

Her French COUNTRY HOME

British-born author and entrepreneur Sharon Santoni has held a lifelong fascination for French culture. With generosity of spirit, she invites women to experience the singular beauty of this beloved European destination.

TEXT MELISSA LESTER PHOTOGRAPHY JANE HOPE



Sharon Santoni, pictured below left, felt an instant connection to her property in the countryside of Normandy, above right. From spring to autumn, flowerbeds grace the front lawn with a shifting kaleidoscope of color.





The quiet of early morning finds Sharon Santoni taking in the wonders of her surroundings. The calendar promises a shopping excursion to Paris—an easy distance from her home in Normandy—but even the City of Light’s most notable *brocantes* cannot compete with the natural gifts found within this pastoral oasis. Cup of tea in hand, she surveys cascades of roses, tangles of nigella, and clusters of foxgloves while her dogs frolic nearby.

“As soon as I saw this house, it felt just right,” Sharon says. “We are on the edge of a small village, and my children grew up riding in the forest, canoeing on the river, and hosting many a great party in the garden.” Built in the late 1850s, the classical *maison de maître* features the symmetrical design and comfortable footprint for which this style of architecture is known. Thick stone walls keep the interiors warm in the winter and cool in the summer. And during temperate weather, the boundaries between house and garden blur as fragrant breezes waft in through doors and windows flung open to invite fresh air.

Retreating to her office allows Sharon to figuratively open a window to her world. She originally left her childhood home in England to attend college in the city of Nice, but plans to study abroad for one



For Sharon, drawing loved ones to the table for a dinner party with friends, or even an intimate family meal, is always an occasion for fresh flowers. “It’s another way to live with the seasons,” she says.



Above left: Sharon's first book, My Stylish French Girlfriends, presents a slice of everyday life for each woman profiled. Her second volume, My French Country Home: Entertaining through the Seasons, showcases a year of her own celebrations. Below right: A subscription to My Stylish French Box delivers Sharon's curated assortment of European finds to the Francophile's doorstep.



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Clockwise from right: Simple pleasures of Sharon's lifestyle include collecting antique French textiles, tending her brimful garden, and hanging linens out to dry. Opposite: Softly gathered drapes frame a lush garden vista.



year ultimately established a new course for her life. She embarked on a career, married a Frenchman, and finally settled in the countryside of Normandy to raise a family.

"While I am fully living a French life," she says, "I can still see French living from an objective point of view." Keen appreciation for her adopted land's customs, cuisine, and décor prompted Sharon to launch her popular blog, *My French Country Home*. From there, her desire to share glimpses of provincial charm grew organically to include writing books, hosting luxury tours, and curating a quarterly subscription box of regional treasures.

Whatever the creative pursuits on her agenda, Sharon's days usually end where they began: breathing in the tranquility of the outdoors. Whether she shares a glass of wine with her husband or gathers friends for a gourmet feast, evenings unfold amid the seasonal bounty of this bucolic setting. And when stars twinkle overhead, Sharon retires to her boudoir, where the gentle *ouh ouh* of owls in the garden lulls her to sweet dreams of bliss. *℥*

"I LOVE THE QUALITY OF OUR EVERYDAY LIFE HERE—THE ATTENTION TO DETAIL, THE BEAUTIFUL ARCHITECTURE AND COUNTRYSIDE."

—Sharon Santoni