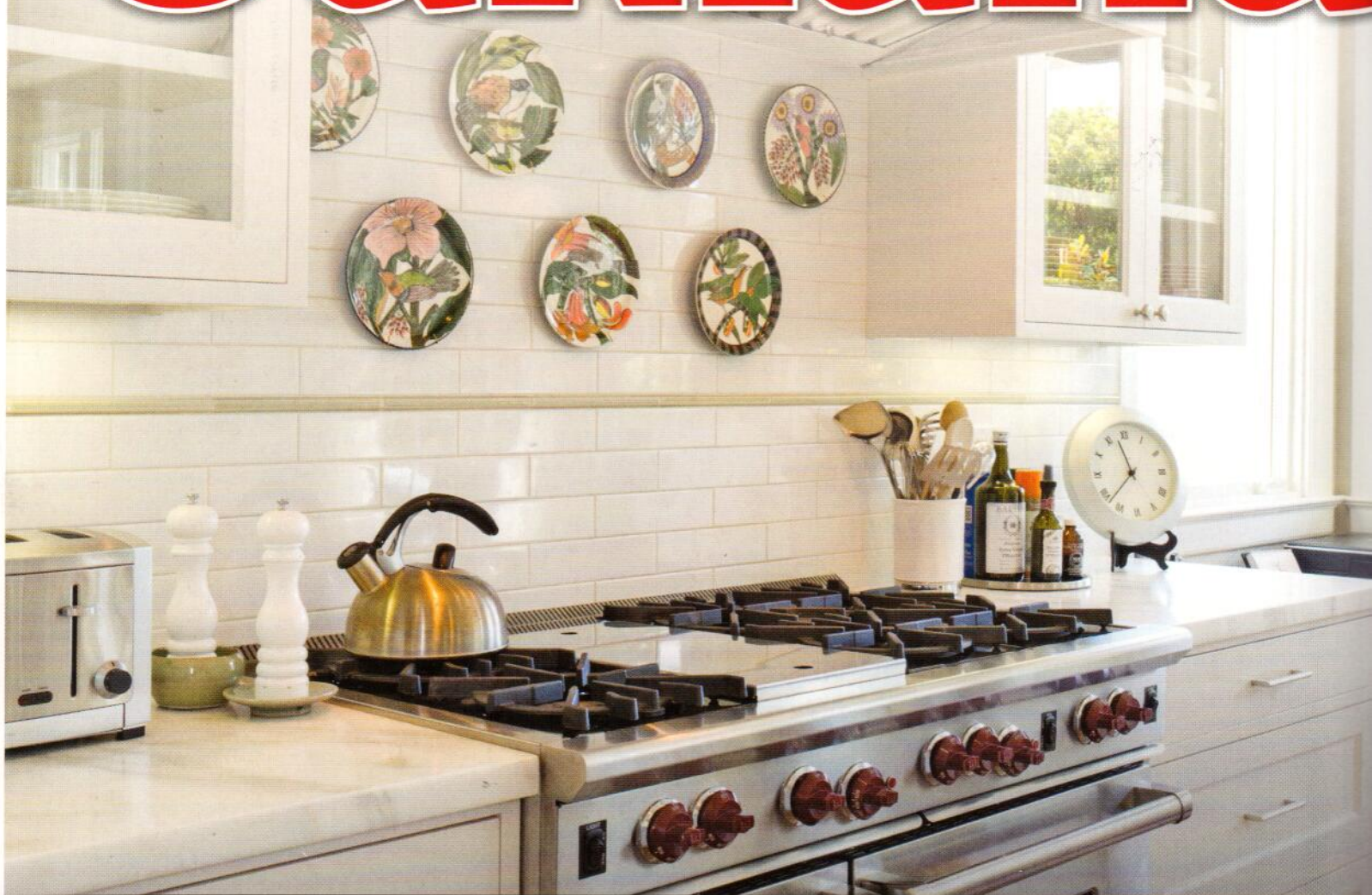


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So, space allowing, hang them about 10 inches wider than the window frame on both sides, and several inches higher than the window top.

Now that you know where you're placing them, it's time to pick your panels, and here size is still key. In order for the curtains to look gracious, you need a good amount of material: between two and three times the width of your window. In other words, if your window is 50 inches wide, you need at least 100 inches of fabric, or two 50-inch panels. If you have a really wide window—so common in Craftsmans and ranches—you'll need to go much bigger. Some stores like Pottery Barn and Restoration Hardware carry double-wide panels (usually about 100 inches or so), or you can have multiple single panels sewn together to create the same effect.

Width isn't your only concern. You've got length to contend with, too. For the neatest look, you want to have your curtains either kiss the floor or float just above it. Shorter than that and they'll bear a striking resemblance to capri pants: a sporty look on legs, but a sure sign of chintziness on a window.

As you start your hunt, you'll note that curtains come in standard lengths: 84 inches, 96 inches, and 108 inches. Few rooms require a full 108 inches, and most are too tall for 84 inches. The 96-inch length is often the sweet spot, with the understanding that you may need to hem them a bit to get the length just right. This is a simple job; your local seamstress should be able to handle it for a reasonable price if you aren't game.

A little prep, a bit of measuring, and a generous dose of fabric: That's all your windows need to look their best.

*Sarah Coombs is an interior designer based in Alameda.*

*Photo by David Duncan Livingston, courtesy of Ann Lowengart Interiors*



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