

CAREFREE *Country*

LEARN HOW TO CAPTURE THE
FRENCH COUNTRY FEEL IN YOUR
OWN HOME BY MAKING THE MOST
OF EVERY SEASON.

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THE RUSTIC CHARM OF FRENCH COUNTRY DÉCOR is a coveted look most romantic homeowners strive to create.

For Sharon Santoni, living in Normandy makes it all the simpler. Her house lies in a valley just an hour away from Paris, nestled between farmland and a forest. Her flowers, food and even the décor are all determined by the seasons. If you've ever wondered how you can have the French country look in your own home throughout every season, follow Sharon's example.

POPS OF GARDEN COLORS

Flowers bring a liveliness to every room. Throughout Sharon's home, fresh blooms pop with color against white walls and porcelain pitchers, and all of the flowers come from Sharon's own garden.

"I see my garden as a palace of colors," Sharon says. "The only time I buy flowers is in the winter, when I can use fresh greenery from my garden, but

“A little bit of
shabby
does no harm at all.”

A PRETTY, FEMININE BEDSPREAD in the guest cottage brightens up the room and makes each of Sharon's guests feel right at home.



[left]
PEONIES BRING
an instant romantic French cottage look. These are from Sharon's personal garden.

[right]
A HOME SHOULD BE COMFORTABLE,
according to Sharon. She is not against muddy boots in the kitchen or her dog resting on an armchair.



not flowers. From early spring through the end of September, I use my own flowers in all my decorating.”

Seasonal blooms stand out against her neutral backdrop of white and gray. On her dining room table, soft white linens and napkins emphasize her colorful blossoms all the more. “All of my linens are vintage or antique,” Sharon says. “I have cupboards and cupboards of linens. I love linens.” The vintage quality and embroidered hems make them simple, elegant tablecloths or napkins for any dinner party.

TASTY DÉCOR

It's impossible to accomplish the French country look without including food as part of the décor. Almost every table in Sharon's home is decorated with seasonal fruits, vegetables and homemade treats.

Although Sharon grows some of her own produce, she also purchases food from the local farmers near her property. Plus she always eats what's in season. “We like to eat food that is in the right season,” Sharon says. “We grow some fruits and vegetables in



**WOODEN CUTTING
BOARDS,** a freshly
baked pie on the
center island and fresh
blooms on the counter
space epitomize French
country style.



the garden. For example, in the spring we're eating a lot of strawberries. I like eating food in season because you can look forward to it ... as the seasons come around."

Aside from growing her own food, Sharon and her husband also enjoy cooking. She shares some of her favorite recipes in her book, *My French Country Home*, and decorates many of her tables with freshly baked tarts and scones.

"Entertaining is such a big part of everyday life here," Sharon says. "My husband comes from a long line of great cooks, and these are my family's personal recipes." Adding croissants and seasonal fruits to your breakfast table next to a pitcher full of fresh blooms goes a long way toward creating the French country feel in your home.

The French country lifestyle is *carefree*
and spontaneous, and your
home can be too.



WHEN HOSTING OUTDOOR DINING EVENTS for her friends and family, Sharon adds a touch of luxury by using her antique linens and a floral chandelier.



THE PRECIOUS AND THE RUSTIC

When it comes to maintaining the French country look throughout the seasons, Sharon offers a bit of advice. Aside from using seasonal blooms and decorating her tables with vintage linens, she suggests always keeping it real. “The French country look is a mix of old and new,” Sharon says. “It can’t be too rich or precious. It has to be real. We raised four children and two dogs in our house. A little bit of shabby does no harm at all.”

Also, don’t overthink it, she suggests. In the end, your home is just meant to make you feel at home. Change with the seasons, and let fresh blooms be your centerpiece for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Purchase fresh fruits and veggies from your local farmer’s market, and bake breakfast pastries or desserts to go with them.

Make the most of neutral colors such as white, off-white or gray in your napkins, tablecloths or runners to emphasize your floral centerpiece. This approach will brighten up your home and make it appear all the more welcoming. The French country lifestyle is carefree and spontaneous, and your home can be too. *///*



[opposite, left]
AS A TRADEMARK GESTURE, Sharon likes to leave one single bloom or sprig on each of her guests' plates.

[opposite, right and bottom]
ON SUNNY DAYS, Sharon enjoys gardening and sitting on her terrace.

EVEN ON THE LAUNDRY LINE, her linens glow and contrast beautifully with the brickwork of her house.



[above] **"I'M A MESSY PAINTER,"** Sharon says. "I only paint in the summer because I can paint outside." When the weather permits, she will spread a thick quilt in her garden, set up her canvas, and paint away.

[opposite, below] **FOR HER OUTDOOR DINING TABLE,** Sharon juxtaposes lush, pink roses with wooden chairs and a black tablecloth to create a comfortable yet luxurious outdoor luncheon.

