

Episode Title: Chris Lavergne: Transforming Homes into Functional, Renter-Friendly Oases

Episode Description:

Investing in real estate can be an overwhelming process with lots of questions along the way. Often it comes down to the right timing and location. In this episode of The Better Buy, media executive and real estate investor Chris Lavergne shares how he built a successful real estate portfolio including a multi-home compound in Upstate New York. Chris offers helpful tips for finding the right investment property, renovating a fixer-upper, and managing rental properties.

Episode Type: Full

Episode Rating: Clean

Season Number: 1

Episode Number: 8

Episode Transcript:

Music begins.

Mélanie Berliet (Voice Over):

Welcome to The Better Buy, a podcast from Better Homes & Gardens. I'm your host, Mélanie Berliet. Each week, we talk to experts about the highs and lows of home ownership, and share stories, advice, and practical tips you can actually put to work in your own space.

In this episode, I'm speaking with Chris Lavergne, Founder of the Thought Catalog media network, a digital agency with a portfolio of websites reaching 25 million monthly readers and a book publishing arm that sells millions of books each year. Chris also oversees Clearing Farm, a real estate company including a nature preserve, creative studios, and a string of rental properties sprawling 50+ acres in upstate New York.

Music fades out while Chris' voice fades in.

Melanie Berliet:

Thank you for being here, Chris.

Chris Lavergne:

Hey, Melanie.

Melanie Berliet:

I think it's important to explain that we know each other. Chris was actually my boss for several years and then when I took a new job at Dotdash Meredith, I ended up employing his services almost immediately. So, now he basically works for me. That's not true, but it sounds good.

Chris Lavergne:

We collaborate in a lot of fun, interesting ways.

Melanie Berliet:

Many, many interesting ways, most of which intersect with the home space somehow. So, can you tell me how old you are these days?

Chris Lavergne:

I am 34 these days.

Melanie Berliet:

And how many homes do you own, Chris?

Chris Lavergne:

Well, I personally own two homes and then I own a company that has an investment in three homes in Upstate New York.

Melanie Berliet:

So, that's five homes at 34. I think it's safe to call you an overachiever at home ownership. Can you tell me about your first home buying experience to start? What was that like?

Chris Lavergne:

Yeah, my first home buying experience really did start with a pretty massive failure. I was looking to buy a condo in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. And at the time that market was very up and coming. There was some nice buildings going up and all of that stuff, but you could get a condo for about 400,000 bucks in Williamsburg at that time, maybe less. And like a good one, like top of the line, brand new. And I was really far along in the process, but I was really something about thirty-, forty-thousand dollars short and there was just no way to cover that fee. Like I just couldn't bridge it, even trying to get, you know, some loans from family and friends and all that kind of stuff. It just was too tight. So, I missed on that opportunity. And then about two years went by and that apartment was maybe triple the price. So it was almost a million bucks at that point. And seeing (laughs) that movement in the apartment price just made me say, "Ah, I'm gonna throw my hands up. I'm not buying in Williamsburg. It's too hot of a market and I just, I can't stomach it." So I started to think really creatively about what are the upcoming markets? Where can I go, that I can have that same type of growth or at the very least not have the anxiety of such a large mortgage? And that really got me to think in ways that were very different about purchasing a home.

Melanie Berliet:

So did you immediately shift your focus from Williamsburg in Brooklyn to Upstate New York? How did you zero in on the location of your first home purchase?

Chris Lavergne:

Yeah, well, it actually tied in with office space. I was also running an office out of Williamsburg, Brooklyn for my company. And we kept looking at commercial real estate. And there was sort of a similar problem happening,

you would spend, you know, easily 30 to \$50,000 a month to rent an office in New York City. And we were already a very remote company from inception. So the idea of dropping that much money to start an office that you didn't own just didn't sit right with me either. And again, this had a lot to do with the fact that we were very remote from the start. And instead of then, you know,, getting this super fancy office, I said, "Let's sort of invest this money that we would spend in rent in starting a real estate company." And that's- that's how it started.

Melanie Berliet:

And was your plan always to purchase multiple homes nearby each other in Upstate New York and form a sort of compound? How did that happen?

Chris Lavergne:

Well, I was 24 when I think I made this first purchase. And when you're 24, you don't really know a lot. So I had-

Melanie Berliet:

(laughs).

Chris Lavergne:

... extremely grand visions of what this property could be. Um, and I sort of imagined it as a, you know, multiple buildings, photo studio, writing pods, all sorts of creative things, multiple homes, so people could feel comfortable staying there and not, like, on top of each other.

Melanie Berliet:

Can you describe what actually exists Upstate if not exactly your grand vision?

Chris Lavergne:

Yeah, I mean, I didn't really understand real estate taxes, zoning laws and all of that kind of stuff. So I had to take a deep dive in all of that stuff and, and become educated on that. And from there, I sort of did what I could with it. And with that, it really just became, you know, very much a, a place to, to create art and photography video stuff, because, you know, in New York City, if you go, just try and shoot a small video in a park, you have to have a permit. It's a whole process.

Melanie Berliet:

Right.

Chris Lavergne:

So we've very much sort of evolved it to be a place where we could produce content easily and you know, not have to pay for hotel rooms and all of that kind of stuff. What it became was what the land told us it needed to be. So we really-

Melanie Berliet:

Hmm.

Chris Lavergne:

... just followed what it was and not really my exact vision for it. Which, you know, really involved, just figuring out ways to, to treat the land properly, like what, what can grow here? 'Cause it's a expansive property. So we looked at that. We looked at the houses that were there and how we could bring back to life what they

historically were because the property had been abandoned for several years. So, there was lots of stuff where it's really just a project of bringing back to life what was there. And we're still sort of in that stage of bringing back what it once was, which if we date back hundreds of years, it was, uh, a large family estate that eventually divided it up to become a neighborhood, it seems. So-

Melanie Berliet:

Mm-hmm.

Chris Lavergne:

... in a lot of ways we're trying to just bring back that original thing, but making it very sort of open to the people that work at the company, to people that wanna rent it through short term, and, you know, figuring out ways to, to grow, stuff and take care of the land there.

Melanie Berliet:

I love that notion of really listening to the land and letting it guide you as you sort of, you know, execute on your vision. Did you go into your first home purchase thinking you'd get a fixer-upper?

Chris Lavergne:

No, I mean, I looked at multiple properties for this and you know, some were fixer-uppers and some were ready to go. At the end, you know, the fixer uppers were good 'cause at the time they were, they were really cheap, so we could get a great deal and, you know, have some budget left to, to fix it up.

Melanie Berliet:

And can you tell me about your first home reno experience? How long did it take versus how long you thought it might take? And what were some of the surprises that happened along the way?

Chris Lavergne:

You know, it's a journey. It's still sort of being renovated to this day and we're still trying to figure it out. I mean, we have it to be functional now. But we don't necessarily, it's not necessarily done.

Melanie Berliet:

Right. "Is a home ever done?" I guess is a good question

Chris Lavergne:

Yeah, when you sell it. (laughs).

Melanie Berliet:

Mm-hmm. Right, right. Now that you've purchased a few different homes, what would you say are your house hunting deal breakers?

Chris Lavergne:

Personally, I'm really sort of opposed to hot markets. Recently relocated permanently to, to Florida and the first sort of instance would be, "Hey, let's, let's move to Miami." And that was our first impulse. But you look at the Miami market and it's just, it's exploding and it's, it's really hot. So I sort of had to do that same thing of what's the upcoming market opposed to the hot market. And that led me to Tampa, which has a lot of the same things as Miami, but is, is not nearly as hot, but it's also not like a bland market. It's definitely up and coming. Um-

Melanie Berliet:

Hmm.

Chris Lavergne:

... and there's sort of those sort of three distinctions you have to make between is this a hot market, an up and coming market or a pretty stagnant market? And I really, I really like to look for the upcoming markets.

Melanie Berliet:

And when you look for those up and coming markets, where do you go? Like deep, dark holes of the internet? How does one even discover an up and coming (laughs) market?

Chris Lavergne:

Well, I mean, it really starts with what you think is interesting, and like what really sort of pulls you and your friends. That's how I sort of found the markets.

Melanie Berliet:

So, one might say one of your interests is living in the forest, Upstate New York?

Chris Lavergne:

Well, with the Upstate New York property, it was definitely a matter of proximity to the city, fast internet coming across, you know, even rural areas that sort of create this sort of hyper futuristic rural environment that you can live in. Uh, self-driving cars becoming a thing. And the fact that this one county where I found it was one of the sort of only things within 90 minutes of New York City that was still not very developed at all and sort of had this sort of open canvas for us to play with, and that made it really interesting. And there was a lot of people from Brooklyn sort of migrating up there for that sort of same reason of just like, "Wow, we're sort of priced out of the city and we don't even have the space to do the creative stuff we want to do there now."

Melanie Berliet:

And that first home is called Clearing Farm. Is that correct?

Chris Lavergne:

Yeah. Well, Clearing Farm is a interconnection of three rental properties, nestled between two rivers, the Mongaup River and the Delaware River. And spans about 60 acres. There's two proper homes on it that can be lived in. A wood shop, uh, where we make our furniture that goes in there and we use all the trees from the property, build with that. And then various sort of, like, spa or wellness centers, uh, scattered throughout the property. As well as a, a farm where we grow hops, which is the main ingredient to make beer.

Melanie Berliet:

Very cool. Do you also have chickens? I feel like I saw somewhere that you were selling eggs or offering eggs to your guests.

Chris Lavergne:

Yeah, we have chickens. And the problem with chickens though, is I can't eat any eggs anymore that aren't fresh.

Melanie Berliet:

Ooh.

Chris Lavergne:

'Cause it's, it's so different.

Melanie Berliet:

You've been spoiled by fresh eggs. Was it important to you that the property you invested in, Clearing Farm, had water on the land?

Chris Lavergne:

I mean, I wasn't that smart at the time to sort of identify that as a core feature. I mean, there's lots of benefits to it that I sort of learned about, but in the beginning that was just like an aesthetic preference. And some of the other properties I looked at before purchasing that one didn't have water.

Melanie Berliet:

Right. I ask because I've, I've been fortunate enough to stay at Clearing Farm. And for me, that waterfall is truly breathtaking and such a largely appealing aspect of the property. And it's not just the way it looks, it's the way it sounds too. Just the sound of running water nearby is incredibly therapeutic I find. And also you can play in it.

Chris Lavergne:

Yeah. The sounds are amazing and there's lots of, yeah,, wonderful swimming opportunities with it. And it's, it's interesting 'cause the area is called Glen Spey, New York, but one of the translations of that is the valley of spas. And it's really supposed to be this idea that it was this area in New York just full of like bubbling brooks and all these sort of interesting water features, and that really is cool 'cause we can sort of bring back that original intention with the property because it does have so much water. I mean the waterfall spans four acres, maybe, of just cascading down the hill.

Melanie Berliet:

I can't help but say it's also very Instagramable. Was that deliberate from your standpoint sort of creating this property that is great for pictures? And not just the waterfall, you have all of those tiny, cool cabins dotting the property. And I, I see them all over my feed.

Chris Lavergne:

I feel like we're still working on making it Instagramable. I mean, there's so much work and there's so much sweat that has to go in just setting up the initial configuration of a lodging. So, so much of it was just how do we make this home and this property function as a short term rental as well as a, you know, creative space to, to come to and make stuff? And once we sort of achieved that goal, we could start to move on to figuring out what those Instagrammable spots are really and, and carving those out.

Melanie Berliet:

And what does make Clearing Farm so appealing to short term renters?

Chris Lavergne:

I mean a lot of times people with short term rentals, they're just designing a place to make a quick buck. Clearing Farm sort of originated as almost a corporate campus, you know, a place for people to come and work and get out of the city and make stuff. So we started from a different perspective there and, you know, understanding all the zoning rules and all that kind of stuff. We, we couldn't actually make it into that. But that impulse of making it, this sort of almost retreat center gives it a very unique feel. And then even with the homes that are on it, I mean, they've been designed in a very creative, artistic way. We do a lot of corporate

shoots up there as well, uh, like photo shoots, video shoots. So everything's designed also to work as a set, which makes it really magical. And then on top of that, it's filled with things in the homes that are really relevant to my career and the trajectory of my company. So we have our books that we publish within my main company, Thought Catalog, other books that are relevant and have inspired us throughout it, art from people we've worked with that have been given to us. So there's really just this level of like, you're not in this cold rental, you're at this, this place with a real history. And on top of that, the land has a huge history that we go out of our way to bring forth while you're there. So everything from the newspaper clippings from the 1850s when the original owner died, hang there. Um, he was also an inventor, one of the people that lived there, so we have some of his patents. And then, you know, we found a lot of old, um, artifacts from, from the original sort of tourism around the area that we've brought back. So we really listened to the history of it and sort of combined it with, with what we're doing in the present to make it just have a lot of soul.

Melanie Berliet:

I love that. It really does come through too. I can attest from personal experience. What would you say Chris is the most surprising aspect of managing rental properties?

Chris Lavergne:

A lot of people think it's gonna be a very seamless experience and you can kind of create a guidebook and put all the information in an email and people will understand.

Melanie Berliet:

(laughs).

Chris Lavergne:

(laughs). And you know, when I go somewhere, I'm like, really intrigued. I wanna know everything about it before I get there. And I kind of thought everyone's like that. I mean, there's so many people that come and they don't even know where they are and-

Melanie Berliet:

(laughs).

Chris Lavergne:

...there's a lot of, like, extra work in that. You know, just lots of social interaction, explaining things, even if the answers are quite clear in our documentation. So there's always this level of work that's associated with a short term rental that I think is sort of forgotten about.

Music fades in.

Mélanie Berliet (Voice Over):

We'll be back with more from Chris Lavergne after the break.

Music fades out.

[Mid-Roll Break]

Music fades in.

Mélanie Berliet (Voice Over):

Welcome back to The Better Buy, a podcast from Better Homes & Gardens.

Music fades out.

Melanie Berliet:

Since you have undergone so many different home renovations, I wanna talk to you a bit about that process. I have a theory about home renovation math that your expected timelines and budgets will at least double during the process, would you agree with that?

Chris Lavergne:

At least double. Yeah. I mean 100%. And you know, ideally you don't really want to go into a renovation unless you really wanna make it your full-time job and you're really passionate about it. Like with my new home that's my sort of primary residence, my forever home, I don't wanna be involved with it at all.

Melanie Berliet:

Really?

Chris Lavergne:

It's just too much work. And particularly with the supply chain issues, now you just wanna hire a professional that knows how to do this and trust them to do the work and, you know, make a few suggestions. But it's too much work for, I think, most people – definitely for me, and at this stage in my life.

Melanie Berliet:

Right. But when it came to Clearing Farm, I seem to remember since I was employed by you at the time you were renovating it, that you were very involved in many of the details. Is that true?

Chris Lavergne:

Yeah, but I was naive. I thought it would go a lot faster. And at the end of the day, I had to do a lot of the work to make sure it got done. You know, it was supposed to take maybe a year, it took four or five years.

Melanie Berliet:

Are there any aspects of your very first home renovation that you, not regret, but may do differently knowing what you knew- know now?

Chris Lavergne:

Yeah, I mean, I was very focused on design.

Melanie Berliet:

Mm-hmm.

Chris Lavergne:

Design, design, design, design, and I really brushed aside all the functional aspects of living.

Melanie Berliet:

Interesting.

Chris Lavergne:

And I think, especially when you're designing a rental property, you do have this tendency of how do I make it look beautiful for the rental aspect of it? And you forget about just what makes a home functional. And then the second thing – and this is only relevant to people that wanna start short term rentals – you really need to think about the hook. Why are people gonna stay there? Because good design is probably not enough. So, you know, we have the, one of them is like a dog paradise and then our other one is a beautiful property, but it also has a hot tub right on it, and an amazing fire pit. And that's sort of the hook there on top of it being a historical house. So you really gotta design with the "why" of who's gonna come and not just say, "Well, it's a great house and people will come."

Melanie Berliet:

Since a lot of your properties are designed to, generate short term rental income, I'm curious how you set up a home to be renter friendly?

Chris Lavergne:

Yeah. There's two types of renter homes. You know, the first are ones that are built on beaches, lakes in important cities, and those pretty much sell themselves. They're gonna be booked during the season 100% of the time. So if you're going in one of those locations, you don't have to do that much except for the, the bare minimum because you're really just providing lodging. What Clearing Farm is is definitely something where it was somewhat of an abandoned land and we have to, in these type of properties – Joshua Tree would be a similar thing to the Catskills in, in New York – in those you're really trying to carve out the home as the destination itself. And with that you always need to have a really strong hook, and the hooks aren't necessarily what you think they're gonna be going in. I thought for our homes that the hook was they're gonna be beautifully designed historical homes. Turns out there's really not that big of a market for it. So the house became, uh, a pet friendly house for dogs. Um-

Melanie Berliet:

(laughs).

Chris Lavergne:

You know, I don't have a pet. but you sort of just followed the data of, of what people seem to want. And we installed a fence that, covers a whole acre, so the dogs can run around and it's our most popular rental. Um-

Melanie Berliet:

Really?

Chris Lavergne:

... primarily because of it being so pet friendly.

Melanie Berliet:

I guess pet owners have a harder time renting properties since there are fewer available to them. That's very interesting. Are there any personal touches you add to your places to make them feel more welcoming?

Chris Lavergne:

We probably go overboard to try and make them welcoming. I mean, all of our stuff, you know, in these homes is really a reflection of my personality, the personality of people that I work with. You can go in and it doesn't feel like a rental, and we really take a lot of pride in that. You walk in and you're like "This isn't just some type of short term rental. This looks like this is a lived-in house." And while they are all rentals, they have this, this

personality where sort of every little turn you take, you sort of discover something new. It's almost cinematic. And that's, that's a really sort of fun aspect of it. I don't know if I recommend it for people that are trying to, you know, just make money on their rentals, but it definitely gives that special touch and creates memories for the people that visit.

Melanie Berliet:

And we know how to make a home more, you know, appealing to pet owners. How do you make a home more livable for families rather than just couples?

Chris Lavergne:

Yeah, for families it's really about creating memories. And in one of our properties, we just have lots of photographic moments. We have open spaces where people can just sort of explore and feel like they're at home even though they aren't home and just sort of carve these special memories. So, you know, we have a swing built into a tree that, you know, is just a gorgeous little moment for people to experience. And you know, we always see on Instagram, the, the family's posting photos of their kids on there. And it's just a, it's a sweet moment.

Melanie Berliet:

What is your favorite room in a typical house and why?

Chris Lavergne:

I love rooms where you move outdoors. It's the best. Um, and I'm always trying to get out of a house when I'm in a house. You know-

Melanie Berliet:

Hmm.

Chris Lavergne:

... as much as I love it, I'm always sort of moving around. So I love, you know, kitchens that open up to the outdoors. I just love houses with lots of doors and just ways that you move. And it doesn't matter if it's snowing out or a beautiful day. There's just this, like, wonderful thing of moving from shelter to outdoors.

Melanie Berliet:

Indoor, outdoor living, I think they call that. It is nice, isn't it?

Chris Lavergne:

Yeah. And then of course, just a beautiful office that inspires you is, is really important.

Melanie Berliet:

Can you describe your personal home aesthetic as you, you know, enter into this phase where you're actually outfitting a home that you will actually live in?

Chris Lavergne:

Yeah, I started out hyper-minimal, hyper-modern, just ruthlessly modern and ruthlessly minimalist. And over the years, I don't know how it happened, but I've become really interested in traditional design and ornate design and just lots of color and texture. So that was a really interesting evolution that I think 10 years ago, if I told myself that I, I wouldn't believe, believe myself.

Melanie Berliet:

What's the first thing you notice when you enter someone else's home?

Chris Lavergne:

Well, I think I'm always looking for how the home is actually used. Because so much of what we look at with homes today is how they look in this ideal environment. So when I walk into a space, I'm really like, "How, how do people live in this? What is it like when it's full and you know, it's a busy day? And does it work? Is it functional like that? How quiet are certain spaces if you want to go and read a book or do some work and that kind of stuff?" So I'm, I'm always trying to x-ray through the beauty of the home and understand, you know, what it's like to really live there because I think that's the most important question when it comes to home design.

Melanie Berliet:

What advice would you give to people looking to buy a home either for personal use or as an investment?

Chris Lavergne:

You know, if you're looking for an investment home it's very different than a personal home. And I think a lot of people sometimes conflate that, particularly people in major cities that are looking to sort of buy a place outside of the city and sometimes rent it and sometimes live in it. And I, I don't know how tenable that really is because there's a lot involved with renting your home out. And I think it's ideal to say this is a rental or this is a, your personal home and, not conflate the two.

Melanie Berliet:

What do you think people should know before undergoing a renovation?

Chris Lavergne:

I mean, there's so many different types of renovations, so it's hard to give particular advice on that. But if it's a large-scale renovation, it's gonna – everyone says this, so it's, it's not particularly interesting – but it's gonna cost a lot more and it's gonna take a lot more time than you think it's gonna take. So be ready for the ride.

Melanie Berliet:

Be ready to spend, I guess, and for it to take a lot longer than one would think. That's what I always like to remember. If you could give one piece of advice to new homeowners, what would it be?

Chris Lavergne:

Yeah. It's to be patient, but I don't mean that in a cliché way. To make it more specific, I think your first home is really something you need to think about not in a two year timeframe, a five year timeframe, but a 10 year timeframe at least. For example, the place that we bought recently in Florida, I don't necessarily think it's the home, but it might be the home for seven years and then it will eventually lead us to our true home.

Chris Lavergne:

But so much time we sort of get fixated particularly first home buyers on purchasing the perfect spot right away. And it's just, it's too big of a project to do that unless, you know, you have a crazy budget, and most of us don't. So the real thing is to say, "All right, maybe, maybe if we look at this in five years, we're gonna buy this home first and then we're gonna renovate it and then we'll eventually be able to sell it and then we'll be able to move into the next home." Opposed to just trying to rush it and make it all happen, at once 'cause it's, it really doesn't happen like that most of the time.

Melanie Berliet:

Can you tell me, Chris, where you look to for inspiration when you're building out a property now that you have really built four homes, or three and are in the process of your fourth?

Chris Lavergne:

Yeah, I really don't look for inspiration in the usuals places. And I, I don't even know if I look for inspiration at all. I think, you know, taking a photo you like from Pinterest of a dreamy house or a dreamy living room, it's kind of counterproductive because it's all designed to look gorgeous and, you know, make you feel this amazing way about it, but is it really livable? Is it really functional? Is it really achievable? So I try to stay away from falling into this dreamscape of what could be, and really just talking to professionals and people who have owned homes for a long time and really saying like, "What works? What went wrong?" And really talking about the practical and functional elements of the home more than getting lost in a pin board, which I used to do a lot.

Melanie Berliet:

Yeah. It's easy to forget that pretty much everything we see on social is incredibly staged and not necessarily very functional. What are some of your favorite money saving tips when it comes to decorating and building out a home?

Chris Lavergne:

Yeah. So my money saving tips are either spend a lot of money or spend no money. So I have furniture in my house that I literally picked up off of the street in New York City and just put in there, like that was being thrown away. And I have stuff that I spent a great deal of money on. The main thing though is to either go all out and buy exactly what you want or find a way to use sort of recycled materials in the meantime until you can afford what you want. So if there's a bed you want and it's way out of your budget, just go look on Craigslist, grab a bed that maybe someone will give away for free, live with that for a few years, and then eventually buy the perfect bed when you can afford it. But don't try and go through this middle ground of, "This might do." 'Cause at the end of the day you know what you really want. And just be patient enough. And you know, there's plenty of stuff you can use just from, you know, your neighbors on, on all these platforms

Melanie Berliet:

Is there anything when it comes to homes that is always worth splurging on?

Chris Lavergne:

Yeah. I think everything with the home is worth splurging on. You know, it's the most important space, particularly after 2020. I mean, we live in these spaces, we work in these spaces a lot of the time. And if there's any place that you really want to invest money, you know, it might not be a vacation, it might be in making your home feel more like a vacation. So I'm really a proponent of making sure that you save the right amount of money to invest in the home.

Melanie Berliet:

Great All right, so, most underrated home tip?

Chris Lavergne:

I think big homes are the enemy of good design. I've never really walked into a McMansion and said, "Wow, everything's so beautiful here" because there's so much space that needs to be filled, that it can't always be designed properly 'cause you need such big furniture, so much stuff. So I think looking at smaller homes and seeing them as actually much more beautiful is a really good way to, to approach things. Bedrooms don't

need to be 300 square feet. They can be 120 square feet and be perfectly fine for most purposes. So definitely being open to the fact that, that small homes are typically more beautiful. And I think even the most expensive homes I've ever been in have, have often been on the smaller side. They're not these, these large homes. Most of them just sort of feel like tombs to me.

Melanie Berliet:

Yeah. Space can be overrated. What does home mean to you in a single feeling?

Chris Lavergne:

Yeah. Home, home is the space that brings you to your best self.

Melanie Berliet:

Spacious lawn or large basement?

Chris Lavergne:

Spacious lawn. I mean open, expanses of land are the best.

Melanie Berliet:

Super high ceilings or lots of natural light?

Chris Lavergne:

I think the high ceilings, because most of the time when I'm in a room with a lot of natural light, I have to pull the blinds down at some point. So I'd rather have the ceilings.

Melanie Berliet:

Living near loved ones or close to work?

Chris Lavergne:

Well, work is home now. So living close to loved ones 'cause-

Melanie Berliet:

(laughs). Good point.

Chris Lavergne:

... I'm always at work.

Melanie Berliet:

Neighbors or privacy?

Chris Lavergne:

Hmm, well, privacy, but you can't really live in a home without neighbors. So no matter how much privacy you have, your neighbors are gonna bleed in somehow.

Melanie Berliet:

Bowls or plates?

Chris Lavergne:

(laughs).

Melanie Berliet:

(laughs). I have a theory that bowls are the new plates. (laughs).

Chris Lavergne:

You know, that makes a lot of sense now that you say that, so bowls, yeah. I don't need a plate. I can just use a bowl for- forever.

Melanie Berliet:

Right. Dinner plates are way overrated. Thank you so much for being here today, Chris. It's been a lot of fun, I have to say.

Chris Lavergne:

Yeah. It's always fun talking.

Melanie Berliet:

Always.

Chris Lavergne:

Always.

Music fades in.

Mélanie Berliet (Voice Over):

You've been listening to The Better Buy, from Better Homes & Gardens. Make sure to follow The Better Buy wherever you listen to podcasts. We'd love your feedback, so please rate this podcast and leave us a review. You can also find us online at bhg.com/thebetterbuypodcast.