

# An Oregon Cottage Podcast

## Episode 56: DIY Remodeling- What We'll Do Again & What We Won't

Brian: Welcome to episode 56 where we're going to talk about remodeling projects that we have done before and are looking forward to doing again and the DIY projects we've had to do before and hope never to do again - like tiling. Though I do think we have to do some tiling again. Sorry.

Jami: (laughing) In our food segment I'm going to be sharing a real food family Spring or Easter dinner menu idea. We have some farmhouse updates plus some things we've discovered lately that are really cool.

### What Remodeling Projects Will We Do Again - And What We Won't?

Brian: Back in episode 34, I think it was, we talked about our DIY remodeling past projects, the ones we've done and then looked at an article on the ones that give you the most return for your money when you sell. And that was actually kind of surprising. To hear all those details, you've got to listen to that to that episode. But in this episode we're going to be talking more about how we feel about our past DIY projects and if we really feel like doing them again based on the results and how hard it was.

Jami: And of course we're finally are getting more of the bones and guts of the farmhouse done. So we're coming up to the time when we will be able to do some of these projects ourselves.

Brian: Exactly. And the thing that we found that kind of kicked off this idea was Improve.net surveyed a bunch of DIY-ers, and I thought this was interesting, about their DIY regrets. And so they listed the most popular projects that people take on themselves. And for example, do you know what the number one is?

Jami: The number one project people take on themselves? Painting maybe.

Brian: Exactly. (Jami: Good. I got it!) How about number two? You're doing, you're doing really well.

Jami: So it has to be interior?

Brian: No, this is exterior.

Jami: Oh, landscaping.

Brian: Yep. Very good. The third one is floor tiles, installing floor tiles. I'd be surprised. And then down to, um,

Jami: Does that mean everything from like laminate to ceramic, any kind of floor tile?

Brian: You know, I don't know. They didn't specify. And then the fourth is, um, install kitchen and bath fixtures. Build furniture - that may be just assembly. So those are the ones that people are,

Jami: Oh, Ikea. That's why I probably made it.

Brian: That could be, I guess that's kind of DIY. So here's the most regretted. And we immediately cued onto this. Installing floor tiles was the most regretted.

Jami: So that was a number three on the most popular? (Brian: Right.) And the number one most regretted.

Brian: Right. And they gave a number of reasons why there's things like: it goes over budget for DIY, you have to call in a pro to fix the problem.

Jami: Okay. So they must be talking about ceramic or, (Brian: that must be it. Yeah.) tile versus laminate pieces you put together.

Brian: Right. Or you get it done and it looks ugly. Oh, that's really sad. Right. So down the list of the other things, I can relate to this: replacing a ceiling. When I did my own dry wall ceiling.

Jami: Is this number two on the list?

Brian: Uh, this is number two. I was not happy with how that turned out.

Jami: Replacing the ceiling - you mean like wallboard? (Brian: yes) Oh!

Brian: Cause it's really hard to get it to fit. Well first of all just holding it up to get the dumb thing hooked in. It's really hard. It's everything about, it's hard from installing it to taping it. Refinishing hardwood floors.

Jami: They regretted that. (Brian: Yes.) I can see how that would be. Cause if you don't, if you've never used one of those things before, you can make permanent marks in your wood floor with those drum sanders.

Brian: Right on that really gritty grit. What am I trying to say? The Grit, not the fine grit. The rough grit. If you sit for a moment, yeah, you'll drill down into and cause waves in your floors. It's really bad. (Jami: Yeah.) This one, number four install carpet? How would, why would anybody do that themselves? That is so hard. You know they stretch it and they do the knee kick.

Jami: Yeah, in fact I've actually never heard of anyone doing it themselves. (Brian: I know, it's the fourth most regretted). I'm even thinking of bloggers that I follow, I've never heard carpet being a DIY unless it's that like indoor outdoor kinda sticky - those sticky tile carpet things.

Brian: And it may be a case of, it doesn't look great when it's done. Yeah, I would totally think wrinkles. And then the fifth was finishing the basement. We did that, in Portland. (Jami: yeah wow.) And installing hardwood floors is the sixth which, we did that. It's, it's not easy actually, unless you like kind of a rough look that

perfection that the pros get, you're not going to get that. So that's true. Anyway, so those, so those are ones from the article according to surveys that people most regret. And so we were kind of making a list of things we've done that we would really like to hire out. And on the top of that list is tile, but I'm not sure we're going to be able to do that in the bathroom, in the farm house.

Jami: Should I say why (Brian: Sure.) it's at the top of the list? Because we did it in the two bathrooms at our ranch house cottage and it wasn't even that hard. We got little 2x2 tiles but they were on 12 x 12 sheets. But we laid them diagonally to get a more of an interest in because we had beadboard and it was too many lines, straight lines if you didn't do it diagonally. So that caused, do you remember what that caused? Because you were cutting all the tile and I was laying it.

Brian: I just remember fitting problems like around the wall where the cuts were.

Jami: Yeah, it caused all these little triangle pieces. (Brian: That's right. They were really hard to fit.) Yes. And it was hard to get them, when you cut them, it was hard to get them and then they would break off - little pieces would break off.

Brian: It was just hard to do the edges. It was okay through the whole middle. But your eye goes to the flaws with tile because it's so even a little flaw in your eye goes to it.

Jami: It just took forever. And you think you've got it done, and then you have to grout. And then you think you've got that done, but then you have to like wash it all off. And you think you've got that done but then you have to seal it. I mean, it was so many steps. I hated it. (Brian: So many days on your hands and knees) And the thing was, I know we can do it, it's not hard. And I thought it looked okay. You know, I thought it looked great, you know, but I don't want to do it again. I didn't like it. (Brian: Yeah.) So I'm trying to, I told you earlier today, I'm trying to finagle something I can do to earn money to hire a tiler because I don't want to do it.

Brian: The other thing it would be done well, done right. You know, perfectly matched up by somebody that knows what they're doing. No errors and then done quickly. Right? Yeah. He just come in two days later it's done or whatever. Right. So one that I did myself that I then struggle to fix a whole bunch - and in Oregon, this really matters - is rain gutters. When we built a free standing garage. I said I'm not going to pay somebody to come and, how many dollars per foot to fabricate metal gutters? Forget it. Cause at our local home improvement store I can get plastic snap together gutters. It's like putting legos together. It's going to be so cheap and easy.

Jami: Well, plus the fact it was literally two, you know, 20 foot runs. You weren't going up, they were really straight.

Brian: Yeah straight. There was a lot of gutter though, it's probably, I don't know, 35 feet of gutter each side or something, maybe for a 32 foot. So but what happened there?

Jami: There was just a constant leak, usually right where you walked out.

Brian: The joint. They dripped at every joint and in Oregon when it rains a lot. Exactly. It would be like,

Jami: I don't remember that much on the other side. It was only the one that we walked under.

Brian: Well I think it did leak over there. We just weren't standing under it or had to go under it. Which it's not going to hurt anything if they drip a little, but it's really irritating if you have to walk under the gutter, and it is, it's like a little bath on your head every time it rains.

Jami: So yeah, we actually can say that we did hire them.

Brian: We just actually that's true. We just hired gutters done and we're so happy. That was money well spent and it's fantastic. I would say do that, have it metal fabricated and have him do it. We did painting exterior, um, when you got that deal with Behr paint, we got this really cool paint and we um, rented or borrowed a paint sprayer. Yeah. And did the whole house and just a couple days.

Jami: And we actually have, I think a series of videos on doing that and how we chose the color and how it went from gray to a really happy yellow. I think it was a dramatic change.

Brian: It made the house look a lot better. But I would put that under, have a pro do it for a couple of reasons. Well that was a single story house and so up on the high parts, I really had trouble hitting it and coating it enough. We saw little bits of gray come through even after I went back. It just wasn't, it wasn't done to how we were happy with it.

Jami: It needed another coat. Yeah. It really needed another coat, but we didn't have any more paint and it was actually, I think, November.

Brian: Yeah, right. It was cold and rainy, it was a bad time of year to paint and we just coated it as thickly as it could go without dripping. And it, it needed a warm, dry days where that would go on.

Jami: Yeah. And it was the higher peaks. Right. Again, it was a single story, but you know, there's peaks. Those were the areas where it was hard to get. Right. And there were little, in ranch houses, you know, the roof's come together at different levels and so there were little strips that actually never got painted until years later.

Brian: Until right before we sold the house. I lay on my side, which is scary with a bucket because you can kick it over, which I've done before. So here on this house, some of the places are really high and one of the reasons we would like a pro to do it is not just for looks and to seal it, but they have the experience and the gear to go, well I don't want to die.

Jami: Right? Yeah, we'd have to rent major. And we knew that when we bought the house. It's um, it's a two story farmhouse and it's actually almost three stories on the one side. And so you know, you need scaffolding for that to paint safely. And

so we kind of knew that that was going to be roofing and painting on a two, almost three story house, or something that you really need to hire out for safety reasons.

Brian: Right. Like for example, I have a 20 foot extension ladder, which is taller than most extension ladders, but it won't reach, I can't even get to the top of the second story windows. So there's like six or eight more feet of ladder I would need to even paint it up there. So, right. Another thing, this was interesting because we had a good experience redoing wood floors, of course in Portland with help from a friend who really knew what he was doing.

Jami: Yeah. He had done some before we'd seen his results and they were beautiful.

Brian: It's always good - two guys working together is also kind of two brains, you know, kind of a team.

Jami: I don't think you had any, any areas of wavy or,

Brian: Uh, I think in the bedroom? There were little places I could find flaws I wasn't super happy with. All in all, it was in an empty house. And we made the mess with all the sawdust, but it'll look great.

Jami: It did - it looked great. And it looked great 12 years later. We did not even have to touch up the floors before we sold it.

Brian: That's true. We didn't have a dog or anything. But then, so fast forward to the Pleasant hill, the rancher turned to country - cottage - whatever it is. We thought, well, we won't go as deep on those because they just, they're okay. They just have this Swedish waxy finish, so we'll just do the surface sand. We won't do the big drum sand. Well, what happened?

Jami: Well, we didn't know what the finish was on there because it was done in the 80s. There's some finish that's there that must've been a wax type of finish or something, but whatever it was, if you dropped something greasy on the floor, it literally left a grease mark for days and days that you cannot get out. It soaked into the wood. So we needed to finish it so that we didn't, because in some areas it was kind of no finish at all. But what that ended up with was, we didn't realize it, but some areas had more finish left than others, and so we just did a light sanding. And it seemed like it got it, the color was kind of gone - it seemed like it got it.

Brian: We did it actually a couple times. I remember doing it, like, one whole time more than I wanted. And it kept gumming the sandpaper, I remember that. As we were, because we were just trying to do it light, just, just get the finish off. We weren't really trying to go down in the floor.

Jami: Yes, and so then I put it, we put the stain on, we put the top coat polyurethane. We did use, because I just don't use oil based anymore because of the smell, so we used water base, which has come a long way. People use it for floor all the time. And we had used it for a lot of flooring. Our, we've done, not hardwood, but we'd done wood flooring from plywood in the, new section, we've done the paper

flooring and it had worn really well. But this, and it looked great for a while, but it immediately started, probably in the areas that the previous finish was thicker, it started bubbling.

Brian: I remember that. Yeah. It just didn't turn out. I mean it was okay.

Jami: There were some areas of cloudy and then bubbles. Yeah.

Brian: It looked better, for the most part, the floor looked better. But there were areas where it just didn't, it didn't all look new like it's supposed to when you, when you do it. So for the fir floors in the house, we'd like to have those done.

Jami: And I worry cause fir is a softer wood. Yeah. So if you are going to, the other floors we did were both oak, so there are a lot more forgiving with those big drum Sanders then fir would be. Plus they're original and they've got problems. And so bringing someone in might have, you know, more creative ways to fix and fill the areas.

Brian: Another one here holds last on my list is doing sheet rock. Sheet rock is really hard to do because it's heavy and there's all this measuring that has to happen. So you've, this geometry where it's, it's on the floor, you have to imagine now up on the wall, where is that outlet gonna go and all these cutouts. And so often there's error there or it doesn't go on flat enough to then prepare it for the mudding. Mudding is really hard. To me, it's like cake decorating. Like I can't, I don't think I could do one of those really smooth professional bakery cakes with a knife for the same reason I can't mud and get it smooth when I'm all done. Right. Yeah. So, and I remember in our other house we would see, you could just kind of see where the seams were even after I'd done it a couple of layers and sanded and.

Jami: Well, I don't remember seeing the seams on the walls, but on the ceilings they were really very much noticeable.

Brian: Yeah. When on the walls we able to cover up a lot of it with wainscoting and cabinets and, but I guess in the hallway, maybe. Anyway, yeah. All that to say, I think we're, we're going to have really tall walls and a really high ceiling and I would just like, I think a team of pros could come in and do it really quickly and it'd be worth investing in that. So what about some things that we've done ourselves that we're actually kind of looking, I mean, it's going to be work, but we're looking forward to doing it again.

Jami: Yeah, I kind of call it the fun stuff. Like, so painting, painting walls and cabinets, that's really easy. I love the transformation that happens right away. Uh, we don't have very many cabinets here, but painting our cabinets in our last house made a dramatic difference and was definitely worth the time involved.

Brian: Countertops, we had a really good, actually in both previous houses, we were able to do our own countertops. I learned that you don't have to have a lot of experience to do it because you can sort of hide the very back edge. There'll be a little bit of molding, so it doesn't have to be absolute perfection. Then the front edge, it hangs over the cabinets a little bit. As long as you've calculated that

correctly and cut your hole for the sink, if it's a kitchen countertop, in the right spot, you're actually fine. It's not that hard to do.

Jami: Yeah. And we should say we always did wood.

Brian: Right. Yeah.

Jami: Yes, I suppose if it was marble, we wouldn't do it.

Brian: No, you're right. I couldn't cut granite. In fact, we have one of our videos, it's one of the most popular as it continues, is two of them actually. One of them is our Ikea countertops. I did a video on how to cut them really exactly. Even if you don't have a giant table saw to get the, we got a really good fit with those. And then the second one was, I think it was four years later. A couple of years later. (Jami: Yeah, four.) What they looked like and how they looked great, after wood counter tops, we'd used them every day. They looked really good.

Jami: Yeah, that's a good place to see that. You know, for years later I thought they looked just as good as the day we did them.

Brian: Yeah. Toilets and vanities are, well, those are very two very different things, but we've done both of those really easy. Yeah. I mean it's gross, but you stick a wax ring in if your floors the right height, it's real, you just set the dumb thing down. There's just, it's, you almost don't need tools, I guess you need pliers to tighten down the bolts. If so, if that's all, if your plumbing is where it's supposed to be, that's actually easy to do. And vanities, we did a couple of them. The one that was really cool that we're going to do, again, it's probably the dresser into a vanity, which again, there's a little bit of work cutting around the drawers.

Jami: And as long as your fixtures are in the right spot, it's just basically put the vanity in. It's pretty easy to do.

Brian: Exactly, and there's even some fudge room wherever you drop your sink, your drain lines and your water feed lines are flexible so you can just sorta - again, you don't have to have perfection because those are hidden. Oh, and changing out lighting. That's pretty easy.

Jami: Yeah, we love to do that because that makes such a difference.

Brian: Right. Just turn the power off. Yeah, and which leads into basic electrical, which is also really easy. It's really basic. If something like I've always talked about, I don't think I could do a thing where you're at two ends of the room and both light switches work on the light that I've had that explained to me like six times. I don't think I could do that. But all the other stuff, lightswitch outlets, even wiring for appliances or whatever, it's really basic.

Jami: And you've rewired old light fixtures that we've got.

Brian: Yes, yes. Put it in, put a new cord into them. So yeah, that's, that's not bad. You kind of, you kind of keep it simple and if you, when you hit the circuit, everything turns on. That's a good sign. You're good. So we've done some basic plumbing,

brought some water lines around. I've done that outside for garden watering, it's not that hard to do. Inside, it's a little more tricky because it's kind of closed spaces. But again, it's, you know, just make sure your water is flowing downhill for your drains and that it doesn't leak when you're done. Actually, plumbers are really more for, you need them for problem solving and for code because at every point they know. But other than that you can, you can do very basic yourself and shouldn't be scared to do it. Now what about other flooring? Uh, besides tiled floors and hardwood floors?

Jami: Floating floors. And we've done some engineering wood floating floors that have, uh, a DIY, you know how to do that on our blog. And of course the paper floor, yes, as a, but we've also done where we've just had, I think we got maple plywood and we cut it in different shapes, like longer pieces and we just put those as the flooring. That ended up being like 54 cents a square foot. It was really cheap and it totally looked good.

Brian: It was great. It was for our offices. And so your top quarter inch is hardwood. I mean, it's, it worked while we can roll our chairs on it and yeah. So, you know, again, depending on what you're doing, that's easy.

Jami: Yeah. It was actually pretty easy. Big sheets. You're just, I mean, we didn't do anything fancy. We just nail gunned them down and put the finish on them.

Brian: As long as they're close you're great. New, uh, replacing windows or putting in new windows is actually, again, it's not that hard. And I had a friend help me when we just cut a hole in the siding and did a bathroom window at our other house. There was no window there at all. We figured, you know, we took the wallboard out. You just, you make a frame around it, you do your header, just you do your math and then it's great because at the window places they always, they give you an extra half inch. Yeah. Because they just know there's gonna be tiny imperfections in the squareness and it just slides in and boom, it's in there.

Jami: And that makes a huge difference. Windows. Yeah.

Brian: And then we've done shelves and built-ins. Yeah. Again, there's all levels of difficulty with that.

Jami: Right. You can, you can take a shelf you already have it and then you can put that in somewhere, make it look built in. Or you can have just basic, you know, one basic shelf or you could go full out and make cabinets. I mean there's lots, but we're talking about real basic built-ins. You know.

Brian: Yeah, we've done that and we've even done, like you had a vintage cabinet that we drug around and we finally installed on the wall. And really the hardest thing about that is finding the studs because you've got a drill to that, right? So you have to drill the screws deep into the studs.

Jami: And we put those shelves on the other side. And we had the big corbels that were from our original porch as the, what are those called, this the supports? Yeah. And we made, you know, really nice edges with them. They looked really nice. They, they looked very nice. We modeled them actually, we modeled them

off a catalog, we used their photos and they were selling these shelves for a lot of money.

Brian: In that case, you know, just lots of measuring and drawing with your pencil on the wall and just kind of think it through. And boom, you can do that. And then we've added a lot of woodwork types of things like, moldings, door trim, little finished trim to kind of cover stuff. And that's really easy.

Jami: Decorative wall treatments we've done like a board-and-batten treatment. And that's super fun, I love doing that cause it that immediately adds character and some depth and dimension to your space for a little investment in money and not even that much investment in time, most of the time. Uh, that's huge. I really like that.

Brian: It's just, it's more like running in and out with this big piece of molding to get it exactly to the 16th. But once it's in and popped on and then you, you come through, our thing has been, because it's painted, you can cover any error. People that do like oak, like pure oak, I don't even know how they do that. There's no room for error.

Jami: Right. So painted, everything's painted and I want to say that one thing like, also we have this on the blog too, just the dramatic difference that it makes in houses like ranch houses and stuff that are more recent and they have a lot of door openings that are just wallboard and they don't have any trim around them. And so we had one like that and it was really irritating to us because the plaster or whatever you call it, that covers the metal piece that goes around the corner. What is that called? The stuff anyway, constantly flaked off so you can see the metal corners.

Brian: I suppose that would be the um, the spackle or whatever they use to cover the seams, (Jami: the "frosting.") the joint compound, I guess they use. You're right cause underneath there's a metal corner, it goes on the corner of the wall.

Jami: And this happened to be a super busy hallway doorway and it was constantly being hit, obviously. And so it actually made it look a lot nicer characterize to make it look like an older house that has molding around the doorframe. But also it was maintenance. I mean the wood just wasn't going to flake and chip like that.

Brian: You're right. That was probably, might've been 30 40 bucks worth of wood and it just a couple hours with a nail gun and yeah.

Jami: And I'll put a link to that article and put the photo in the show notes because that was pretty dramatic, I thought.

## Farmhouse Updates

Brian: Well, a milestone we're very excited about on the farmhouse is that our rough plumbing permit passed. So that means, I know that was like a major worry headache, at least for me in the more we dug into, especially the bathroom, but actually all the plumbing down there on the main floor, it was not good. It was not done the right way. It was done, "How cheap can we do it?" Definitely not to

code. And so we were just, our challenge was even finding plumbers who would come and give us an estimate and talk about it.

Jami: Yes, and I think we've been probably mentioned that before. (Brian, laughing: I think we've talked about it a lot.) Having a hard time finding people, plumbers especially. Yeah, we did get one that came and just gave us a really super high estimate. Yeah. That set us back to kind of square one.

Brian: We're like, oh shoot, yeah, can we, what can we do? And then we found a really nice one and this was great because he gave this bid and I said, well look, what if you just do this, and this, and this, and all do these other parts? And he said, look, my name is going to go on this so I will discount you. Just let me do the whole thing and I will discount my price.

Jami: Oh, hey, just like a little, here's what you do, threaten to work with them!

Brian: Pro tip, ha! Threaten that you're going to finish the job and then say they did it. They will do the whole thing for the price. (Jami: They'll discount your plan!) Yeah. And so he, I think even as he dug in and there were things that were a little different than he had bid. It's just weird how kind of the fun house of bad...

Jami: Of old houses. And we hear this a lot from people who dig into a remodel and find all this stuff. So when we bought the farmhouse, we were told all the plumbing was updated. Well, when we took out the walls and could see the plumbing, we could see that the plumbing was updated with teeny weeny little RV piping. Like it wasn't the regular house pipping. that happens.

Brian: How does that happen? You wouldn't use it. You could maybe use it to feed like a spigot. I don't know, you would, you don't feed a whole house with it.

Jami: No, no the, the plumber was like, "oh my gosh, you're not even gonna get pressure water pressure out of it." It's just like,

Brian: And it's going to crack and it's getting cracks in your walls and is going to crack and break.

Jami: We already had a leak in one.

Brian: Yeah. So anyway, I was, I was just really happy because I think he had to do some problem solving as he got into it. And it's much nicer. We don't have to have crazy soffits to cover where a pipe would be sticking out. He just was able to raise the plumbing. We can have a nice high flat ceiling in the hallway. So we're really happy. He did a great job and we pass the inspection. Right, the proof is in the pudding. So yeah, there you go. Onto the next thing.

Jami: Well, we did have a purchase that we purchased for our new bathroom in the master and it's actually this bathroom fan. Now if you've done any kind of looking for bathroom fans, you know that they're just not pretty, there's nothing very nice looking about them. And, they're kind of in your face, they're kind of obtrusive. They're kind of big up there. I just thought that's what you had to have. And they're not cheap, either. Like these ugly big ones are, you know, 80 to 100

bucks. And you want something that's going to work, you know, that's actually going to take humidity out cause you don't want it to be in your wall. So I get that. So I actually saw on Young House Love, I don't know if it was an email, I get their emails as well as read their updates, but they actually use, have used in a number of houses of fan that you can just get at Home Depot and it looks like it's a canned recess light, which it is. There's a, it's a light too and the fan but it just looks like that's what it is. But it has a fan around it and, and they said that it works like any other fan they've had. I mean it's really good quality and works. So we paid a little more for it. We paid probably \$50 more for it but I'm so glad we did because it, it just huge like it's just not going to be this ugly fan down there.

Brian: The they look, they remind me of something you'd see on an RV, like the plastic (Jami: Oh, the regular the ones that you use?) Yeah, the standard kind of wide fan baffles out to side kind of plastic covered light in the middle. They just don't want,

Jami: And then they always collect stuff like, collect a lot of fuzz and cobwebs and you're trying to clean those. What did you call them? Fan? (Brian: I don't know. I said baffles intakes.) Those plastic intake vents collect those little, oh, they're hard to clean. I'm just so looking forward, this is clean looking. It just looks like a canned light.

Brian: It's really small, so hopefully, yeah, this will look nice.

Jami: Excited about that. And I will actually drop that link in the show notes too and a photo of it because it's really cool. And if you're looking at all for to replace bathroom fan light you should really look into it.

## What's Cooking

Brian: Well we are dropping this episode right before Easter. So Jami, you thought it would be appropriate to do like a sample - Is this like a sample spring menu? Like an idea? You don't have to do this. Okay. What is this idea?

Jami: A menu idea, it could be for Easter, also just be a spring menu. You know when you want to have people over. Well I of course you've got to have your roast ham so you roast your ham. And then what I've used on our hams before are one of three different recipes that I have on the blog. One is Sweet Onion Marmalade that is so good glazed on any kind of meat, but on ham especially. I have used Cherry Chutney and Rhubarb Chutney as glazes and you just put them on the last probably half hour of the roasting and you just use a pastry brush and just brush them on a couple of times. So at the 30 minute mark, then at the 15 minute mark and just then let them bake on there. Oh, they're so good. Any of those, of course you don't have to use those. But a roast ham with those glazes would be good.

Jami: I have a really great recipe for slow cooker scallop potatoes - they're cheesy and garlicky and you let them all cook in the slow cooker so you don't have to worry that your ham is taking up all the room in the oven. Also, roast asparagus is a wonderful springtime side dish and I have an easy hollandaise sauce that we use for eggs benedict and asparagus, and, um, these wonderful little egg cups too,

that I make with asparagus. Now this hollandaise sauce, it's not greasy. It's more light and bright with lemon in it and it's made in the microwave. So it is really easy. It's the easiest hollandaise sauce that I've ever made and I think it's the best tasting, but that's just me. If you're wanting to have a green salad, I suggest honey mustard salad dressing. I have an amazing honey mustard salad dressing on the blog and that's also just seems very springing to me. So I would put that on there. If you didn't want to make the holiday sauce, you could also drizzle a little bit of that honey mustard on the roast asparagus and just kill two birds with one stone.

Jami: For dessert, I would suggest a lemon berry cake with an amazing lemon frosting that you make with lemon curd and powdered sugar. So good. Or if you want to go a little bit lighter, use this recipe for glazed lemon cupcakes and they're really good. So either I think a lemon dessert is really a nice way to finish out a spring menu. So I'll have all of these linked in the show notes and even if one or two of them seems like something you want to add to your Easter Spring Dinner Menu, I encourage you to go check them out because they are some of our favorites.

Brian: Sounds really good.

### This Is Really Cool!

Brian: A cool thing that we've discovered together is the *Neverwhere* book. That's the title of the novel, but what, what was amazing, it's a novel by Neil Gaiman who is like the most awarded Scifi fantasy author. It seems like since 1991, I was looking at his Wikipedia page and my eyes glazed over at how many awards he's won. I mean he has to have one like a hundred of them. They had to make the print really, really small. This is one of his best, evidently, we found it through as a recommended audio book version of *Neverwhere*.

Jami: It came through Audible and it was on one of their two for one sales that they often have. And so I was just looking at different options and I noticed that this one said it was in the top 100 of the best Scifi books of all time. And I had never read any of his stuff. And, and then I asked you and you had said you never read it. So I thought, well we should probably listen and I'm glad we did.

Brian: So what was amazing about it me, it's a terrific story, but the description that it was read by the author. Often you can get authors, they can sort of pull off reading nonfiction books. It's not great. It's kind of fun to hear their voice. We've listened to books by Comedians, memoirs like by Martin Short or Steve Martin. They do pretty well, but they're performers, we're thinking. We've listened to, I don't know, like a Harry Potter book, the Guy That did like 126 different characters. And it was just this, it was a performance. The reading was a performance, even beyond the book. Yeah. Well Neil Gaiman blew us away because he does, I don't know how many characters, he's British. He does the characters ranging from kind of a guy from Scotland down to very low level, upper level, uneducated women. He did an unbelievable job with not just reading the narration but the characters and keeping them separate and you could imagine what they look like.

Brian: So we go digging into his background. I was like, wait a minute, was he like an actor? How can he do this? You know, a regular person can't do this. Over how many hours was that book? (Jami: 12 I think.) It's like 12 hours. It was a long, it took us a lot of long drives to get through it. The plot is really fun and imaginative and you don't even have to have been to London to kind of get, I think we've seen London on TV just enough to sort of know, okay, these are the spots and this is what they're talking about. So, yeah, it's a great, it's just a great story. It's not super gory. There's some danger and a few, little bit of cruelty.

Jami: Yeah, once I got it, I started reading about his other things and saw that he was also the author of American Gods, which is on TV now as a series and we haven't watched it, but I've just seen promos of it and it seems really kind of something I wouldn't enjoy, like, like scary and gory and you know, over the top. And so I was worried about this, but it's not, we should say it's, it's about, Neverwhere is like London underground. There's this place that people go where, they fall through the cracks kind of thing and you don't, you don't really notice them or see them, but there's a whole different world and it seems to be kind of in a different place in time. You're not really sure. And that's what makes it all kind of fun too, is you're just trying to figure it out as he's giving you little clues. And there are some, like, pretty evil, the evil villains are good.

Brian: You've got to have good villains. The villains need to scare you a little bit and they're scary.

Jami: Yeah. But not in a gory over the top way. In fact, they kind of talk very fancy. Yeah. And they're like, Whoa, Mr they call each other Mr Croup and Mr Vandermere and you know, "Well I would like to break his arm," you know, just like happily, you know?

Brian: Yeah, they just go about their business of evil. Yeah.

Jami: Yeah. So, but it was not at all, like, awful. So uh, really did like that.

Brian: Yeah. So anyway, Neverwhere by Neil Gaiman definitely listen to it. The audio book. Yeah. My goodness.

Jami: So my cool thing is we just finished watching a new PBS program on Masterpiece called Mrs. Wilson. And it seemed interesting, we like period pieces, it's set kind of World War II and then in the 60s. But then, actually right before we started watching it, I read something in the paper that the actress who is playing it is actually the granddaughter of the woman she's portraying in the story, Mrs. Wilson. She's her granddaughter, her name is Ruth Wilson and she is the granddaughter of the woman being portrayed. And I was like, this is a true story, really? Because I knew that it was about um, supposed spy in a World War II who was also a spy novelist. And I thought, oh that is too - I thought that can't be real and that he, you know, had other lives that she didn't know about after he died.

Jami: And it was all true. Like they dramatize some things for the story, of course, and how things came together. But it was based on a book that was written a few years ago about the main and also the main character - the grandma of the

actress - wrote a short diary or journal. So it's based off of those two things. So they do know something about this man. But it is incredible. I don't want to give too much away because some things are,

Brian: They kind of reveal it in the story.

Jami: And they'd be spoilers, but it's definitely so good. It's so good because you're like, what? How? What?

Brian: Your opinion of what really happened keeps flipping. Yeah. That's a good kind of story.

Jami: Yeah. So I'm not sure, like if I would've just looked at it thinking it was just a fiction, I would have been like, oh, well, okay, maybe. But knowing that it was based on a true story and that this man really did do a lot of these things, you're blown away. You're like, he wrote 26 spy novels and he was actually kind of a spy and he went like, he, you know, had all these other lives. It's, it's kind of amazing. And so, for me, that ups the story up and makes it that much more interesting.

Brian: I was just going to say, at least we see in movies where in World War II a lot of British people worked in intelligence, one way or another, or with information that was secret. And so they all signed these nondisclosure, and I think the rest of your life you can't talk about it. So imagine you're going through life and you just can't tell your family. They were assuming this one thing about your husband. You can never, until your death never reveal what it really was.

Jami: At the end she was telling her son, that she did work as a secretary with him, but they couldn't talk about anything they did, but she did. I was there, I saw.

Brian: They might've breaking her confidentiality. Though, 40 years after the war, is that going to, you know? Yeah.

Jami: And as a little aside, I did see, and I'll link to the website, so if you're interested you can see the book that it was based on, and on that website they say since this release of Mrs. Wilson in the US that MI5, which is the secret service agency, or maybe it's MI6, whichever one in England, is now considering releasing more documents. Because the family, his family has been asking for more and more because there's so little that they know about him and they want to know if whatever is true and some of them are in their nineties. And so they would like them to be released and it's 80 years right? Right. Sometimes 90 for some of it because he started in the 30s. Right. So, it's so long after that, that I hope they do get that release for them so they can know more about him.

Brian: Yeah, it's really good story. We've been getting such great feedback on the podcast lately. I'm a put you on the spot because I think it was just this last week we got a really nice note from somebody about something on the podcast. Do you remember, do you even remember where, I'm not going to ask you to quote it. Do you remember where it came from? Like how did they even get that through to us?

Jami: (laughing) Talk about putting me on the spot. What did it sound like?

Brian: Did it come, was it a, I wonder if it was a reply to an email or if they posted it on the page. Just somebody who said, I dunno. They enjoyed it. They thought we sounded friendly. You know everything, hopefully.

Jami: Oh, I do. I kind of remember, what was that? I think it was a response to an email. She was emailing, asking me something and she said, oh, I just really like your podcast. And I listened to a lot and you guys are one of my favorites.

Brian: Okay, there we go. Okay. That made our day. Yeah, it really does do a lot, but we're one of the favorites like that, so I just want to use that to say to thank her for that. And because we talk about it so often we're, we're really bad about leaving reviews and feedback for things we really like too, so we're asking you listener, if you just have a minute, we would love it to hear from you to get feedback, ideas, whatever. It's easy to get it through to us. You can leave a comment on the podcast page on the website. You can reply to one of your emails. You can probably tweet you, I don't know, there's probably six other ways. Facebook, right. It'll get through somehow. Though leave the starred reviews on the APP iTunes and the podcast APP, which are both apple leaving a five star review and leaving a review. I'm sorry, leaving a five star rating and writing a little review.

Jami: Can they not do that on other apps? Like you can do that and Google too, can't you?

Brian: Right. So anyway, we just, we appreciate the people that have done that because it's helped people find the show and we just encourage, if you get a minute and you're, and you like it then to do that as well. And I think that's all I was going to talk about. We just, again, thank you so much for listening as we kind of blather on here.

Jami: You can leave a voicemail, too. We've had a few and we love getting voicemails and if you have a question that you want to ain't have answered, the voicemail is the place to do it. So you dial (541) 658-0215 and that's just a voicemail we won't answer. So you can leave at any time of day and night. It doesn't have to be Pacific standard time or anything.