



Farmhouse Style: Bringing A Country Feel To City Life

How homeowners can bring character into their homes without losing a modern edge.

Hannah Kramer
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Homes are full of stories. Whether those stories are built from memories of a child's quickly changing height noted with pencil marks on a wall or a small dent in a dining room table from a dish passed less gracefully than desired over Thanksgiving dinner, those memories last.

For this reason, there is a growing trend of homeowners looking to design their homes with pieces that lend themselves to stories. Rather than turning exclusively to big-box retailers with cookie-cutter designs, people are looking for items that have a past and, therefore, have an older, rustic or farm-style feel.

“The trend of shopping local has been huge for our business,” said Jess DiNuzzo, owner of [Chicago Farmhouse](#) in Gilberts, Illinois. “People want to support the local community and appreciate history. They want the story behind the piece.”

DiNuzzo started the business about three years ago when a hobby for finding and restoring furniture turned into a passion and then a full-time job. Now, she has a 2,000 square-foot warehouse/workshop where she collaborates with a 30-year veteran woodworker to provide customized refinished pieces for locals based on their design requests.

“People are being more eclectic about their design,” DiNuzzo said. “They’re willing to spend time hunting down items that they want and look for older style pieces because things aren’t made today like they were 50, 60 or 70 years ago.”

While she relies on furniture and accessories of the past, DiNuzzo said that the business thrives because of digital platforms that allow her to hunt for hidden gems online. She said that most of her days are spent on Facebook’s Marketplace, Craigslist, Habitat for Humanity’s web platform and other furniture exchange sites.

“Essentially, time is money,” DiNuzzo said. “If I’m taking a whole day to go shopping and come back with nothing, it doesn’t make sense for business.”

After finding pieces with potential, DiNuzzo will post images of “before” pieces on social media looking for a buyer who has a vision for how it may fit in their home after being restored. From there, the Chicago Farmhouse team updates the piece to fit the client’s look, while maintaining its history.

“We’re seeing that the mix and match style is really in right now,” DiNuzzo said. “The combinations of urban and elegant or rustic and fancy are very popular.”

DiNuzzo attributed that eclectic style to homeowners’ willingness to test contrasting looks that can blend together when styled correctly. She said more people may be taking those risks after the urban farmhouse feel has grown in popularity on television with shows like Fixer Upper or Flip or Flop.

“A lot of it is about the uniqueness of each piece in a person’s home,” DiNuzzo said. “The uniqueness of two things coming together can create a blend that allows the style to compliment rather than clash.”