

## Little Things Can Help Us Live Better, For Less Money

By Sasha Witte

If 2008 was about reassessing how we spend money as members of our American consumer society, than 2009 can be about learning to live better with less.

Even for friends I know whose jobs have been unaffected by the current economic climate, I watch them evaluating more carefully than ever before, the way they spend their discretionary income. With all that's been in the news of late, I understand their thoughtfulness.

I have collected a list of ways I believe we can experience life and our homes in new, simple and beautiful ways in 2009:

### Live Well Daily

I read an article recently about an interviewer chiding writer Joan Didion for using her good silver at the dining table each day. "She replied, "Why not? Every day is all there is." Another of my favorite quotes is, "The journey is the reward." Since the journey is a series of "everyday" moments, why not make those moments beautiful?

Enjoy the good china for your morning tea. Cluster a grouping of your favorite vases and objects of art to greet you on the entry table when you return home from work. Pull out your favorite and treasured afghan or

quilt that your grandmother made for you as a child and drape it across the back of your sofa for color and texture.

### Be Inspired

William Morris, father of the Arts & Crafts movement, famously said, "Have nothing in your home you do not find to be beautiful or useful."

If you look around your house or apartment and realize you don't feel a connection to the things that surround you, it's time to donate and send them on to someone who will treasure them. One at a time, collect objects and items that nurture and inspire you.

Consider enlarging and framing your best scenic photographs from favorite vacations or local vistas — as daily reminders of the places and people that you enjoy most. Seek out local young artistic talents whose work you love — and in doing this you can find original art for a fraction of what you would often even pay for a print by an already well-known artist.

Every direction you gaze in your home, your eye should be able to rest upon an object, a color or an image that brings a

smile to your face.

### Entertain Often

A recent Harvard study expressed that those with good friends living within a 12-mile radius live longer and happier lives. Foster those friendships with evenings shared at home. Make simple food and light lots of candles. Candles can hide a multitude of "sins" with their soft ambient light.

For simple and fresh ingredients, visit one of our local farmer's markets for some seasonal produce. These visits are also a visual treat — with all the beautiful rows of colorful fruit and vegetables recently harvested right here in Southern California.

Or pull out and dust off those old board games. Along with a bottle of wine (or two) and a pizza — you can connect with friends in a way a group trip to the movies will never achieve.

### Buy Local

Explore the local boutiques, flea markets and estate sales both when traveling and at home. Not only is the experience more fun than a visit to the mall or the big box stores, but you'll come home with more

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unique and personal finds.

Spending your money locally also helps the economy in your own back yard.

There are wonderful boutiques and one-of-a-kind stores here in Long Beach on Broadway, Fourth Street, Bixby Knolls and in Belmont Shore.

There is a local flea market the third Sunday of each month at Veterans Stadium. Visit early for the best selection. But, if you stay late you can sometimes get the best pricing because vendors don't want to have to repack and reload the unsold items into their trucks.

I wish for you and yours a beautiful year in 2009. And remember to enjoy something wonderful on each of your "every-days."

*Sasha Witte owns Sasha's Design on Broadway.*

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