HOME

Homestead Core is Trending on TikTok. And It's Making Survival Look Like a Hobby

HOMESTEAD CORE? TRY RECESSION CORE

BY SYDNEY MEISTER • PUBLISHED JUN 11, 2025

FILMSTUDIO/GETTY IMAGES

It says something that in the past six months, I've met a handful of people who've become deeply invested in growing their own food. One turned her fire escape into a tomato farm. Another built a raised bed on a slab of Brooklyn concrete. And one—thanks to TikTok—is now seriously considering buying chickens. "They're low maintenance," she told me, as if we were talking about succulents, not livestock.

Welcome to **Homestead Core**. It's what happens when a generation that can't rely on housing, healthcare, climate or even the grocery store decides to turn survival into an aesthetic.

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It's a trend that's been taking over my feed. Compost bins that look like Scandinavian decor. Canned goods in vintage Weck jars. Seed packets arranged like Polaroids. And Yelp's most recent summer trends report can help explain why: People are responding to rising food costs and unpredictable supply chains by embracing self-sufficiency. Searches for live chickens are up 424 percent. Chicken coops? Up 163 percent. Similarly, plant nurseries have seen a 58 percent spike in interest, with garden centers up 27 percent.

The report spells it out: "Consumers are seeking ways to become more self-sufficient… and enjoy a quaint aesthetic." But the aesthetic isn't the point—it's what's underneath the packaging. Raised beds have become mood boards. Emergency prep looks like a farmer's market in a Nancy Meyers film. From the outside, it's curated, wholesome and calming. But what it actually reflects is a slow-burning panic—one that's been simmering since the early days of the pandemic and hasn't cooled since. We're building survival infrastructure and disguising it as design. And I hate that.

> We're building survival infrastructure and disguising it as design.

Case in point: I'm 27. I live in a tiny Brooklyn bedroom with a snake plant I've kept alive more out of spite than skill. I have no interest in making my own jam or installing a water

catchment system. But even I've had moments—standing in a bodega at 9:47 p.m., staring down a $12 carton of eggs—where I understand why someone might.

Because homestead core isn't just an aesthetic. It's a symptom of something larger. Don't feel like spending your entire paycheck at the grocery store? Here's a video on dehydrating kale. Nervous about power outages or future shortages? Here's a $400 raised bed and a compost bin chic enough to double as a side table. It's framed as a lifestyle—one rooted in wholesomeness and intention—when really, it's about making do in a system that's no longer working. And instead of asking *why* the system's failing—why food prices are still 31 percent higher than pre-pandemic—we glorify the workaround. We turn it into content.

In fact, as I dug further into homestead core on TikTok, I was reminded of fridgescaping—a trend I covered earlier this year, where people styled the insides of their refrigerators like design showrooms. On the surface, it was harmless. But beneath that was something troublesome: the expectation that women should turn even their stress into something aspirational. Homestead core works the same way. It's not just survival—it's survival with a color palette and an affiliate link.

It goes to show that this movement isn't about "taking grandmacore and cottagecore to the next level," as the Yelp report suggests. It's about regression. We have more access to advanced technology than any generation in history—AI that can code, satellites that track atmospheric shifts in real time—yet people are growing lettuce on their windowsills like it's 1932. And the scariest part? How social media flattens our anxiety into aesthetics. Suddenly, real economic pressure looks like a lifestyle preference, where struggling to survive becomes "farm-to-table living."

So no, I'm not anti-garden. I'm not anti-jam jars. If homesteading brings you joy, I love that for you. But let's also acknowledge that for many, it isn't a hobby—it's a coping mechanism. And what worries me most is how social media reframes this response to systemic breakdown as lifestyle inspiration.

If this is where we are—raising chickens on balconies, harvesting tomatoes as contingency plans—then the real question isn't how to start a homestead. It's why so many of us feel we *have* to.

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I live in a (very small) house in Brooklyn. I have 3 chickens. Only one of them is laying. I have a one car garden (I tore down a garage to create it). Except for tomatoes, I rarely get food stuffs to grow enough to justify the time I spend. If people are doing this because they think it will ...

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There are problems we're all dealing with that aren't going to be solved by a cunning Ikea hack or a bowl of artfully arranged fruit.

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