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Frugal Kitchen Spruce Ups

By Kathleen Wilson

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Most of us spend a good deal of time in our kitchens these days, and it's not just for cooking. More homes are being built with the kitchen as the hub of the home, and even if you're on a tight budget, that shouldn't stop you from making it a pleasant and personal place to be!

If your cabinets are in need of a total overhaul, consider painting them. Nothing changes the look of a kitchen faster! Visit the library for info on faux finishing, or go to www.paintedhouse.com or www.fauxlikeapro.com, and turn a simple paint job into a one of a kind kitchen.

If you don't want the hard work that goes into total repainting, consider removing a cupboard door to make a display cabinet. Paint the entire interior of the cabinet a light or bright accent color, and put your prettiest on display. Or have someone good with power tools cut out the center panels of the doors, then shirr fabric over the inside to hide the contents of the cupboard...secure with a staple gun or Velcro tape.

Pick up inexpensive plate hangers from the hardware store and hang the saucers from your good china around the backsplash, or as a border. Don't have any china? Visit garage sales and thrift stores this weekend to pick up a bunch of sweet little plates for a song. (No, they don't have to match, or be fancy!)

Hang tea towels on the diagonal over your curtain rod for a fresh summer valance, and save some extra to stitch up into potholders and placemats.

Make a floor cloth to perk up your tired floors from a piece of remnant vinyl flooring you get at a home improvement center for just a few dollars. Turn the piece over to the backside, and give it a coat or two of good primer, then a coat of any basecoat color. Then use masking tape, stencils, stamps, sponges or freehand painting to impart a design that fits your room. Be sure to seal it with a couple of coats of

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water based polyurethane, and it will wipe clean for years! This is a great way to customize your kitchen for little money...lets face it, rugs are expensive, impossible to keep clean in a kitchen, and are usually the same old boring thing. This is also a great way to cover an aging or damaged floor, as you can make the floorcloth to whatever size you need.

Save empty bottles and fill with colored water to set on the windowsills, or line up the bottles and fill with one flower each from your garden.

Grow plants from seed on your windowsills! Even grass seed has become very vogue. (Don't tell anyone, because I usually shy away from "vogue", but I really like the grass thing!J)

Above all, invoke your family into the place where you spend the most time. I've heard some designers

say you should keep your refrigerator clear to prevent clutter, NO MAGNETS! But honestly, what would my kitchen be without my kids drawings stuck all over the door? It wouldn't be the place I want to spend most of my time. I even have a couple of framed photos of my kids, right on the kitchen counter! So make your kitchen YOUR home, and have fun doing it!

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Kathleen Wilson is the editor of a free ezine and website called The Budget Decorator. When she's not decorating or gardening she's caring for her 5 kids, 3 stepkids, and wonderful husband. You can get more info and free projects at her website <http://www.thebudgetdecorator.com>

Book Review: "Frugal Living for Dummies"

By Deborah Shelton

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Book Review: "Frugal Living for Dummies"
Reviewed by Deborah Shelton

"Frugal Living for Dummies"
by Deborah Taylor-Hough
Publisher: Wiley Publishing, Inc.
ISBN: 0-7645-5403-4

Price: \$16.99 US

Whatever your reason for wanting to save money (job loss, suddenly single-income, another child on the way, rising college tuition costs), arm yourself with Frugal Living for Dummies for super saving success.

This book details so much more than coupon-clipping. Some of the chapter topics include ideas for frugal family fun, thrifty cooking tips, ways to cut utility bills, setting a budget and lots of inexpensive gift ideas. And that's just the beginning! Frugal Living also provides icons in the margins that alert readers to important reminders, tips, super savers, special warnings, great ideas and handy checklists.

Each section is jam-packed with cost-cutting ideas for baby showers, back-to-school needs, dinner parties, gift giving, auto maintenance, home cleaning, dining out, laundry, family trips.... Basically, Deborah Taylor-Hough offers money-saving solutions for every aspect of your life.

Frugal Living for Dummies is an essential reference for your family collection. This book will make a practical and thoughtful gift for young couples just starting their lives together, college students on their own for the first time, single-income families, new parents, and anyone who needs

proven ways for cutting costs while keeping their sanity.

A must-have guidebook for the novice penny pincher as well as the seasoned dollar stretcher.

About the Reviewer: Deborah Shelton is a mother, freelance writer, and author of the brand new book, "The Five Minute Parent: Fun & Fast Activities for You and Your Little Ones." Visit Deborah's website for more family-friendly ideas: <http://www.fiveminuteparent.com>



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