

Ask Charlie: The Lost Art Of Homemaking [C1]

Orgogliosa madre di tre figli, casalinga e influencer, ha conquistato milioni di persone con i suoi consigli su cucina, cucito e genitorialità, trasformando le faccende domestiche in un'arte.

Do you know how to make marmalade, grow your own [spring beans](#), or repair a [woollen jumper](#)? Charlie Gray does! And she's been teaching these and other practical skills through videos posted on her website as well as on YouTube and Instagram. Since launching her brand in 2018, the British [homemaker](#) and influencer has attracted tens of thousands of followers worldwide.

TUTORIALS

Gray, who is forty-four, grew up in the south of England and learnt essential homemaking skills from her parents. When she became a full-time, stay-at-home mother, she realised that many people have never learnt these skills, and that she was now in a position to teach them. In 2018, she started her website, Ask Charlie, and began to upload tutorial videos about everything to do with homemaking, from [cookery tips](#) to organising children's birthday parties, [sewing](#), [ironing](#), and managing [household](#) routines, even pet care, gardening, and seasonal decorating.

A REVIVAL

Charlie's online courses are available with a subscription to her website starting at £15 a month. She also offers them at her lovely home in the West Sussex countryside, where she lives with her husband, Simon, and their children Archie, Coco, and Gus, surrounded by animals, including ponies and chickens. Her contribution to reviving what was becoming a lost art has been widely applauded. To find out more, we met with Charlie Gray. As she told Speak Up, a subject called 'home economics' was once taught in British schools but has since been [removed](#) from the curriculum. This means that

many young people never learn practical skills, which will help them look after themselves and each other. **Charlie Gray (English accent):** Particularly here in England, there isn't [aren't] home economics lessons at school anymore. And these practical skills I found were being lost over the years, and I felt that actually they were really important and it's really important to be able to know how to do these things. And particularly when it comes to food, we are what we eat and if we eat good food, we're gonna feel good. There's been such a rise in ready meals and instant food and things like that, and actually it's not that healthy for us. And I think now we're really looking at ways to cut back on ultra-processed food and cook from scratch. And I love teaching, I've always loved teaching and so, through my YouTube, TikTok and Instagram, I teach practical skills.

MUM AND DAD

And as Charlie explained, she got her love for both homemaking and teaching from her parents. **Charlie Gray:** Mainly from my mother. So mum... I didn't realise that she was teaching us these things. I just thought it was normal. I thought everybody knew how to do these things 'cause their parents had taken the time to share them. And it wasn't until we had our own children, my husband and I, and we had au pairs, mainly from Spain and Italy, [but] they would come and they wouldn't necessarily know how to do the laundry and the ironing or to stitch something up if it needed mending or, you know, basic cookery. So I took the time to teach them how to do these things, and it just became apparent that actually my mother really had put a lot of time and effort into teaching us these skills and not everybody else had parents that did that. My father also taught me a lot of stuff. Every Sunday we would clean our shoes with him before we went to church. So I was lucky, but I also have a real interest in it. I love homemaking, I love all things about the home. I get a huge pleasure and satisfaction from doing all of these things.

FACE TO FACE

While homemaking skills have been devalued in recent times, a revival took place during the pandemic. Today, Charlie also leads courses in person at her West Sussex home. We asked her more about them. **Charlie Gray:** There's nothing like time with people face to face, and I get a lot of ideas when I'm talking to people when they say "I'd like to learn how to do this." It's a two-way feedback which you don't get when you're doing stuff online, it's just one way, apart from the comments. But actually when you're in person you can really communicate, you can really get to know people and I love that.

A REAL MIX

While Charlie herself fits the archetype of a traditional homemaker, she was delighted to see just how diverse a group her students were. **Charlie Gray:** I would have thought it would have been women in their mid-thirties... would be the target audience I was aiming for, but actually I have people... I think the youngest person I'm aware of is ten years old and the eldest is eighty-five! And I have men, I have women... There's quite a lot of university students that follow me. So it's a real mixture and I love that. A lot of people said to me when I started "You need to niche down. You're too general. You need to find your niche and just focus on that." But I didn't want to do that. And so I've done everything to do with the home and garden and family life and children and seasonal things and Christmas and Easter and whatever it might be.

A BETTER WAY

Some people argue that homemaking skills are easy, not essential, or even take away other peoples' jobs. We asked Charlie about that. **Charlie Gray:** There's nothing wrong with paying somebody to come and clean your house. And yes, we don't all have time to bake our own bread, but it's so much healthier if you do cook your own food, and I really do believe you are what you eat, and if you put good nutritious food into your body, you're gonna feel better. And I don't think cooking from scratch needs to take too much time.

It doesn't need to be really stressful, and if you plan and you're organized, then you can **batch cook** meals, put them in the **freezer** and you can **pull out** a healthy, nutritious meal. So I think it is really important to make the time to cook. You might not be the best cook, which is why, through my videos, I really take you step by step how to do it.

YOUTH REVIVAL

As Charlie explains, the role of the **homemaker** has been devalued in recent times and is even equated with a sexist past era. However, younger generations of all genders are playing a key role in its revival. **Charlie Gray:** Yeah, definitely, definitely, definitely. But I think there seems to be a **shift back** to it, particularly a younger generation in their early twenties. I think they really want to learn how to do these things and I think it's also really good for your mental health to do these things yourself. It's a real **sense of achievement** and satisfaction when you've cleaned your bedroom and you come back in and you're like, "Oh, I did that!" and you **take pride in** your work, it actually **lifts your spirit** and **boosts your mood**. So I do think it is really important to have these skills for our mental health. Sometimes as a parent, it's easier to do it yourself than to teach your children and to stop and be like, "Let me show you how to do this, so next time you know how to do it." It's just quicker and easier to do it yourself. Also, you might not want the **mess** in your kitchen of your children cooking and baking, but actually if you don't take the time to teach them, they're never going to know. I think it's, yeah, our job as a parent to teach and **pass on** these skills.

GENDERLESS IDEAL

So, are boys and men as open to learning these skills as women? **Charlie Gray:** Definitely, I think they are, so it's not a sexist thing at all. These are skills for everybody. You know, my husband will **vacuum**, he will **empty the dustbins**, he will cook a meal, he will **wash up**. If I'm busy doing things, then I don't **wait on him hand and foot**. I do admit that I do all of his **ironing**, he's not great with an iron! But I'm not great at some things that he

does better than me. So it's learning your strengths and working on them. www.askcharlie.how If you want to know more about this topic, read the article Charlie Gray: I Am Not A Tradwife.

Glossary

- **ironing** = stiratura
- **cut back** = ridurre
- **fits** = incarnare, adattarsi
- **aiming** = avere come obiettivo
- **niche down** = specializzarsi
- **whatever it might be** = qualunque cosa possa essere
- **ready meals** = piatti pronti
- **pull out** = tirare fuori
- **sense of achievement** = senso di realizzazione
- **stitch something up** = rammendare
- **delighted** = felice
- **argue** = sostenere
- **bake** = cuocere al forno
- **freezer** = congelatore
- **cookery** = cucina
- **from scratch** = da zero
- **I'm aware** = essere consapevole
- **lifts your spirit** = sollevare lo spirito
- **homemaker** = casalinga
- **batch cook** = cucinare in grandi quantità
- **pass on** = trasmettere, insegnare
- **empty the dustbins** = svuotare i bidoni della spazzatura
- **spring beans** = fagiolini
- **woollen jumper** = maglione di lana
- **tips** = trucchi, consigli
- **sewing** = cucito
- **mess** = disordine
- **vacuum** = passare l'aspirapolvere
- **wash up** = lavare i piatti
- **removed** = rimuovere
- **became apparent** = diventare evidente
- **take pride in** = essere orgoglioso di
- **wait on him hand and foot** = servire qualcuno in tutto e per tutto

- **household** = domestiche
- **shift back** = ritorno
- **boosts your mood** = migliorare l'umore