1. Remove everything, then decide what to keep, donate or toss. Purge what doesn't fit or is never worn.
2. Maximize space by adding shelves, hooks and an additional hanging rod. Add a clothes hamper with separate compartments for lights and darks.
3. Group similar items together and use matching hangers for a tidy look.
4. Store out-of-season clothing in unused closets or boxes.
5. Save space by placing folded sweaters and jeans in bins or on shelves.
6. Maintain your shipshape closet space by occasionally revisiting the "keep, donate or toss" method.

## Classic Bruschetta

### Ingredients

#### *Balsamic Glaze:*

2 Tbsp. brown sugar  
½ cup balsamic vinegar

#### *Bruschetta:*

5–7 fresh basil leaves, thinly sliced  
3–4 small tomatoes, diced  
Olive oil  
Baguette  
Basil leaves for garnish

### Directions

In a small saucepan, combine brown sugar and vinegar over medium heat. Bring to boil, reduce heat to low and simmer until the liquid is reduced by half, about 20 minutes. Set aside.

In a medium bowl, combine basil and tomatoes and toss together with a splash of olive oil. Slice baguette into ½-inch thick slices and drizzle lightly with olive oil. Place baguette slices on a hot grill or skillet and cook until lightly browned on each side. Spread baguette slices with tomato-and-basil mixture and lightly drizzle with balsamic glaze. Garnish with basil leaves.

*Serves 6–8*



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