

What Makes A House A Home?

It's a question that gets asked a lot.

And it's a question that gets answered a lot, too.

Benjamin Franklin said, "A house is not a home unless it contains food and fire for the mind as well as the body."

Robert Frost described home less favourably, but perhaps more accurately, when he said, "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in."

Home.

This monosyllabic word conjures up many images and creates different feelings and impressions for different people.

Home is where the heart is. Home is where you feel comfortable. Home is where you know you're loved.

I bought my first home - a modern, two-bedroom, town-centre flat - nearly two years ago. I was surprised when, a few months after I had moved in, people asked me if it had started to feel like home yet.

I was surprised because it felt like home from the moment I moved in.

I don't know if it was because I had all of my things around me (in various boxes and cases and crates), or because the first thing I unpacked (even before the kettle) was one of my favourite paintings, which I immediately hung up, or because I chose

all of the furniture and furnishings myself and arranged everything just as I wanted it.

Or if it simply felt like home because I called it home and thought of it as such.

Home. It's a powerful word. It denotes not so much the physical, bricks-and-mortar building, but the people and relationships which dwell within its walls. It speaks not so much of the visible and the tangible, but of the emotional and the relational. It tells not so much of the structure of the building, but of the structure of the family (no matter what 'family' looks like).

It is a full word - a word filled with busyness and warmth and love. It is a comforting word, a reassuring word, a familiar word. It represents a place of safety and security, a place where we can feel welcomed and accepted.

To me, home is somewhere I can, quite literally, put my feet up on the sofa. It's somewhere I feel comfortable and relaxed and somewhere I can be myself.

And that, to me, is what is so important - a home should be a place where people can be themselves, whether they live there or are just visiting. A home is made and shaped and formed by the people who live in it and it should reflect them - it should be an extension of their personalities.

So, instead of asking, what makes a house a home? Perhaps we should ask, what makes me, me?

This is my house. *Mi casa.*

Come on in and have a look around.

Mi casa es su casa.