

# HOUSE RULES

t h e p o d c a s t

## Episode 9: What's Your Decorating Era?

I'm Myquillyn Smith and this is House Rules.  
Welcome to Episode 9.

Two years ago, I was once again at one of my favorite antique malls: Main Street Antiques in Mooresville, NC. Y'all I promise I go to other places besides antique malls. But at one of the very first booths there was a vintage sofa, it was a camelback shape – which if you've heard me teach about how to buy a sofa you won't hate tomorrow, you know this is one vote already in favor of this particular sofa. It was a warm brown brushed velvet—so swoony, and it said it was horsehair stuffed which meant: it was old. I loved it and the price was right. The problem was, I wasn't in the market for a sofa. Not only was I not in the market for one, even if I purchased it there was zero place in my house to put the sofa. Even though I had the money burning a hot hole through my pocket, I was not in a season of adding large pieces of furniture to my home and I knew it. This sofa, although amazing, and a great price, didn't match the personal decorating era I was in. And I had to pass on it and wish him well.

Then, this past summer, I stopped by the Salvation Army in Hickory, NC. Once again, in the sea of sofas my eyes went straight to a camelback style sofa. This time it was in a warm, polished cognac in all his orangy glory. The sofa was marked \$150 and furniture was on additional sale that day. This camelback was in great, perfectly imperfect condition, we had recently moved to another house, and this house still had empty walls and rooms. And I was in a different era. Although I didn't know exactly where the sofa would go, I knew I was in a better place to buy it. And I did. With confidence. It's the very sofa you see on the graphic for this podcast.

By the end of today's episode, you'll understand how to know what decorating era you're in today and why it matters.

+++

Making decisions for and in our homes can be overwhelming. There have been times in my life that the biggest issue in my house has been ME. My own insecurities, coming to terms with the home we have, learning to see my limitations as wonderful opportunities – I call those Lovely Limitations. At the time, I truly believed I was the only soul on earth working through those types of feelings. But now I know that's an Era. And lots of us – almost all of us – have experienced living in a home that doesn't quite match up with the dream that we have, and we need to figure out how to move forward within that reality.

When you know the era you're in, you can seek out help, encouragement, camaraderie, mentors, and mindsets to help you through to the next phase. But sometimes you don't realize what you're in is an Era.

30 years ago, I was starting out as a newlywed in an apartment that my husband chose as a bachelor, and the only mentor available was Martha Stewart. One of the main ways to learn was through her beautiful magazine Martha Stewart Living. I am a Martha fan, I think she's an icon. But my subscription to Martha Stewart Living in 1995 probably hurt me just as much as it helped because I didn't have the right mindset. I can remember opening the magazine, y'all this is back when I think HGTV started maybe six months before. So we didn't have it yet. I was thankful, and still am, for Martha Stewart because she is the queen of all things home. But, I was 21 years old in an apartment, looking at Martha's calendar for the month, where she had daily tasks laid out. So there were lots of hosting duties, gardening chores, home upkeep, and that all made perfect sense for a grown up, East Coast, 50 year old lady with multiple homes to keep up with. Not so much for me. But I didn't know what to think, I didn't realize I simply wasn't there yet, and that it was a different era. Instead I just felt bad that I didn't have that.

One great thing about Martha is that she's truly gifted in all things home. From decor to hosting, gardening, seasonal decorating, cooking, DIYing, I still appreciate that she gets her hands dirty even now at the age of 82. I'm sure Martha wasn't born knowing how to do all the things she does. Like all of us, she had to learn over time and focus on different things depending on her life's circumstances. She's had eras too.

I still remember the very first rental home I ever saw featured in a magazine. It gave me more hope and inspiration than every single feature I had ever seen added together until that point. I was currently in a rental at the time I saw it, and the magazine spread showed images from a family who lived in military housing. It was incredible, it was beautiful, it was the most personally inspiring home I had ever laid eyes on. It was one of the very things that convinced me that even though I lived in a rental, I could make the most of it too. I didn't have to wait for better circumstances. I had hope, and now I had a mentor, in the form of one magazine article that I ended up saving for years. I had a goal. I needed inspiration to meet me where I was and I didn't know to look for it. But luckily, one day it fell into my lap in the form of a feature in a favorite shelter magazine. I can still remember showing that article to my husband Chad, proclaiming: They live in a rental house!!! It was the encouragement and focus I needed at that

moment in my life for the home decorating era I was in. That single piece of encouragement carried me through an entire era.

In September of 2019, I attended a weekend workshop at Jeanne Oliver's house. If you don't know Jeanne, be prepared to fall in love. It was at a point in my life where we had finally settled into our fixer upper and fixed a lot of her up. We had hosted festivals at our home and property for three years up to that point. It was called the Nest Fest, maybe you've been there, each one had over 1,000 people in attendance. And I longed to host smaller groups of little classes at my home and barn. But I had never actually attended a small class at someone's home and I'm a big believer that if I'm gonna do something, I have to experience it first.

So, I had followed Jeanne for years after seeing one of her Christmas tours of her home and it was so lovely. Jeanne is an artist and a teacher, among other things, and although I wasn't currently interested in art classes, I was interested in Jeanne. She had a unique way that showed up in how she decorated her home and also, more importantly, how she used it. I signed up for Jeanne's email list and from time to time she'd invite her online community to her property and studio for weekend workshops. One workshop was called Creatively Made Business and I thought that could be a good fit for me. I even contacted Jeanne because I had an ulterior motive. Yes, I run an online business and I want all the advice and help I could get, but what I really wanted was to watch and learn how she hosted a small event at her home. So she told me to come and that I did.

That meant, I had to fly to Colorado by myself, and for the first time ever in my life I rented my own car from an airport, drove to a hotel, then drove to Jeanne's house every single day. I didn't know anyone else who was going to be there, nor had I ever met Jeanne. I knew it would be worth it, because all good things have a cost.

It's no exaggeration to say that experiencing Jeanne's home, her property and her hosting was life changing for me. I also learned that Jeanne and I share the same enneagram number so it was especially eye opening for me to watch how she hosted, how she managed her energy, and where she focused her time.

What Jeanne taught about business was spot on and fantastic. What I learned about hosting a weekend workshop will be put into practice next week when I finally host my first small workshop. But what I took away from Jeanne's, besides a burning desire to host small groups at my own home, was the attention to detail in her home. It was moving, memorable and if I was forced to summarize the visit to Jeanne's house that weekend into one word, that word would be DETAILS.

You walked into her studio just a few steps from her home and there was a wood stove with stacks of wood at the ready. Candles were lit and it smelled delicious. A record player quietly crackled in the background. There was artwork on the walls, art supplies were sitting out. They were organized, but loved and used and kind of tattered just perfectly. There was an inviting seating area with slubby natural rugs over the concrete floor, a coffee table with open books,

candles burning, a ukulele or some kind of instrument laid across the sofa, ready to be picked up. There was a bar cart with drink supplies, artwork and foraged greens layered all over different surfaces. I had just turned in the manuscript of my last book, *Welcome Home*, that talked about how to welcome seasons with your five senses, and here was someone doing it way better than me and it was IMPACTFUL. And it worked! The layers of meaning, beauty, nature, story and soul created the most comforting, magical place.

In the recent past, we had moved from house to house, and for the past 6 years we had put all of our energy into that fixer upper – we needed new walls, trim, ceilings and floor. And Jeanne's home reminded me of the power of details. Of meaningful beauty. My eyes were open to the fact that it was time to include a layer of soul to my own home. I suddenly realized I needed to do something different in my home, and I was ready for my next era.

Looking back I would have paid the ticket price and gone to the rental car trouble just to spend three hours looking around Jeanne's home and studio and property. They were that inspiring. That was exactly what I needed in that particular season of my life. Her soulful home and presence full of detail and meaningful beauty met me exactly where I needed to be. Sidenote, if you also want to learn how to host small workshops in your home Jeanne now has a workshop about that very topic and I know it's worth its weight in lamps. It's called the Art of Gathering and if I were you I'd get on her email list to learn more, I'll make sure we put that in the show notes.

When you understand the era you're in, you understand the type of encouragement, mentors, and experiences you need most.

And although I'm sure there are lots of ways to classify and identify eras, looking back over my life I can see five distinct eras I've experienced. I've been in some many times and sometimes they overlap. Sometimes I'm in one major era for years, other times an era might just last a month.

Understanding eras has helped me know what to focus on – what types of purchases to make, what creators, designers, artists, and teachers to pay closer attention to and maybe who to let their words take a backseat for a while. It helped me know where to put my resources and thoughts, how I needed to budget, and how I should prepare myself.

The era I'm in can have to do with the house where we live, maybe circumstances of our life at home and in our family, the literal season or time of year, maybe special occasions we have coming up. So much can affect your personal era and understanding that there is a time and season to make certain types of decisions and changes can be encouraging and help us not be overwhelmed with what could be done. And instead we can listen to where we are and focus on the good that is there.

So, are you wondering what the eras are and what era you're in? I sure hope so.

I created a fun little quiz to help you consider your own decorating era with some suggested resources that you might find encouraging.

Of course, the quiz is free and I'll link to it in the show notes. I want to remind you there is no wrong era, they all have a different focus and I've been in all of them multiple times and will probably go through them each again in the future. Understanding your era is a little step to understanding yourself and your unique circumstances at this moment in time.

+++

Are you still here? Thank you so much for listening, I've recently received a lot of questions about the music we use here. It's a song called Dream of Home and I had to purchase the rights to use it on the podcast, so it's not something out in the world we can add to our seasonal playlists, sadly. But I asked my sound producer, sound engineer Kam, to include a longer version of it for a few weeks so you can hear more of the homey lyrics. I hope you enjoy!