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nerding out

PLANNING AND BUILDING SERVICES was one of my favourite departments to work with when I was a corporate communications type with the City of St. Catharines years ago.

I loved writing about and promoting the staff's work. They were the visionaries, devising plans to maximize all the city's assets and ensuring its livability for future generations. I learned so much and got so excited for the potential of a city that's been no stranger to hard times and naysayers.

During my tenure with the city, planning staff documented the history and heritage features of a west-end neighbourhood known as Power Glen. Officially, Power Glen was designated a heritage district for its ties to milling and power generation in the late 1800s. Remnants of those industries can still be found there, including the homes of workers and the business owners who made the area thrive.

So I nerded out just a little bit when we got to shoot a new development in Power Glen for this issue. Rinaldi Homes honoured that important history in the design of Mill Creek, a townhome development on Power Glen's western edge. Those lucky enough to live there will enjoy life in a stunning corner of the city that's paramount to St. Catharines' story as a manufacturing heavyweight.

I also feel incredibly grateful for the time we got to spend with chefs Tania Ganassini and John Vetere, who are characters in the story of a new Niagara. Food has taken over manufacturing as one of the region's largest economic sectors and it's because of people like Tania and John, young transplants playing key roles in our ever-evolving culinary scene. Both were making their marks in Toronto kitchens when they were beckoned to Niagara by affordable home prices and a lifestyle unmatched in the city. We take Tania and John from behind the burner to front of house – their house – and learn how they're making the most of life in Niagara.

And now that it's summer, it's impossible for any of us to not make the most of living in the region. This is when Niagara shines, so enjoy it to the fullest before it rushes out of here, like it always seems to do.

Tiffany Mayer, Managing Editor
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SUMMERTIME

WHEN IDLENESS FINDS RESPECTABILITY



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Photography by Kelly Horkoff.

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outdoor rooms
for breezy
summer living

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*friends are
very special*

This issue I was astounded by the support I received from my friends and business partners.

OUR HOMES works with small and large businesses. It's easy to establish rapport with each client, and some smaller businesses just become closer as you work together establishing an individual marketing plan. You understand their needs and meet their families, all working away and growing their business together.

This issue, Mary Cath Altobelli of Alto Interiors and Paul Elia of Paul Elia Gallery assisted with the staging on one of our shoots for this issue. They both drove to Niagara-on-the-Lake from Hamilton, their cars piled high with different items and art to help for the day. Wow, a huge thank you goes out to them. Everything came together beautifully, and the homeowners, focused on growing their own businesses, were wonderful to work with.

And then we have the spectacular Rinaldi Homes project in Power Glen. As a youngster, I played there with my Water Works friends and the location brought back tons of memories of those fun-filled days. They were my special friends of the time.

Please support all your local businesses from apples to anchors and restaurants to renovators. Buy local and support your local friends.

Laurie

Laurie Lotimer, Associate Publisher
laurie.lotimer@ourhomes.ca

A photograph of a modern living room featuring a large, dark wood ceiling fan with three blades. The room has large windows, a wooden coffee table, and a black leather chair. The text "Form MEETS FUNCTION" is overlaid on the image.

MONTE CARLO
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Four different ceiling fan models are displayed in a vertical column. They vary in blade design, color, and light fixture style.

A logo for Don's Light House Ltd. featuring a stylized house icon with a light bulb inside.

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THE NAME SAYS IT ALL

A photograph of a modern kitchen with a large island. The island has a white countertop and a sink. There are four bar stools with metal frames and dark seats. The kitchen has dark cabinets, a stainless steel refrigerator, and a range hood.



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My husband and I spent years making rough sketches of our dream home, bookmarking photos, discussing features we admired in other houses, visiting building lots. We had a fairly specific idea of our wants and needs, but the reality of building a custom home seemed out of reach.

When a cottage we purchased as an investment proved structurally unsound, our plans changed and we found ourselves digging through our stack of magazine clippings and feverishly researching details. The cottage had to come down. In its place we'd build the custom home we always wanted.

While the ins and outs of design decisions and project management would come easily to us, financing a home build was utterly perplexing. With the mortgage we had in place for the cottage, and modest savings, how could we fund the needed construction? Would a lender approve us, a couple with no prior homebuilding experience, to be the general contractor of our own construction?

We were fortunate enough to enlist the help of Treena French, mortgage specialist with RBC, our everyday bank, who answered our questions, quelled our fears and walked us through each step (and there are many).

Yes, we could act as general contractors, as we had gathered and presented detailed cost estimates and drawings. Yes, our financials were sufficient for approval of our small home build. But just how would our construction mortgage operate?

Ours was the most common type, a construction draw mortgage. The first draw was enough to replace our original mortgage and gave us sufficient funds to begin the building process. Then, as work progressed on the house, we made three further draws against our final mortgage amount. Each time we reached a milestone in construction, we contacted Treena, who set the process in motion for the next draw.

That draw process was straightforward. An independent appraiser stopped by to evaluate the percentage of completion, and his report indicated that number to the bank, who released the next set of funds.

Those funds could take anywhere from days to weeks to arrive, during which time contractors required payment. In addition, each draw had its own holdback – a percentage of the funds that are held

CONSTRUCTION MORTGAGES AT-A-GLANCE

COMPLETION

A completion mortgage is one in which the builder receives all funds only after the home is complete – therefore all costs for the build are shouldered by the builder during the construction process. These types of mortgages are more common for homes with fewer customizations, as most lenders require construction to be complete within 120 days in order to lock in your interest rate.

With a completion mortgage, your application is approved before building commences. But, as the mortgage will not be registered in your name until completion, your financial position must remain unchanged during this period. A change in employment, a new car purchase, additional loan, etc., could jeopardize the mortgage of your home.

DRAW

With a draw mortgage, your mortgage is registered before the building process begins. Your builder receives payment throughout the build, via periodic draws on the final mortgage amount. The interest rate is locked in from the initial draw of funds, and you hold the title.

Each time a draw is initiated, an appraiser assesses the progress of the build, and funds are released through a lawyer. As a result of these steps, additional fees can be associated with a draw mortgage. In some cases, a larger down payment may be required up front to purchase land for the project, as well.

Your mortgage specialist will walk you through the details of both options, and help you choose the right plan to suit your needs.

by lawyers until project completion. For these circumstances, we were able to utilize our existing line of credit, which was required for the construction mortgage's approval.

If our line of credit had not been sufficient, or if we were otherwise not a good fit with our bank, where could we have turned for our mortgage? I contacted Gerard Buckley of Mortgage Wellness to gain some insight.

As an independent mortgage agent, Gerard works to match the objectives of his clients with the strengths of his various lenders. In the case of an insufficient line of credit, the right fit might be a lender who offers far more than three or four draws throughout the construction process – perhaps on the order of 25 or 30. Buckley describes these draws as buckets, noting, “Thirty buckets is less precise and gives more flexibility to the homebuilder.”

In our case, four buckets was exactly what we required. We hit no snags on the way, only asked a handful of needless questions of our lender, and somehow finished on budget.

I often mention, and speak highly, of the team who built our custom home – the tradespeople who spent weeks and months drilling, sawing and painting. But, although she was never on site, one of the most important players was Treena, our lender. Having an accessible, supportive mortgage specialist was crucial to the success of our build, and we found that finding someone we could trust and with whom we had a comfortable rapport was just as important as choosing tradespeople. **OH**

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style picks



A fine finish

Every home has one – that one room that didn't get as much love as the others. These finishing touches will give any room in the house some serious TLC. PHOTOGRAPHY **KELLY HORKOFF**



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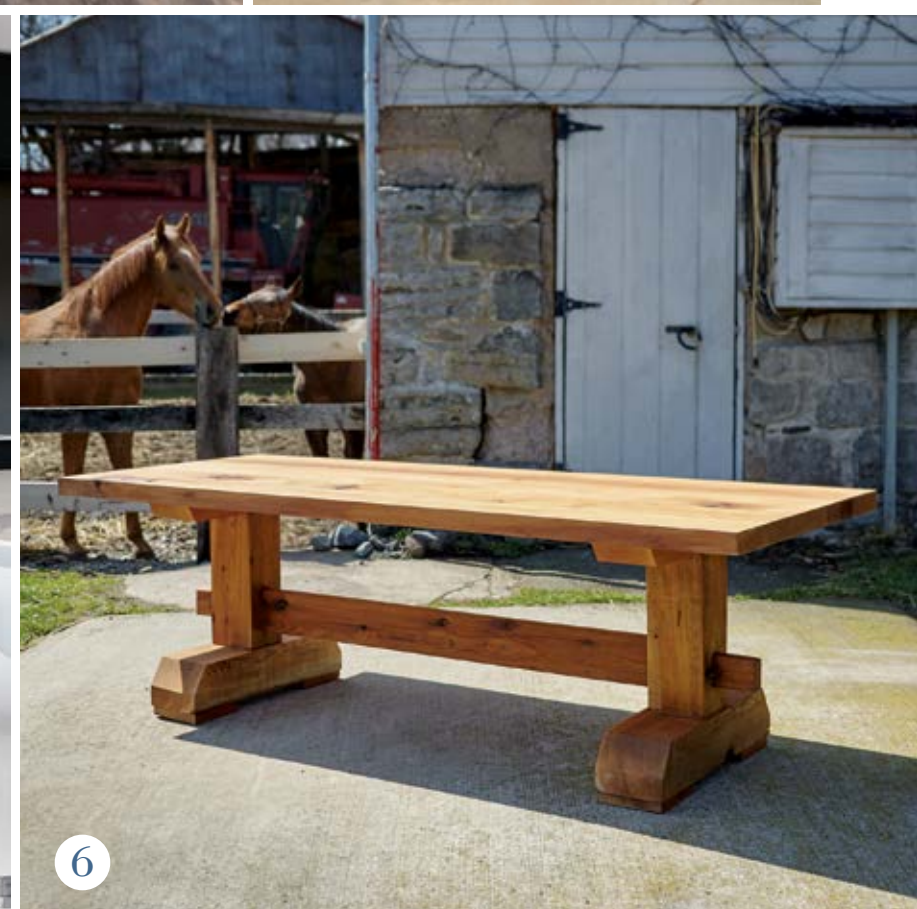
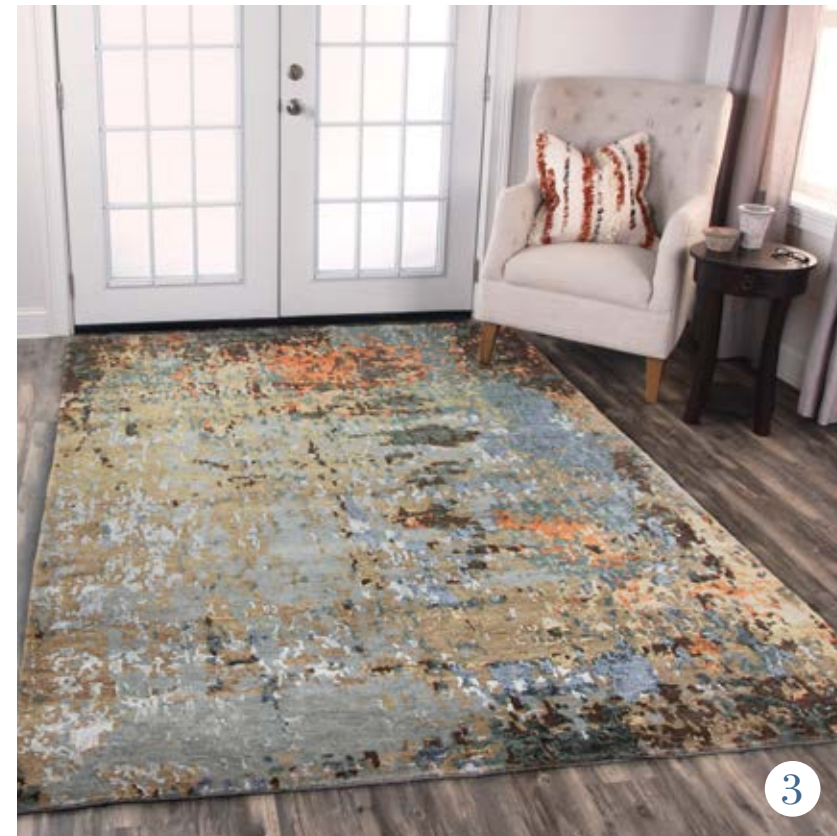
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Continued on page 18





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Our summers may be short, but from March through July and on to November, cooking outdoors allows us to share our food experiences with family and friends while we extend our outdoor play time. More and more people are choosing to invest in their homes and backyards rather than vacation elsewhere.

Before planning and spending on an outdoor kitchen, ask yourself some simple questions:

- How much time do I want to devote to maintenance? Knowing this will save you a lot of grief and disappointment.
- What's critical-to-have, must-have and nice-to-have?

Critical to Know

- Safety first. Make sure you meet your region's building and fire codes. There's a difference between a code for building a house and a code for preventing open

flames in and near a building. They are two different things.

- Protect combustible materials.

Choosing Cabinets and Materials

Cabinets and counters need to be corrosion and weather resistant, low maintenance and made with stable materials. All materials expand and contract with temperature change and moisture. Sun fades colours, and natural materials break down over time. There are three types of cabinetry-based kitchens for outdoor use: HDPE/Polymer, wood and stainless steel.

Polymer: Waterproof, sun safe, available in a variety of solid colours, lower maintenance, plastic, variable durability.

Wood: Flexible design, requires some maintenance, most affordable, not fire resistant.

Stainless Steel: Heat and fire resistant, non-corrosive, easy to clean, available in powder-coated colours.

Things to Consider

Appearance: What do I want to see when I look at my outdoor kitchen? Choose your landscaping and furniture for that perfect outdoor style.

Clean-Up: Install a sink with water. You may not want to use your indoor kitchen to clean greasy, sooty stuff. Plan ahead for plumbing.

Heating and Electrical: Layer your heat sources. Consider heat lamps, fire pits or a built-in infrared heater. Make sure you put in multiple electrical outlets that meet code. Plan ahead for electrical.

Shade: Create shade from the sun and protection from the rain with pergolas, retractable patio covers or tents.

Stay Cool: Cool yourself off with fans, misters or rugs to shield you from the hot floor and use light-coloured furniture.



Layout and Seating: Transition your rooms with removable screens, doors and walls. Offer a variety of seating – low Muskoka chairs, chaise loungers, stools and benches.

Storage Space: The ultimate amenity. Think of what else may need to be stored – equipment, furniture, sports and hobbies. You don't want to run back and forth from the house or garage, to the outdoor living area.

Small Spaces – Condo Balconies and Terraces

Electric grills make outdoor eating possible despite strict fire and safety codes. Brown Jordan has fully assembled kitchens for terraces, to be lifted by a crane, or custom units transported by a service elevator.

Nice to Have and Trending

- Specialty right-sized appliances replacing mammoth barbecue grills. These can include: Argentinian grills, smokers, side burners, pizza ovens, fridges, dishwashers, beer on tap, espresso machines, ice makers and Kamado-style grills.
- Lighting schemes, televisions and sound systems. Treat this space like another room of the house.

Value to Your Home

Outdoor kitchens seem to be replacing the pool as an add-on feature. It increases your competitive edge when selling because people will imagine themselves having great times in their new backyard.

Good design blurs the lines between the indoors and the outdoors. In what creative ways have you designed your very own private outdoor oasis? **OH**



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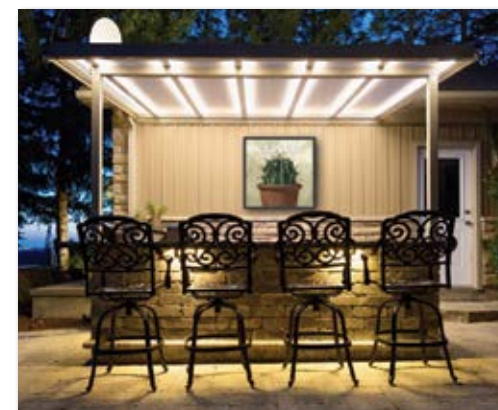
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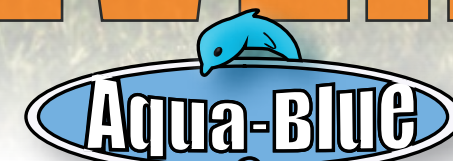
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PROJECT **DAWN MCCONNELL**
PHOTOGRAPHY **TARA CHATTELL**

Get creative with your flowers. Simple arrangements will look great on a table, mantel or counter. Think parties, showers or weddings.



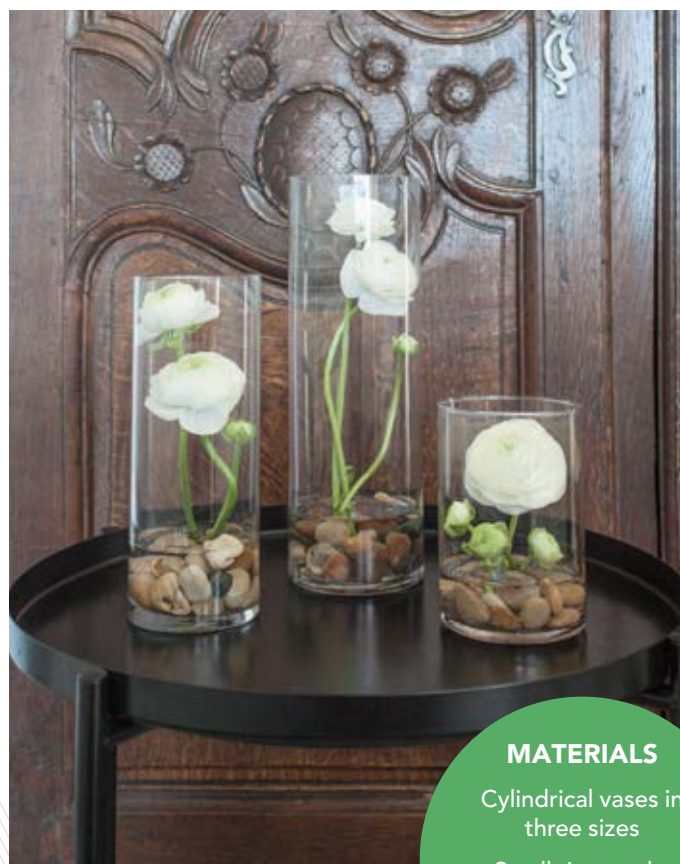
MATERIALS

5 Clear vases, your choice
Water
Food colouring
Gerbera daisies

JUST ADD COLOUR

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Add water to each vase. Squeeze a few drops of food colouring into each vase and stir.
- 2 Cut flowers to fit vase. Display and enjoy!



MATERIALS

Cylindrical vases in three sizes
Small river rocks
Water
3 Flowers on stems

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Place a handful of rocks on the bottom of each vase. Cut flower stems in various heights.
- 2 Arrange stems between rocks on bottom of the vase. Fill vase with water. Enjoy! **on**



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The great room in this model features plenty of space for gathering and entertaining. Triple-glazed windows provide increased energy efficiency and soundproofing.

a gift from TIME

STORY DENISE WILLSON | PHOTOGRAPHY KELLY HORKOFF

When an area holds historic significance, by definition it dates from or is preserved from a past time or culture. It's a gift from time, which is why the Power Glen neighbourhood, a historic neighbourhood nestled in a quiet part of west St. Catharines, draws people with an appreciation for the past, nature and community. *Continued on page 26*



newer builds, Mill Creek was created using traditional materials, including stucco, steel and copper. Masonry materials with a quarried stone profile were sourced at **Burnstein Brick** and **St. Catharines Building Supplies**, which provided the three-colour blend interlocking brick used in the driveways. To keep in tune with the traditional architectural features of the homes and properties in the area, Rinaldi Homes, this year's winner of the **Niagara Home Builders' Association** Builder of the Year Award, added copper roof accents, hand-troweled stucco, and mahogany Richards-Wilcox's Landmark Rockwood garage doors that channel carriage house charm from **Yarnell Overhead Door Ltd.** "All of the townhomes in Mill Creek have covered front and rear porches – features seen on many of the heritage homes in the area," Danielle says. "In this neighbourhood, people really appreciate the beauty surrounding them so we really wanted to take advantage of that in the design." *Continued on page 29*

ABOVE: Aurora Bachert from The Ensuite, Selena Fabi of Rinaldi Homes, Lisa Littleton of Don's Light House, Joan Rinaldi of Rinaldi Homes, Moira McCreadie of Artcraft Kitchens and Rhoda Cipparone of Aristocrat Floors of the World are some of the local talent who worked on the interior look and feel of the models at Mill Creek. **OPPOSITE, LEFT:** High ceilings with additional windows bring lots of natural light into the living area of the great room. **RIGHT:** The front entrance offers a warm welcome.

REMNANTS OF THE 18TH CENTURY saw and grist mills dot the valley along with landforms from an old dam, millpond, and spillway that once powered the mills. Several heritage buildings and homes of workers from a generating station built in 1898 by the Cataract Power Company of Hamilton – earning the area its Power Glen moniker – also remain. Surrounded by trees and nature, and cut by Twelve Mile Creek, Power Glen is a hiker's dream. With friendly residents who are proud of the area's heritage, it's a great location

for those who crave quiet country living close to city amenities.

"It's a village in the city, a community that honours its natural and historic setting," says **Danielle Rinaldi** of **Rinaldi Homes**. "This was at the forefront of every decision we made when planning, designing, and building Mill Creek."

Mill Creek is a community of 28 newly built bungalow townhomes by Rinaldi Homes within the heart of Power Glen. Intermingled with heritage homes and custom crafted





“It’s a village in the city, a community that honours its natural and historic setting. This was at the forefront of every decision we made when planning, designing, and building Mill Creek.”

– Danielle Rinaldi

To bring the community together, Rinaldi Homes oriented the townhomes to face inward, towards a central parkette with a large gazebo. Built by **Timber Frame Solutions Inc.** with Douglas fir timbers, it’s a great gathering place for residents to meet and converse with their neighbours. “Rinaldi Homes prides itself on building beautiful communities, not just beautiful homes,” Danielle says. “That’s why so much care went into landscaping (by **Dekorte’s Landscaping**), exterior elements and a gathering place for residents.”

The townhomes are built with high quality materials to minimize homeowner maintenance and increase energy efficiency. For example, the Dashwood windows, supplied by **Crowland Sash & Frame Ltd.**, are triple glazed. This contributes to longevity and energy efficiency, and also provides an added layer of soundproofing. Tankless water heaters are also standard, cutting down on usage and providing a steady flow of hot water.

Like any new build, there were obstacles. Due to limited site space, each block of townhomes had to be built one after the other, starting at one end of the community. This allowed for excavation and backfilling to be completed in sequential fashion. Also, there were existing trees on the property. Trees can create challenges during the building and services stage, but Rinaldi Homes made every effort to preserve the natural environment. “Materials and attention to detail create character and charm, but a home should blend into the surrounding landscape,” Danielle says. “Mill Creek does just that.”

As a testament to the quality of Rinaldi Homes, Margaret Desanti and her husband were one of the first to purchase and move into their Mill Creek townhome. Margaret has worked for Rinaldi Homes for over 15 years.

Continued on page 31

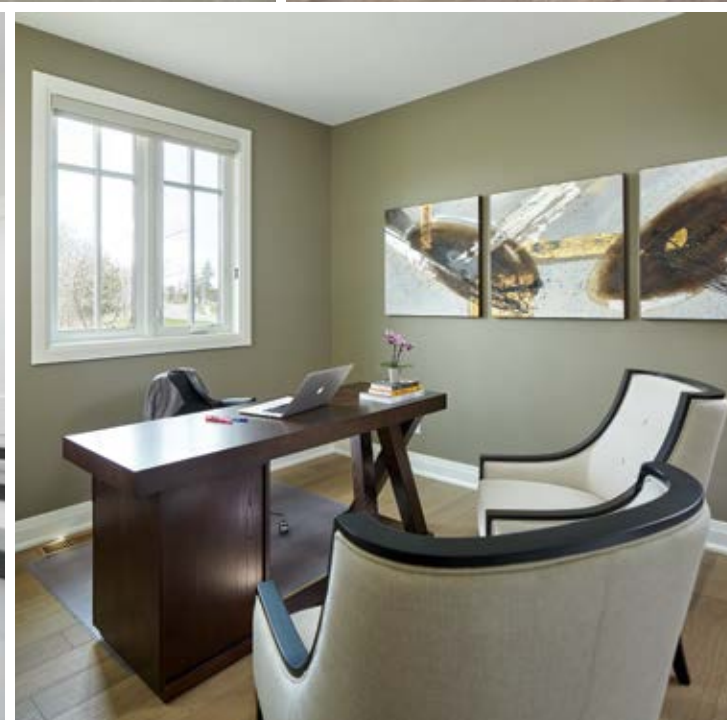
ABOVE RIGHT: Cupboards galore ensure plenty of storage space in the kitchen while a large island provides lots of room for meal prep or entertaining. **RIGHT:** A black kitchen faucet matches the cabinet hardware and looks great against the light coloured kitchen cabinets and quartz countertops. **OPPOSITE:** Generous room to manoeuvre between the stove and island ensures no one gets in the way of each other when more than one person is working in the kitchen.





The lower level in one model features a built-in bar, large windows and built-in shelving for additional storage. **BELOW:** Heated towel racks in the master bathroom are an added touch of comfort.

ABOVE: Main floor laundry rooms are a feature of the units at Mill Creek. **RIGHT:** The master bath is both functional and stylish. **FAR RIGHT:** An additional bedroom on the main floor serves as a quiet study or potential guest room.



“When it was time to downsize, there was no doubt Mill Creek was the place for us,” Margaret says. “The area is beautiful. There are a lot of trees and my husband loves to walk the many trails. Most of all, the bungalow style simplifies our lives. We were tired of stairs.”

There are several unit types to choose from, all of which inspire bungalow living with main-floor bedrooms and open-concept kitchen (**Artcraft Kitchens**), dining, and living areas. Even laundry rooms and studies are on the main level. The kitchens in all the open-concept designs were made with family gatherings in mind, centering around substantial islands and modern lighting from **Don’s Light House Ltd.** There’s plenty of custom cabinetry for storage, so everything has a place, keeping counters uncluttered. Some units also feature walk-in pantries.

Large windows and transoms in the models, adorned by **The Drapery Workroom**, allow for a ton of natural light and an unobstructed view. Flooring and backsplashes meant to withstand years of use were provided by **Aristocrat Floors of the World**. *Continued on page 32*



BELOW: The master bathroom in another model features lots of glass and contrasting tile for visual interest. **RIGHT:** The great room in another Mill Creek model. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The master bedroom. Nightstands, lamps and bench, all from Lincoln Design House.



The master bedrooms are retreats with upgraded spa-like en suite bathrooms and walk-in closets. Upscale fixtures from **The Ensuite** were installed by **Plumbtech Services Ltd.**, including floating tubs, glass shower enclosures, double oversize sinks, and rain showers can be seen in various units. And if main floor living isn't enough, every townhome offers finished living space on the lower level. In one model, a gas fireplace from **The One Stop Fireplace Shop**, built-in cabinetry, and a wet bar to please the most discerning wine connoisseur finish the space.

Mill Creek townhomes are for buyers drawn to a flexible lifestyle that allows them to come and go as they please. One of the biggest benefits to homeowners wanting to do so is the year-round grounds maintenance. Although, considering Power Glen's historical elements and the area's sheer beauty, you might never want to leave. *Continued on page 34*



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Mill Creek's community of 28 bungalow townhomes – built in the heart of Power Glen – was created using traditional materials, like stucco, stone and copper. OH



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PROJECT **DAWN MCCONNELL**
PHOTOGRAPHY **TARA CHATTELL**

Nautical LIGHT POSTS

Light up the summer night with easy-to-make solar light posts. Store-bought solar lights, commonly used on pathways or flower beds, become task lights in a cluster. Use on the deck, around the pool or at the lake.

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Cut post into three lengths measuring 38, 32 and 26 inches each. Your lumber yard can make cuts for a small charge.
- 2 Using a drill paddle, drill a hole 2-inches deep in the top centre of each post for the solar light stem.



MATERIALS

- 1 6x6-inch post, 8-foot length
- 3 Solar lights with stems
- 4 L brackets
- 2 Flat brackets
- 24 1-½-inch woodscrews
- 15 feet of rope (pick your desired thickness)
- 1-¼-inch finishing nails
- Paint or whitewash

TOOLS

- Saw
- Drill
- Drill paddle (of the same diameter size as the light stem)
- Screwdriver
- Finishing nails
- Hammer
- Paintbrush or roller

- 3 Paint posts and let dry thoroughly.
- 4 Arrange and attach posts together with brackets and screws – L brackets for inside corners, flat brackets on the back side.
- 5 Attach rope around the middle of the post bundle. Tuck ends in behind wrapped rope and nail end in place. Using finishing nails, tack rope into post in random areas to hold in place.
- 6 Cut solar light stems to 2 inches or desired length. Insert light stems in posts, attach solar lights to stems. Enjoy. **OH**



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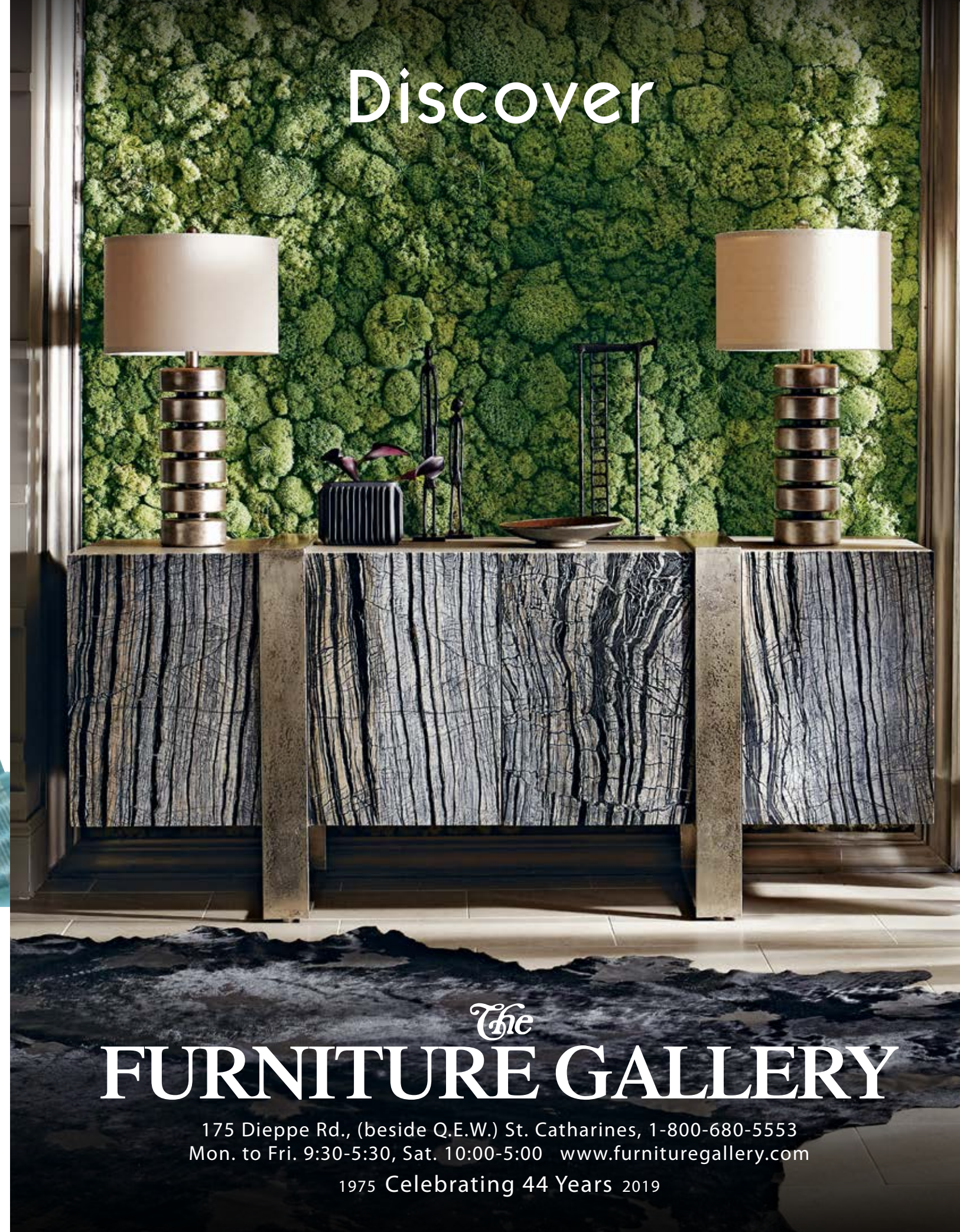
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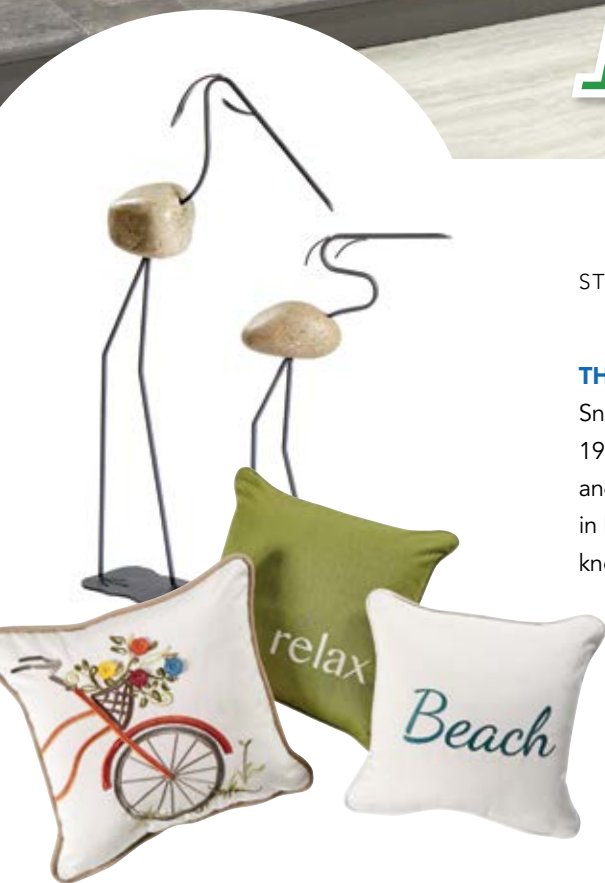
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1975 Celebrating 44 Years 2019



STORY **TIFFANY MAYER** | PHOTOGRAPHY **KELLY HORKOFF**

THE PLACE: When Bill Hind and Elaine Snell got into the sunroom business in 1982, their focus was supplying bright and airy additions to seasonal dwellings in RV parks. But then homeowners came knocking, seeking the same enhancements that made them feel less holed-up in their year-round addresses. Business boomed and their showroom at **Aztec Enclosures** in Welland grew. And grew and grew, to eventually include their latest venture **Inspired Patio**. One lets people see the range

of options for extending their homes with high-end three- and four-season sunrooms while the other, in an adjoining retail space, provides all the essential furnishings and accessories to make sunrooms, patios and backyards a dream. "We've found since having the showroom, it's a customer service thing to a great extent," Elaine says. "It helps people visualize what something will look like." The marketplace is really evolving. "They won't see it unless they come to a business like this," Bill adds.



the weather is good. As a result, features such as shade protection are top of mind now, rather than a luxury. In patio furniture, fire tables are growing in popularity. Patio furniture is also being manufactured to standards of indoor pieces, built to last with all-weather fabrics.

WHERE: 28 Clark St., Welland | 905.788.5068
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THE APPROACH: Bill and Elaine invite customers to visit their showroom to see what's available and discuss ideas. The couple's success hinges on providing as many options as possible, including mixing and matching features for a space customers will enjoy as long as they own their homes. "We want you to have what you want. We don't want you to settle," Bill says.

THE STYLE: The stores feature items bound to be conversation pieces, including beverage coolers and centrepieces fashioned from recycled oil drums to look like flamingos, motorcycles, bulldogs and Airstream trailers. Outdoor furniture tends toward a modern look, but also classic and timeless. "We try to have a bit of everything, but quality is the hallmark of all of it," Elaine says.

THE TREND: Backyards are no longer the domain of a few simple lawn chairs and barbecues. People are spending more time outside, using their yards as living space when



STORY **GEORGETTE MCCULLOCH**



PHOTO: SANDY MACKAY

A recent survey of Canadians who purchased a newly built home shows walk-in closets topped their list of must-have features. Surprising? Not really says Tim Bailey, division president of Avid Ratings Canada Ltd., a customer satisfaction company that works with Canadian homebuilders to determine what buyers want in a new build.

"The 2018 Canadian Homebuyer Preference Study revealed three themes," Tim says, storage solutions, energy efficiency and kitchen design.

New home buyers across the country are asked to answer 190 questions based on a recent new home purchase. It's the largest survey of its kind in Canada. The result is a comprehensive report by region, buyer type and demographics that Canadian homebuilders can use to plan new housing projects based on consumer wants and needs.



PHOTO: SANDY MACKAY

WHAT HOMEBUYERS want



PHOTO: JASON HARTOG



PHOTO: SANDY MACKAY

Avid Ratings is currently compiling results for 2019 but Tim doesn't anticipate dramatic changes. There's only been moderate changes in the four years Avid Ratings has been conducting the survey.

Consumers clearly want energy efficiency, Tim says. "But they also want granite and quartz and all the fine features so it's really about trying to strike a balance between what buyers can afford to spend. Energy efficiency is a hot button for consumers, especially with the carbon tax and rising utility costs. Buying a home is one thing but then carrying the cost of that home is another thing."

Homebuyers also want storage, lots of it. "We're a four-season country," Tim explains using his family as an example. "We're a *Brady Bunch* family with four kids and storage is critical. We have off-season gear, four seasons of clothing and four seasons of sporting goods."

People also want open-concept kitchens with an island. "Quartz countertops and smart home technology score high on the survey as well," Tim says. Other wants include a single-detached home, double-car garages, brick exteriors, tankless water heaters, LED lighting and a main-floor master suite.

What's surprising is the renaissance of the formal dining room. According to the survey, formal dining rooms have increased in importance since year one of the study.

What isn't a priority for new home buyers is outdoor spaces. Tim figures it's because landscaping isn't an immediate concern, it's not part of the purchase and new home buyers have to save and budget for outside projects that happen a couple of years down the road.

The 2018 study found the largest cohort of today's Canadian homebuyer is the growing family with kids followed by single couples with no kids. Millennials have edged out Gen Xers as the largest group of homebuyers.

How does the survey translate for resale homes? Tim believes new homes inspire renovations to older homes and stimulate the resale market. **OH**

TOP 10

"MUST HAVE" NEW HOME FEATURES

1. Walk-in closets
2. High-efficiency windows
3. Energy-efficient appliances
4. Overall energy-efficient home
5. Kitchen island
6. Linen closet
7. Open-concept kitchens
8. Large windows
9. Heat-recovery/energy-recovery air exchange
10. Certification by a designated program (ENERGY STAR, Built Green, EnerGuide, etc.)



PHOTO: BONNIE FOX

Kitchen Life

An open-concept main floor has ceilings that rise to meet a loft and skylights that create a bright and airy space. Artwork supplied by Marina Randazzo. Staging by Mary Cath Altobelli of Alto Interiors. **RIGHT:** Tania Ganassini and John Vetere. Staub enamelled cast iron cookware from Nella Cutlery.



STORY **TIFFANY MAYER**
PHOTOGRAPHY **KELLY HORKOFF**
STAGING **MARY CATH ALTOBELLI**

Chefs **Tania Ganassini** and **John Vetere** were set to become big city condo owners when Niagara beckoned.

It was late 2014 and the young couple had made a deposit on a unit stacked in a high-rise on Toronto's bustling Richmond Street. They were eager to leave behind their days as renters of a 600 sq. ft. space, equipped with a roommate, for a place not much bigger, but that they could call their own.

Enter Niagara. Well, actually, Tania's father Marco, a home inspector fresh off a job in Niagara-on-the-Lake's Garrison Village development. The neighbourhood featured new builds with a heritage air, including a cluster of bungalow and bungalow townhomes by **Brookfield Homes**, tucked off Niagara Stone Road. *Continued on page 47*



ABOVE: A collage wall in the great room pays tribute to the couple's relationship. Painting by Marina Randazzo. Lamp from Sparkling Lights. **RIGHT:** A bar cart with all the tools fills a corner in the great room and makes entertaining a breeze. Lamp from Sparkling Lights. **OPPOSITE:** Tania and John spend most of their time in the kitchen but relax in the living area of the great room. Chair and side table from Creative Visions Furniture.



Marco was so impressed by the quality of the homes – and their prices – that he suggested his daughter and son-in-law take a drive to wine country.

So they did. It wasn't long afterward they pulled the plug on that Toronto condo, and their careers in the city. Instead, they chose 1,600 square feet with a small patch of grass, and a world of opportunity in Niagara to prioritize their health, relationship and a slower lifestyle.

"It was spacious, there was a walk-in closet. There were two (bathroom) sinks," Tania says with a laugh.

It might not have happened had they hesitated a moment on the move. The Niagara real estate market was poised to explode as more Torontonians clued into everything on offer across Lake Ontario. Tania's parents eventually bought here as well, and her sister, Dani, is renting in St. Catharines as she considers where to settle in the region.

"If we waited even a year, we couldn't have afforded it," she says. "We honestly didn't spend that much more to buy this house (instead of the condo)."

Neither wanted anything big or ostentatious. But being chefs, the kitchen had to be the focal point of their open-concept bungalow. The space is bright and airy thanks to soaring ceilings and generous skylights ushering in the day's glow, which plays off walls in Twig by **Benjamin Moore**. It's where they spend most of their time when they're not at work – John helming **Brushfire Smoke**, his barbecue operation at nearby **Niagara Oast House Brewers**, and Tania running **Staff Meal Niagara**, a joint venture with business partner **Amanda Ali** that focuses on plant-based meals and workshops.

Clean and functional were essential traits for their home galley by **Barzotti Woodworking Ltd.** They had three feet of counter space in Toronto, so an entire quartz-capped island in addition to several feet of counter meant a kitchen in which they could really cook. They also required something else they wouldn't have had in Toronto: a BlueStar professional-grade, six-burner gas range.

"That was non-negotiable," Tania says. "We had to have a good-sized island and a big sink. Storage space was a bonus. Compared to what we had, we were grateful to have more than two cupboards." *Continued on page 48*



LEFT: A den at the front of the home provides quiet space for reading and meditating, and features a china cabinet with a collection of antique teacups Tania was gifted at her wedding shower. **ABOVE:** Tyler Knott Gregson poems, read at the couple's wedding, hang on a collage wall dedicated to their relationship. **BELOW:** A large sink, ample counter space and a six-burner professional range were essentials for these chefs.



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For the first while after moving here, the couple entertained weekly in their new home, cooking for family and friends. By themselves, they make dinner to the crooning of 60s soul legends Otis Redding and Sam Cooke on the sound system. “Our life is food, so we’re in this area all the time,” she says. “Even when we’re entertaining, we don’t leave the area. This is all we need.”

As it turns out, so is Niagara. Both Tania and John worked in some of Canada’s top kitchens before pulling up stakes in Toronto. Tania, who had been drawn to cooking as a child watching her mom prepare the Romanian and Israeli foods of her heritage, logged time at Canoe, Café Boulud at the Four Seasons, and the Michelin-starred Arco Antico in Savona, Italy. John also cut his teeth overseas at Locanda Della Tamerici, a Michelin-starred restaurant in Liguria, Italy. In Toronto, he helped open Scarpetta, The Chef’s House, A-OK Foods and Yours Truly – named Best New Restaurant by *Toronto Life* magazine in 2012.

Continued on page 50



A tribute to their time in Europe hangs in the great room on a collage wall dedicated to their relationship. John's train tickets from Liguria to Savona to visit Tania are framed amongst Tyler Knott Gregson poetry read at their wedding, and other keepsakes collected as a couple.

They arrived in Niagara at a sleepy time of year though, long after the throngs of tourists

headed back to reality down the QEW. Tania recalls how they "walked in blind" to their job prospects here. They had no connections, no friends, and not much money. Restaurants were bracing for the grind of winter, shrinking their kitchens rather than expanding them, so the duo started The Norton Underground, a supper club that offered exclusive dining experiences once a month. "It enabled us to

make connections very quickly," Tania recalls. "I don't think that would have happened if we holed up somewhere."

Soon John was hired to work as chef de cuisine at Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery, and Tania, noticing a dearth of healthy eating options, set to work on Staff Meal after meeting Amanda while working at Oast House. *Continued on page 52*



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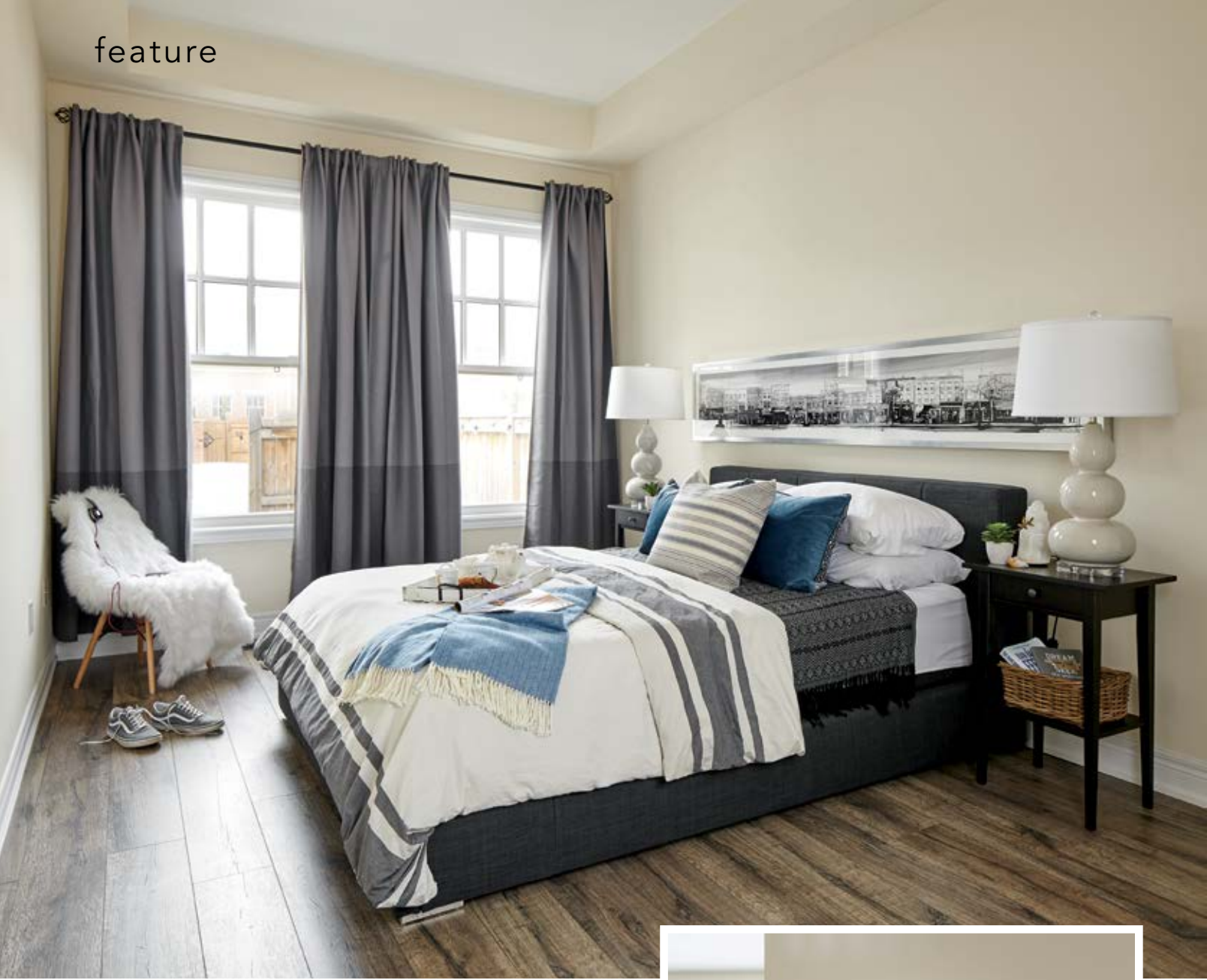
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On a bit of a lark, Tania, who describes herself as more collaborative than competitive, applied to be on season seven of *Top Chef Canada*, which aired on Food Network Canada in April and May. Though she didn't win, she was determined to use her time on a national stage to show that plant-based food, her specialty, could be haute cuisine and hold fast in competition against dishes with meat as the centrepiece.

Attesting to her love for collaboration, she's working with local chef Justin Pepe on a shared space set to open later this year.

Moving here with no professional contacts or job prospects went against conventional wisdom, Tania notes.

"But it was also the best (decision)," she says. "I consider myself from here now." **OH**

ABOVE: The master bedroom. Artwork by Paul Elia. Lamps from Sparkling Lights. Throw cushions from Mary Cath Altobelli. **RIGHT:** The couple make smart use of the space in the front hall with additional storage. Artwork by Paul Elia.



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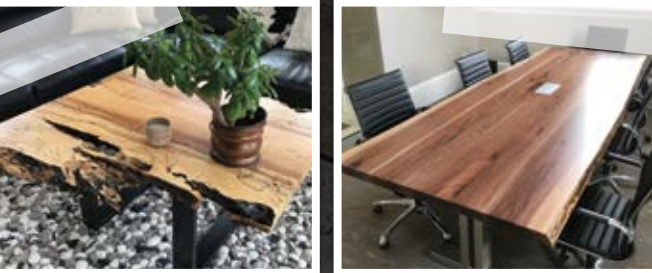
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CEILING DRAMA

STORY
SARA MARTIN

Look up. Is a popcorn ceiling staring back at you? If so, it might be time for a change. Here's some inspiration for that overlooked "fifth wall" in every room.

1 WOOD

Reclaimed barn boards add rustic, textured character and provide an interesting colour palette to draw from. Plywood is another choice and when sealed with a gloss varnish, adds warmth and simplicity to a space.



PHOTO: SANDY MACKAY



PHOTO: SANDY MACKAY

2 BEADBOARD

No longer just for the cottage, use it on any ceiling. In a peaked ceiling, try running the boards vertically towards the peak, it will draw the eye upwards. A real time saver if placed right over a popcorn ceiling.



PHOTO: KELLY HORKOFF

3 COFFERED DIMENSIONAL

You need ceiling height to get the full effect of this style of finish, as the elements can overwhelm a nine-foot ceiling. This design adds formality and looks best in a living or dining room.



PHOTO: JASON HARTOG

4 INDUSTRIAL

The unfinished, finished look is not for everyone. Exposed duct work and wiring can be a turn off to some, while others are excited by the conversion of industrial spaces into housing. Continued on page 56

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design ideas



PHOTO: JASON HARTOG

METAL

Metal ceiling tiles were introduced in the 1800s as an affordable alternative to detailed plasterwork. Today, reproductions are plastic and come in a variety of patterns. Of course, if you can find the antique tiles, their patina and dented appearance will add incredible character.



PHOTO: GORDON KING

LIGHTING

LED lights come in many options these days. Pot lights are smaller and directional and bulbs come in cool and warm light. LED strips or tape come in several lengths and colours and are waterproof.



PHOTO: JASON HARTOG

PAINT

In some ways, paint is one of the easiest ways to finish a ceiling, but try to move away from white. Stencils, stripes, faux finishes and glazes will add that extra touch or just use a high-gloss paint in a rich dark colour.

MOULDING

With a seemingly endless choice of mouldings available, creating a design pattern on the ceiling is only limited by your imagination. Foam or plastic ceiling medallions can start the design and highlight a hanging fixture.



PHOTO: JASON HARTOG

BEAMS

If beams are existing and need an update they can be re-clad. You can paint or stain existing beams. Faux wood beams can also be added. **OH**



PHOTO: SANDY MACKAY



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RECIPE AND PHOTOGRAPHY
JENELLE MCCULLOCH



Pavlova

INGREDIENTS

- 4 egg whites
- Pinch of salt
- ¼ cup cold water
- 1-¼ cups sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp vinegar
- 1 Tbsp + 1 tsp cornstarch

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 300°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Draw a six-inch circle in the centre on the side of the parchment that will face down. This will be your guide when you shape the pavlova.

Combine egg whites and salt in a stand mixer and beat on medium-high until stiff peaks are formed. Be careful not to over- whip the egg whites at this stage. The egg whites will be thick and foamy and a peak will

form when the beater is lifted out of the egg. Turn the mixer to low and slowly add the water and then the sugar. Turn the mixer back up to medium-high and beat until stiff peaks are again formed. The eggs will be thick and glossy. Remove bowl from mixer and fold in vanilla, vinegar and cornstarch.

Pile the meringue onto the circle on the baking sheet. With a spatula, smooth edges and top of the pavlova so it almost forms a dome. If preferred, create ridges in the side of the pavlova by swiping the sides in an upward motion.

Bake the pavlova for 30 minutes. Do not open oven! Turn oven down to 275°F and bake for another 45 minutes. Let cool completely in the oven for an hour or overnight. It is normal for the pavlova to crack and the centre to sink in.

Remove from oven when cool.

Citrus Curd

INGREDIENTS

- 4 egg yolks
- ¼ cup citrus juice of choice (lemon, blood orange, etc.)
- 1 tsp citrus zest
- ⅓ cup sugar
- 3 Tbsp unsalted butter

DIRECTIONS

Combine all ingredients in a double boiler and heat on medium-high, stirring continuously until mixture thickens and coats the back of a spoon. Strain curd through a fine mesh sieve into a bowl. Cover the top of the curd with plastic wrap directly on the curd and chill until cooled.

GARNISHES


- Fresh whipped cream
- Berries
- Mint
- Powdered sugar

ASSEMBLE PAVLOVA

Assemble shortly before serving. Fill the centre of the pavlova with curd, whipped cream and berries. Garnish with mint and powdered sugar. **OH**

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PROJECT **DAWN MCCONNELL**
PHOTOGRAPHY **TARA CHATTELL**

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MATERIALS

- 1 Pine board measuring one-inch thick and eight inches square
- 4 3-inch Hose clamps
- 4 500 ml Mason jars
- 1 Cabinet handle with screws
- 4 ¾-inch Woodscrews

TOOLS

- Jigsaw (if shaped corners are desired)
- Sandpaper
- Cloth
- Paint (colour of your choice)
- Paintbrush
- Screwdriver



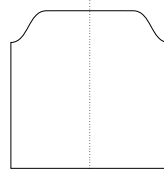
DIRECTIONS

- 1 Sand, and if desired, using a jigsaw, cut decorative corners out of the pine board. Wipe to remove dust. Paint board and let dry thoroughly.
- 2 Fasten handle to the top edge of the board.
- 3 Place rings on jars loosely, mark placement of the rings on both sides of the board. Remove jars and attach rings to the board with screws.
- 4 Slip jars into rings and tighten the rings to a snug fit.
- 5 Fill with cutlery and napkins. **OH**

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If you are in the condo market, please don't hesitate to give me a call, I'm here to help out with your questions and purchases.

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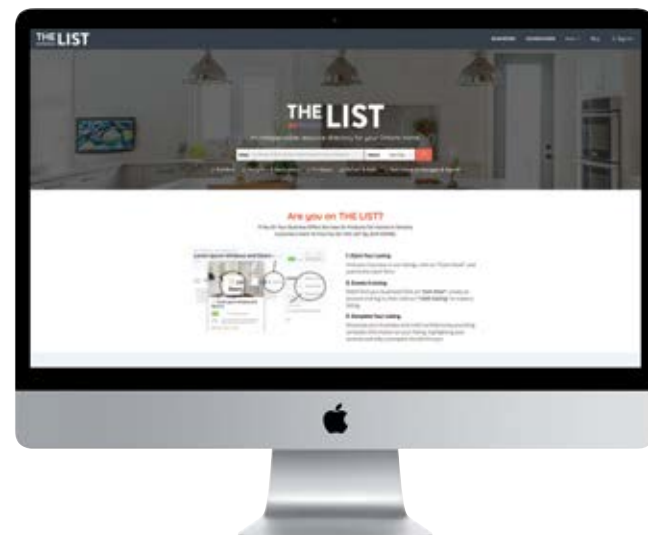


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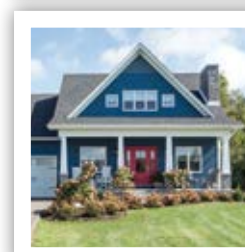
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AT HOME

Neighbourhood: St. Catharines' south end. **Vacation Plans:** England in July. **To-do List:** Spring cleaning home and cottage. **Favourite Spot:** Backyard fireplace lounge. **Green Thumb or Black Thumb:** Kind of green, partly black.

AT WORK

Secret To Success: Integrity. **Latest Project:** Modern showstopper in Old Glenridge. **Current Trend:** Reinventing interior spaces without adding square footage. **Splurge On:** Custom front entry systems. **Biggest Feat:** Creating clients' dream homes.

AT WORK

Business Philosophy: Provide quality products and installation with great customer service. **Essential Daily Task:** Curate flooring and wall options to excite even the unexcitable. **Current Trend:** The 70s, four-by-four glazed tile in emerald, blush and ocean blue. **Small Change With Big Impact:** Colour. Paint it if it can't move.

SUMMER FUN

Summer Plans: To use this fabulous palette bar we built for our 60th anniversary party last summer. Easy to build, more fun to lean on. **Ice Cream or Frozen Yogurt:** Ice cream all the way. **Beach Day or Pool Day:** Pool day – less algae. **To-do List:** Changes in the showroom. Home fashion doesn't stand still.



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Continued on page 68

AT HOME

Neighbourhood: Pelham. **To-Do-List:** **Eric:** Finish cottage renos. **Dan:** Finish my barn. **Favourite Place At Home After Work:** **Jack and Dan:** In our backyards. **Dog or Cat:** **Eric and Dan:** Dog. **Currently Reading:** **Eric:** *Side by Side* by Edward T. Welch. **Jack:** *Cujo* by Curtis Joseph.

AT WORK

Business Philosophy: Commitment to excellence, quality workmanship. **Favourite Project:** Every project. **Small Change With Big Impact:** Planting – instant curb appeal. **Essential Daily Task:** **Jack:** Design/management; **Eric:** General operations; **Dan:** Management communication. **Current Trend:** Clean lines, minimalism and vegetable gardens.



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JORDAN CECCHI
AT HOME

Dream Vacation: Island of Okinawa, Japan. **Dog or Cat:** Dog – our 16-year-old store mascot, Pierre. **Favourite Part Of Summer:** Enjoying the beautiful sunsets. **Beach Day or Hike:** Beach day. **Breakfast:** A wholesome smoothie to super-charge the day.

Continued on page 70



AT HOME
Neighbourhood: Fonthill.
Favourite Room: My kitchen, of course. **Flower Garden or Vegetable:** Flower. **Coffee, Tea or Smoothie To Start Your Day:** Coffee, black.

AT WORK
Latest Project: Main floor renovation in Port Colborne.
Most Important Task For The Day: Thank my staff for their contribution.
Secret To Success: Passion, tenacity and listening. **Current Trends:** Cool greys and honed finished counters. **Worth The Splurge:** Great looking hardware, quartz countertops. Comfortable stools are a must.

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OUR HOMES is committed to ensuring the businesses above appear under the correct headings. To make a correction, or to have your business listed under more than one heading, please email laurie.lotimer@ourhomes.ca. To have your business listed in our Home Resource Directory, call us to advertise at 905.516.8933.

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decorating

TREAT YOUR

WALLS

STORY TAMARISK MCNALTY STEPHENS

Painted drywall is the traditional interior wall finish in new home builds and renovations. However, there are countless alternative materials and finishes for walls that can create a significant visual impact while also defining your style. Here are seven wall treatments and the areas of your home you might want to splurge on for the best investment.



PHOTO: MAX WEDGE

1. WALLPAPERS OR WALLCOVERINGS

Material: Rolls or sheets of grasscloth, paper, cellulose or vinyl. Whether foil, flocked, embossed, block printed or textured paper, there is an endless selection of patterns and colours.

Installation: It is generally recommended to hire a professional, but if you're up for a challenge, do-it-yourself types often hang their own paper. Ensure you do the proper prep work – plot out the install, level everything, smooth the surface, have all the tools required and know whether you have a pre-pasted wallpaper or if you require an adhesive. Always check the pattern repeat, as it will affect the coverage provided per roll.

Pros: Natural fibres breathe and add an element of Mother Nature to the space, while vinyl is highly durable, stain and moisture resistant, colourfast and scrubbable. You can completely change the overall look and feel of a space with a wallcovering.

Cons: Natural fibres are more delicate, less scrubbable and more susceptible to sun fading. Vinyl cannot breathe. If selling is in your immediate future, perhaps give wallpaper a pass as some potential buyers can be hesitant.

Application: An entire room or a simple accent wall. Powder rooms are a great place to try out a bold print.

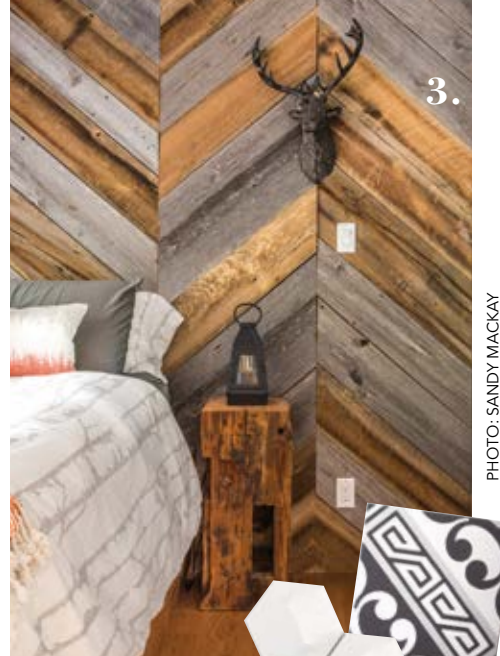


PHOTO: SANDY MACKAY

2. TILE

Material: Porcelain, ceramic, slate, limestone, glass, mosaics, cement encaustic or marble.

Installation: Professional installation is generally recommended. Labour cost will vary depending upon size and style of tile and design of pattern and layout.

Pros: Easy to wipe up and clean, durable finish, waterproof when installed correctly.

Cons: Cleaning grout lines. Natural stones require a sealant to be applied a couple of times per year, or more frequently depending upon use and exposure.

Application: Great for bathrooms, powder rooms, kitchen backsplashes or fireplaces.

3. BARN BOARD

Material: Weathered boards, generally but not exclusively sourced from a barn.

Installation: Can be a DIY project with the proper tools.

Pros: Texture, visual interest, improved durability of walls in high-traffic areas. Provides a natural, rustic aesthetic. Commonly planks are installed horizontally but can be used to create various patterns such as herringbone.

Cons: Can collect dust.

Application: Great for accent walls, mudrooms or laundry rooms.

4. SHIPLAP

Material: Typically either long planks of MDF or a paint-grade poplar, installed horizontally. Traditional shiplap has a special rabbet or notch cut on the long edges of the boards to aid in spacing.

Installation: Can be a DIY project with the proper tools.

Pros: Texture, visual interest, improved durability of walls in high traffic areas. Typically white, but shiplap can be painted any colour you desire. Gives a farmhouse or coastal vibe.

Cons: Can collect dust.

Application: Great for accent walls, mudrooms or laundry rooms.



PHOTO: JASON HARTOG



5. WAINSCOTTING OR APPLIED TRIM

Material: Tongue-and-groove wainscoting, bead board, board-and-batten and traditional applied-panel details are available in wood or MDF.

Installation: A trim carpenter is generally recommended however, depending upon the complexity of the installation, an avid DIYer can attempt with the proper tools.

Pros: Instant character and charm to a room, adds an element of elegance, great texture for visual interest and is more durable than drywall.

Cons: Can collect dust, can be costly depending upon species of wood selected and installation method for desired aesthetic.

Application: Dining rooms, dens, bedrooms or hallways.

Natural or manufactured stone can provide a good return on investment.

6. STONE OR BRICK VENEER

Material: Natural or manufactured stone and brick, generally sold in pieces by square foot or in sheets.

Installation: For masonry work, hiring a stonemason is recommended. Labour cost will vary depending upon the stone and method of installation. Sheet veneers can generally be managed by the average DIYer.

Pros: Strong visual impact. Can provide good return on investment. Non-combustible and available in a wide variety of styles and colours.

Cons: Can collect dust. Manufactured stone veneer products are formed and often a repeating pattern will emerge. With a natural material every piece comes from the earth and has its own uniqueness but requires cutting and fitting.

Application: Focal walls or fireplaces.



PHOTO: SANDY MACKAY



PHOTO: KELLY HORKOFF

7. PLASTER

Material: Clay, lime, Venetian, gypsum or tadelakt plaster each has its own pros and cons.

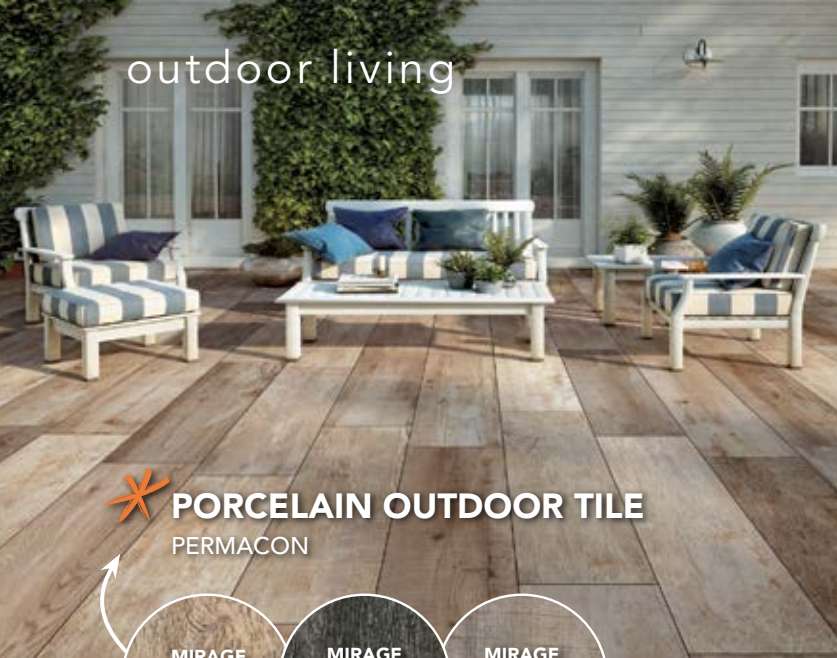
Installation: Professional trowel installation recommended. Pre-planning is required to ensure proper backing is installed as some plasters require wire mesh or blue board, while clay plaster requires a primer with added sand for adhesion.

Pros: Beautiful, timeworn aesthetic adds a depth and luminosity to walls that is impossible to achieve with paint and drywall. Plasters are generally more durable than drywall. Generally sanding is not required and therefore dust is limited at time of install. All-natural materials and low VOCs.

Cons: Costly and time-consuming to install.

Application: A splurge for rooms you'd really like to highlight. For tadelakt, use it in areas that require waterproofing (showers or perhaps a kitchen or bath backsplash). **OH**

outdoor living



PORCELAIN OUTDOOR TILE
PERMACON

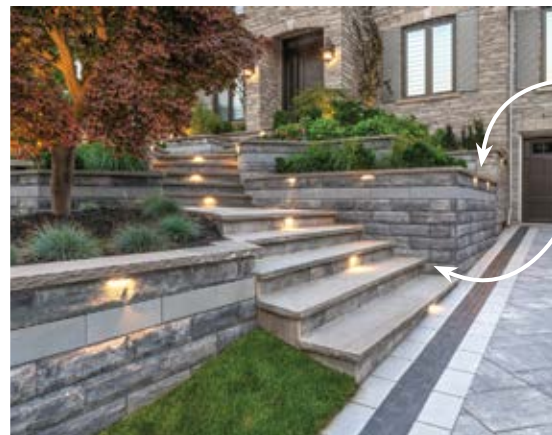
MIRAGE
NOON:
DAYLIGHT

MIRAGE
NOON:
CHARCOAL

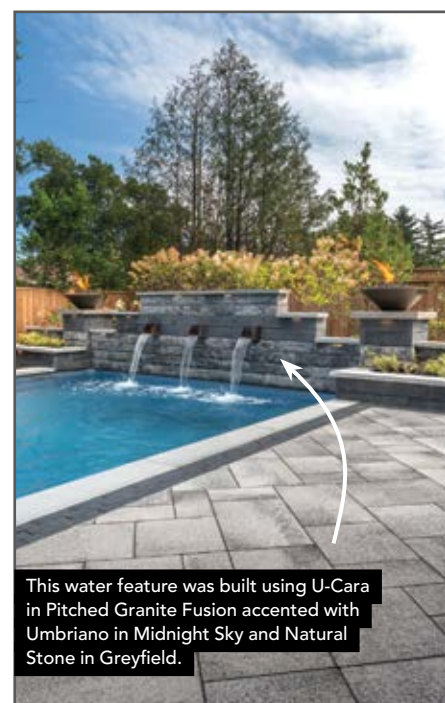
MIRAGE
NOON:
EMBER

beautiful HARDSCAPES

Living outside is what we do in summer. It's true, outdoor recreation rooms are a huge splurge. Just imagine the possibilities. We've picked a selection of must-have hardscape materials to create your backyard oasis.



Unilock's U-Cara Multi-face Wall System in Pitched Granite Fusion with accents in Smooth Opal. The treads and coping are in Unilock Natural Stone.



This water feature was built using U-Cara in Pitched Granite Fusion accented with Umbriano in Midnight Sky and Natural Stone in Greyfield.



STONE SURFACES
UNILOCK

TOP LOWER PAVER: Elegance Richcliff pavers in Dawn Mist with a Courtstone accent Basalt.
GRILL ISLAND, WALL & WATER FEATURE: Brussels Dimensional Stone in Limestone with Natural Stone coping in Black River.

SMOOTH
OPAL

PITCHED
GRANITE
FUSION

GREYFIELD

BLACK
RIVER

LIMESTONE



BONDED FACADE: Zenith, Solid Collection.
OUTDOOR COUNTERTOP: Orix, Industrial Collection.
FLOORING: Nilium, Industrial Collection.



CONTEMPORARY OUTDOOR SURFACES
DEKTON BY COSENTINO



Q-STONE:
ALMOND



DESIGNER STONE
SHOULDISCE OH



ESTATE STONE:
HAMPTON



LAVASTONE:
STRIPS



NATURAL STONE VENEERS
ERTHCOVERINGS



CARIBOO:
ROCKFACE



FOSSIL:
CASCADE

finishing touch

Campfire COCKTAIL

RECIPE AND PHOTOGRAPHY
JENELLE MCCULLOCH

You don't need an open flame to create this campfire-inspired summer cocktail.

INGREDIENTS

- Chocolate chips
- Graham crackers
- Amaretto
- Bourbon
- Stout of choice
- Roasted marshmallows

DIRECTIONS

To prepare rim, melt chocolate chips (in the microwave, on the stove or over the campfire). Crush graham crackers on a plate. Spread the melted chocolate along rim and dip into graham crackers to coat. Fill glass with ice and add ½ ounce each of Amaretto and bourbon. Top with stout and garnish with a roasted marshmallow. **OH**

online Get more recipes at ourhomes.ca/mag/cook

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