

A Desert Dweller's Guide to Hygge

Written by Melissa Larsen

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The Danish concept of hygge (pronounced "hoo-ga") has made its way stateside, encouraging Americans to embrace of a lifestyle of comfort, togetherness and well-being. Basically, hygge means enjoying a cup of hot coffee fireside on a rainy day under a cozy throw blanket—and we're all about it this holiday season. Here's where to enjoy some local hygge and how to infuse a little more of it into your own home.



AFM: What is hygge?

MW: Hygge has been called everything from 'the art of creating intimacy,' 'coziness of the soul' and 'cocoa by candlelight,' and some of the key ingredients are togetherness, relaxation, indulgence, presence and comfort.

The true essence of hygge is the pursuit of everyday happiness, and it's basically like a hug, just without the physical touch.

AFM: Does it matter where one lives in regard to practicing hygge?

MW: Hygge is accessible for everyone. In my travels, I hear from people that already practice hygge but might not have had a word for it before. Hygge gives us the language, the objective and the methods for planning and preserving happiness—and for getting a little bit more of it every day.

AFM: What is the greatest lesson that Americans can learn from Danes in regards to creating happiness?

MW: Hygge is a part of the cultural DNA in Denmark. I guess, perhaps hygge is to the Danes what freedom is to the Americans. It is also something that we seek out. Danes plan for *hyggelige* times and reminisce about them afterward.

AFM: If you had to put together a hygge "starter kit," what would be in it?

MW: Put some candles, or as they are called in Danish, *levende lys*, or 'living lights,' in a hygge emergency kit with good-quality chocolate, tea, a blanket, a good pair of woolen socks and your favorite book or TV series for when you need get cozy and get happy.

AFM: So, what is the greatest secret to happiness in your opinion?

MW: Hygge can help promote happiness in a few ways.

1) TOGETHERNESS

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Hygge fosters a special way of being together with your loved ones. Today, when happiness researchers analyze the common denominators among those who consider themselves happy, a pattern emerges without exception that these people have meaningful and positive social relationships. Studies also show that when individuals experience social isolation, many of the same brain regions become active that are active in the experience of physical pain.

2) GRATITUDE

According to Robert A. Emmons, professor in psychology at University of California, Davis, and one of the world's leading experts on gratitude, people who feel grateful are not only happier than those who do not but also more helpful and forgiving and less materialistic. Hygge may help us to be grateful for the everyday because it is all about savoring simple pleasures. Hygge is making the most of the moment, but hygge is also a way of planning for and preserving happiness.

3) FOCUS ON THE EVERYDAY

Hygge functions as a driver for happiness on an everyday basis. Hygge gives us the language, the objective and the methods for planning and preserving happiness—and for getting a little bit of it every day. Hygge may be the closest we come to happiness when we arrive home after a long day's work on a cold, rainy day in January. And let's face it, this is where most of our lives will play out. Not on cold, January days, but every day. Once a year—or more, if we are lucky—we may find ourselves on a beach in some exotic country, and we may find both hygge and happiness on these distant shores. But hygge is about making the most of what we have in abundance: the everyday. Perhaps Benjamin Franklin said it best: 'Happiness consists more in small conveniences or pleasure that occur every day than in great pieces of good fortune that happen but seldom.'

Homey Goods

Light the fireplace, and let these made-for-getting-cozy wares do the rest of the work—or lack thereof—for an at-home hygge experience.



Lit: Rituals Touch of Magic Massage Candle, \$37. [rituals.com](https://www.rituals.com).



Pom & Circumstance: Studio Life.Style [Pom Pom Throw](https://www.studio-lifestyle.com), \$80. [studio-lifestyle.com](https://www.studio-lifestyle.com).

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Iconic: Tea Forté ICON Au Gold Infuser with Black Tea Tray, \$30. teaforte.com.



Been There, Dune That: Windsor Smith for Arteriors Dune Chair, \$2,700. arteriorshome.com.



Cream Collar: Stick & Ball Knit Collar Poncho, \$595. stickandballco.com.



My Jam: Eberjey Pajama Set, \$102. RH.com.

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Domino Effect: RH Leather Dominoes Set, \$171. [RH.com](#).



Feeling Hot, Hot, Hot

Whether caffeine or whiskey is your vice, these Valley restaurants have a piping-hot sip for you to savor.

Irish Coffee Three Ways (pictured): ROC2 coffee is mixed with Jameson Irish whiskey, brown sugar and semi-whipped cream. *At Citizen Public House.*

Matcha Horchata: A good-for-your option with almond milk, evaporated cane sugar, cinnamon, clove, vanilla and nutrient-dense matcha. *At True Food Kitchen.*

Cortado: For serious coffee drinkers only, espresso is mixed with equal parts steamed milk to create a silky, textured coffee beverage. *The Henry.*

Virtu Coffee: A latte-inspired cocktail topped with a dollop of—get this—Nutella-frothed milk. *At Virtù Honest Craft.*

Virtoddy: A play on the omnipresent hot toddy with the addition of sassafras for festive root beer aromatics. *At Virtù Honest Craft.*

Apple of my Rye: The perfect winter sip with Michter's Rye, house-made baked apple shrub, lemon juice and Becherovka and finished with a cloud of vanilla-infused foamed milk. *At Fat Ox.*

Salted Caramel Moroccan Coffee: A decadent drink of 151 rum, Kahlua, Bailey's Irish Cream, Buttershots, caramel, coffee and salt. *At Thirsty Lion Gastropub & Grill.*

Spiked Pumpkin Coffee: This spiced seasonal favorite gets grownup-ed with a shot of bourbon. *At U.S. Egg.*

O.H.S.O. Eggnog: The Christmas classic is made with a choice of one of the brewery's house-made spirits, like Arcadia Coffee, Jane Apple Cinnamon Whiskey or #rum. *At O.H.S.O.*

And one for the kiddos...

Mexican Spice Hot Chocolate: This spiced hot chocolate is infused with cinnamon, nutmeg, cardamom and clove and crowned with whipped cream and mini chocolate chips. *At Kneaders Bakery & Café.*

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Comfort Food

A fireplace + twinkle lights + an old house = a hygge-ready dining experience. Here are a few super-cozy Valley favorites.

> Savor comforting eats like pan-fried chicken and deviled eggs fireside on the beautiful tree-lined patio at Arcadia-area **Chelsea's Kitchen**. chelseaskitchenaz.com.

> One of the Valley's most historic restaurants also happens to be one of the coziest, thanks to the fire features, string lights and beautiful fauna that deck out the **El Chorro** patio. elchorro.com.

> **The House Brasserie**, located in a Scottsdale home that was built in 1939, offers guests modern American fare in a cozy vintage setting. thehousebrasserie.com.

> From the squeaky hardwood floors to the fireplace, everything at this restored 1913 bungalow screams "cozy." **Cibo Urban Pizzeria's** fresh pastas and artisanal pizzas only add to its comfort factor. cibophoenix.com.

> Guests enter through the back kitchen door at Phoenix's 65-year-old **Durant's**. How much more "at home" can one get? durantsaz.com.

> Head downstairs to sit at the bar at **Rokerij** in Phoenix where diners are greeted with stone walls, old photos and beautiful woodwork. richardsonsnm.com.

> A local favorite for 30 years, **House of Tricks** is located in a 1920's cottage surrounded by one of the loveliest patios in the Valley. (Keep an eye out for the cats that like to linger outdoors.) houseoftricks.com.

> Find a cushy spot on the patio around one of the fire pits and watch the sun set—with a glass of red in hand—at **Isabella's Kitchen**. isabellaskitchen.com.

> Snack on smoked chicken wings and truffle fries fireside (there are eight fireplaces!) at the newly expanded **LON's Last Drop**. hermosainn.com.

> Savor an ever-changing, farm-to-table menu under a canopy of trees and twinkle lights at **Quiessence at The Farm at South Mountain**. thefarmsouthmountain.com.

> String lights, fire features, flora and fauna, Chef Gio Osso's famed octopus dish—**Virtù Honest Craft** (pictured) is close to hygge perfection. virtuscottsdale.com.

> Earlier this year, the **Mix Up Bar** at the historic Royal Palms Resort and Spa was named "The Coziest Restaurant in Arizona" by *Food & Wine Magazine*, thanks to its roaring fireplaces and rich leather seats. royalpalmsotel.com.