

# HOUSE RULES

t h e p o d c a s t

## Episode 2: How to Decorate for Fall Without the Fuss

I'm Myquillyn Smith and this is House Rules.  
Welcome to Episode 2

Here in the northern hemisphere, we're starting to think about autumn. Much to my dismay, the change in seasons is less about an abrupt drop in temperature and more about creation's slow but steady pace of small changes over time.

It's already begun if you choose to notice. We've lived in Florida, Michigan and lots of states in between and although the seasons played out differently in each place we've lived, as I got familiar with nature in my own backyard, even if somehow I woke up from a coma and walked outside, I could spend a few minutes soaking it in and probably tell you what month it was. And I could for sure tell what season we were in.

By the end of this episode, you'll have a fresh perspective of how to incorporate your favorite parts of the season (this applies to any season) into your home and life. Whether you live in the northern or southern hemisphere, Key West or Seattle, there's a simple way to welcome the season in the way you truly need and want this year.

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If you've stepped into any type of retail store you've probably noticed that the fall decor is here. So much of it is beautiful. Although I wouldn't say that fall is my favorite season, it is my favorite season to decorate for. Maybe you can relate.

If you've scrolled Instagram or Pinterest, you've probably seen fall mantels, fall art, and fall vignettes. Sometimes, as I'm scrolling around online, all of the beautiful fall styling and images are so full and abundant, it takes me a minute to tell if I'm looking at a home where a family lives

or a styled surface in a shop. I admit, I'll double tap those overflowing fall images because often they're just gorgeous.

But, when I think about what I want for my own porch steps, my own mantle and my own coffee table, the thought of lugging 48 real or pretend pumpkins feels like a lot of work. And using up so much of the surface area in my home, only to display a bunch of store bought items that will need to be packed away for 10 or 11 months out of the year– well, it makes me tired.

There's absolutely nothing wrong with dozens of pumpkins along the steps, there's nothing wrong with having bins full of decor that need to be stored. But if that doesn't sound like the fall that you want this year, I'm here to tell you, there's another way to celebrate fall and to surround yourself with beauty without feeling like you have a part time job in shopping, styling, packing away and storing stuff.

You don't have to exclusively rely on store bought fall decor to create a home that feels like fall because the best and easiest way to welcome the season into your home is the exact same way you experience the season in your every-day life.

### **Through your five senses.**

When you allow your home to reflect the season in the same way that nature is modeling, it doesn't take much to make an impact. The simplest, most natural way for your home to feel like fall is to pay attention to the beautiful yet subtle changes that occur in the world and bring some of that inside.

Before I get caught up in buying every gorgeous brown, burgundy and rust color object I see in the stores, I go through the same simple routine to remind myself what I really want from my seasonal home. I consider what it is about the season that I love and look forward to and then I do my best to incorporate those things into our home.

I do this at the beginning of each season. Even though we're talking about fall today, if you're in the southern hemisphere you can apply this practice to spring. Or it also applies when you want to decorate seasonally for winter or summer.

Begin by gathering some photos of the great outdoors that feel like the season to you. You could do this in Instagram with the saves feature, you could screenshot images on your phone and organize them in a folder, you could collect images the old fashion way with a pair of scissors and a stack of magazines, or you could use my favorite way which is just to create a Fall Pinterest board.

Usually at the end of August or beginning of September, I'll start looking for more images to add to my Fall Pinterest board. All I do is look for images that feel like the autumn I'm craving and I try to keep the emphasis on nature.

There's really no wrong way to do this as long as you find a way to collect some fall photos. Your photos will probably look different than mine and that is the whole point. When we lived in Florida the grapefruits were beginning to ripen in the fall, in Michigan we were getting snow, and now we're in North Carolina and every fall the apples are ready to harvest. But to me, no matter where I live, the fall that I crave will always be the fall I grew up with in Southern Indiana with rustic covered bridges, muddy blue October evenings, and sycamore leaves on the ground in various shades of brown. You get to decide what type of fall you're drawn to.

Personally, I like to aim for 30 or so photos on my fall pin board. I collect those images over a couple of days, or a week, or maybe on a Saturday afternoon. I've been doing this for a long time so my fall inspiration board has over 300 images and I add to it each year. I'll go ahead and put the link to that in the show notes in case you want to use it to jump start your own board.

But no matter how you choose to collect some images, the goal is simply to remind yourself what fall feels like to you.

Okay, once you have your photos, how in the world do you turn inspirational photos of autumn in the outdoors into real changes in your home inside? Well I'm glad you asked.

It's so simple. Remember, we experience autumn in nature through our senses, so when it comes to bringing that feeling inside, you simply work through the five senses, adding a layer of each into your home.

I always like to start with the sense of smell and I like to end with the sense of sight.

### **Let's get started.**

**Scent** is powerful and they say it's the sense most directly linked to memory and emotion. When you think about adding scent to your fall home consider two things:

First, what does fall smell like to you? And if you're unsure, just refer to your pinboard. Maybe it's some type of pecan or apple pie? Or cinnamon rolls? Maybe it's leather, or a bonfire, leaves, s'mores?

The second thing I like to consider is just understanding the power of scent. Each season you can set the signature scent in your home. So if you use the same scent year after year you, your family, even your guests, will begin to link that scent with the season and the experiences that they have in your home. I like to pick one or two ways to switch up the scent in my home every fall. Maybe with a scented candle, essential oils, I've got that pura, making a simmering pot, hand soap, dish soap, counter spray, lighting a fire in the fireplace, or simply opening the windows.

Plus, cooking adds a wonderful aroma which leads us to the next sense on our list:

**Taste.** You know, the taste of fall is one of the best tastes around. I always look forward to getting back into the kitchen after a blazing summer. And this week the temperature dropped a few degrees and it was overcast and I received a brand new book, I got *The Cook's Book* by Bri McKoy. This book has recipes you can cook year round. But I was especially drawn to the soups and heartier recipes that felt like fall. I ended up making her Topsy Braised Short Ribs. They were delicious. My house smelled like heaven in the fall all day long, and then we got to eat heaven in the fall on our plates for dinner.

There aren't wrong or right tastes for fall, but make sure to make it a point to enjoy the tastes that you associate with the season. Maybe it's chili or a pumpkin spice latte? Bread from the local bakery or straight from your oven. It's not about making something from scratch, it's just about making sure you enjoy it.

This is also the time to consider if you have what you need to eat, cook and serve the fall foods that you require. Do you want to make a fall themed charcuterie board? Wonderful! Do you have a wood board large enough and presentable enough to use? Do you want to make soup and serve bread from the farmer's market? Great! Well, then do you have a big dutch oven to make your soup, do you have a ladle? A bread knife, a bread board? Do you have soup spoons and soup bowls? These supplies will continue to serve you through all of the seasons year after year.

I have a confession. As I look back at my old fall ways, I would get really excited about fall, and then run to my local store, grab a bunch of new decor to enjoy for six weeks and then stuff them in my overflowing orange bins, ready to be packed away for months at a time. But I did not have the supporting pieces that helped us truly enjoy the season in the way that I secretly longed for. I had three fall wreaths and zero bread knives, much less any bread. Now I have a milk frother, I have an iron skillet and soup spoons that help me welcome the taste of fall, and then they serve us again, over and over, the rest of the year.

Do you have the supplies you need to enjoy the food and drinks that you crave?

### **Let's talk next about the feel of fall and the sense of touch.**

Fall is all about coziness. Even if the temperature outside isn't freezing, if you love textures you can still find ways to incorporate them inside without looking like you live in the frozen tundra.

You want the things that people touch in your home to be inviting. Adding in some texture is a simple way to layer in the feel of fall. If you've been using the same lightweight throws around your house all spring and summer, it's time to launder them, you can fold them up and get them out again next spring. Look for a few beautiful and cozy throw blankets that add some texture. Add something nubby or furry or chunky to your space. If you're not sure about what colors to look for, maybe check in with your pinterest board, look for colors that are repeatedly showing

up. It might not be the school bus yellow and rusty reds. It could be anything. Maybe you'll want to go for something neutral and textural that you can use through both fall and winter?

Depending on when and if the temperature cools down where you live, fall could be a good time to switch out the cotton sheets for the flannel sheets, to layer a wool rug on the floor and to make sure everyone has a pair of house slippers and a robe or cozy jammies.

According to my pinboard, the one thing I look forward to feeling the most in the fall, is a warm fire. Whether that's in the firepit in the backyard, a gas fireplace or a wood stove. If you also have a longing for the warmth of a fire, now's the time to gather your supplies to make sure you can enjoy some type of fire.

A few years ago, we redid our basement and we wanted the feel of a real fire down there, even though there was not a fireplace. So we purchased an electric wood stove and it's been one of the best purchases we've ever made. It looks like an actual wood stove – it's black, it's tiny, it has little doors that open and it even puts out heat. So it has a pretend fire and it looks pretty decent. So, for a few years we even tucked that little wood stove into our real fireplace in the upstairs when we felt like it. But the most wonderful thing was, it just added that sense of fall that we really needed. So, I'll put a link to that in the show notes as well in case you're curious about it.

### **Let's move on to the sound of fall in autumn.**

Mary Randolph Carter says that music is the salt and pepper of an evening. And I believe when you surround yourself with music, you're creating the soundtrack of your life.

I like to create a playlist for every season and, to me, autumn is all about the banjos. So, I'll add my seasonal playlist below, but really the point is for you to create your own playlist to be the soundtrack for your best autumn life.

Make sure you've got a way to listen to that playlist when you're home. We've been using a portable bluetooth speaker, when people are over I can control the volume from my phone or watch, it's perfect.

### **Finally, we get to talk about the sense of sight and the look of our fall home.**

But first, I want you to think about what your home would feel like after you layer in the other four senses before you start to add in items that cater to the look and decor of your home.

You wake up in the morning, you light your fall candle or maybe after work have some crusty bread heating up in the oven. The aroma is the first thing everyone notices when they walk in through the door.

Maybe you grabbed some apple butter at the local farmstand and it tastes just like fall spread on that bread hot from the oven.

Your toes are snug in your fuzzy slippers or maybe it's still 80 degrees outside and you look over and get to enjoy the texture of your new cozy throw on the arm of the sofa.

Your fall playlist is playing in the background.

Your home feels like fall, and you haven't added any "fall decor" to the surfaces yet.

Maybe you find that you need a lot less than you originally thought to create the feeling of fall.

*Now it's time to decorate.*

You've welcomed the seasons with four of your senses a layer at a time. This layer might only need a light touch – or, if you are more of a maximalist, you can add in as much as you'd like to get the look you're after.

I always start with pillows and greens to add the look of any season.

I usually change out my pillows every fall. I use pillow covers with a zipper so I'm only actually changing up the outer fabric and using the same down insert. My fall pillows are usually neutral enough to work through the winter and my spring pillow covers usually work through summer.

In the fall, I look to my pinboard to guide my color choices, making sure to choose pillows and pillow covers in the versions of fall colors that work with what I already have happening in the room.

Now for the greens. When I talk about greens, I mean live or faux plants, flowers, could be cuttings, branches, weeds, whatever. Fall is especially fun because you get to use dead or preserved plants and they fit right in. I make sure to add in some fall "greens" in the form of stems, or branches, or dried things around the house. Layered in with the other four senses, that's kind of all it takes for my home to feel in keeping with the season.

As the season moves closer to Halloween, a lot of times I'll pull out some black drippy candles. As soon as I see some weird, warty pumpkins and gourds at our local farmers market, I'll grab a couple of huge pumpkins. I like to find ones large enough to have an impact if they're sitting alone in the center of a coffee table or dining room table. I call that a statement pumpkin and I've learned I'd rather purchase a couple huge live statement pumpkins every year and support our local farmer, than purchase a bunch of tiny, small plastic pumpkins that I have to store away

and keep up with. I like getting to buy something new, I like getting to throw it away in the woods at the back of the yard once I'm done with it.

If you need a change for the way you approach your fall home, I hope today gave you some new ways to think about layering in supplies that you can use and enjoy throughout the fall season in ways that won't exhaust you. If you want to learn more about decorating for the seasons you might enjoy the book that I wrote about that very topic, it's called Welcome Home.

The goal of your home is for you to use it and love it. Whether you have one real pumpkin or a hundred pretend pumpkins, if you love and use them, then you're doing it right.

Here's to home.

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Thanks so much for listening. If you found this episode helpful and want to hear more words about home, I'd love for you to subscribe and leave a review.

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