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- Sharon in Welland











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HOW IS IT THAT 2018 IS UPON US? I FEEL LIKE 2017

had only hit its stride when the calendar changed.

I remember so well sitting in a coffee shop, plunking away on my laptop on a snowless January day when I looked up and out the window into the distance.

What would the year ahead bring? What did I want to achieve? What did I most want to do this year? Then like that, I was thrown into it. At times it felt like there was no time for thinking, just doing. There were so many balls in the air that I was doing my best to keep them all there. Anyone in such a situation knows that can only last so long. One – or two – is bound to drop at some point.

This past year was one with few complaints, however, save for the fact that days still haven't evolved to have 25 hours. That said, I look forward to what 2018 holds, even if it still doesn't look promising that an extra hour a day will materialize.

Without waxing too poetic, my days spent working on OUR HOMES are some of my most enjoyable. It's such an incredible privilege to be invited into a home and make new friends by the end of a photo shoot or interview.

The homes we feature become more and more fun to photograph, to write about and to share with you. Case in point: the modern Niagara Falls townhome that's one of two Home and Builder features this issue. It's an award-winner by Rinaldi Homes, and you'll see why. Writer Caeli Mazara gives you the scoop on how this fresh space nabbed such prestigious accolades.

Meanwhile, our other home, by the award-winning Windrush Hill Construction, is another contemporary stunner set in a rural corner of St. Catharines. Builder Tony Alfieri amazed us yet again by demonstrating what can be done using the old bones of a house to make something entirely new.

For those wanting to start the year off right, I suggest a peek at our Style Picks. They're all about creating a sense of warmth and cosiness, not unlike *hygge*, the Danish ritual of enjoying life's simple pleasures. Hmm, now that's a resolution worth setting this year.

Whatever your plans for 2018, I wish you only the best.



Tiffany Mayer, Managing Editor tiffany.mayer@ourhomes.ca

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Tony Alfieri, President

Since 1996, we've been collaborating with homeowners to build individually tailored homes that reflect their design dreams, lifestyle needs and family values. Led by founder and president Tony Alfieri, our skillful team of project managers, tradespeople and carefully curated suppliers all share a dedication to exceptional workmanship. We pride ourselves on delivering superb quality, creative excellence, functional solutions and the highest level of customer satisfaction.

We're very proud to have been recognized with multiple awards of excellence over the years by the Canadian, Ontario and Niagara Home Builders' Associations. One of our recent projects is featured in this issue of Our Homes magazine (see 'Natural Wonder'.)



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ON THE COVER

A Pelham Road remodel brings these homeowners closer to nature. Story, page 46. Photography by Kelly Horkoff.





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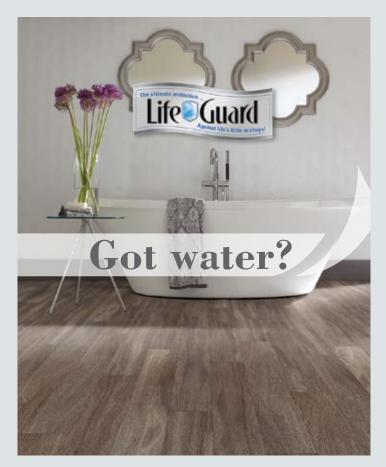
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WE ARE THRILLED TO BRING

an award-winner to the pages of OUR HOMES. We're showcasing a Rinaldi Homes townhouse recently named the most outstanding attached multi-unit home by the Ontario Home Builders' Association. Aristocrat Floors of the World and Burnstein Brick also received accolades for their involvement in the project. Congratulations! We're very excited to share this home with our readers. The layout, features and the exterior design is top notch.

And not to be forgotten is our newly remodelled home by Windrush Hill Construction. This home is stunning and has been submitted to the Canadian Home Builders' Association for an achievement award. We wish Tony Alfieri and his team well during the competition later this year.

With winter upon us, it's time for some fabulous local shopping. There are tons of must-haves from all over the area. Check out the shops in Ridgeville and Welland. Spend the day touring all the fab design and furniture stores in the St. Catharines area. And did I mention wine? Don't forget to support those locals too. No need to travel too far. We have it all right here.

Enjoy the holiday season with your family and friends with good cheer and laughter.
Thank you to all my new friends in the Niagara area. I am grateful for your support.

May the winter months be kind to us all, and to all, happy reading.

Laurie

Laurie Lotimer, Publisher laurie.lotimer@ourhomes.ca

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COURTESY OF STONE TILE





Tile. This all-purpose material used on floors, walls and ceilings, in wet or dry locations, as decoration or as a versatile workhorse, is available in a variety of shapes, sizes, colours and textures. Today's manufacturers have the shocking ability to mimic concrete, brick, wood, marble, carpet, wallpaper, sand – you name it – in ways that look more real than real. The options are endless.

Here's what you really need to know when choosing the right tile.

PIANNING

Research online to see the many possibilities. Know what you're looking for to make purchasing easier.

Have a floor plan. The size of the room and its intended use will dictate what's possible.

Determine your colour scheme. Bring home a sample tile to make sure it coordinates with other elements.

Explain to your contractor what size and type of tile you're using. The size and weight of the tile affects the application and labour costs.

Plan and start the tile layout from the room's centre line and work outward, balancing the pattern and minimizing odd pieces.

MINI TO MAXI

Tiles can be as tiny as ¼-by-¼-inch or super large at five-by-10-feet.

The size and condition of a floor or wall will determine what size suits your space best. Uneven surfaces and curves have different size and installation requirements than do large, flat surfaces.

TILE VOCABULARY

Application: What is the tile's intended use? High or low traffic? Floor or wall? Wet or dry? Answer these questions before making your final choice.

Ceramic: Stoneware body with a surface application of colour or texture. Highly decorative and mostly used for walls.

Porcelain: Made from fine white compressed clay, fired at a high temperature to create a dense tile, impervious to moisture. It has colour throughout the tile so that if chipped, the surface colour appears in the body of the tile.

Glass: Made of glass where colour lies behind or throughout the body of the tile.



Mosaic: Individual small tiles, purchased on mesh sheets 12-by-12-inches to 118-by-118inches. Can be easily cut to size. Perfect for inside and outside curves.

Large Format: 141/2-by-141/2inches or larger.

Specifications: Technical information including intended use, material composition, country of origin and LEED certification. Always read your specs to know what you're buying and how to maintain it.

Matte Finish: Non-shiny surface, easy to walk on, slip resistant.

Polished Finish: Shiny surface and slippery.

Stacked Pattern: Tiles are aligned to form a repeating grid pattern.

Staggered Pattern: Joints are not aligned. Each tile requires different offset spacing depending on size.

THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Grout: Filler used between tiles allowing for flex. The tile setter can make minor adjustments along the way.

Grout Size: The space between tiles - 1/8-inch for wall tiles, 1/4-inch for floor tiles. Super large tiles require larger grout lines.

Grout Release/Sealer: Same product, different names. Matte porcelain tiles need to be sealed to avoid the cloudy effect that occurs after wiping off the edges.

Grout Colour: Use as a design element. Match grout to wall colour. Use darker grout for floors. Grout tends to darken with regular foot traffic and cleaning.

Epoxy Grout: Guards against germs. Especially for spillage of bio fluids in kitchens and bathrooms.

SPECIAL PIECES

Trim pieces are usually L or U shaped and cap off tile edges for a smooth, clean look, making it easier to clean. They come in a variety of finishes and colours. Most pros like to use the Schluter System, available in any large hardware store.

Super large tiles covering a large surface require expansion joints. All structures and materials expand and contract. Planning a strategic cut will make your super-size tile age gracefully with no cracking over time.

Now that you have the right information, you'll produce the right solution for you and your special project. он



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PHOTOGRAPHY KELLY HORKOFF

It's the season of cocooning and taking our cues from Scandinavian cultures to enjoy life's simple pleasures. These style picks help you achieve maximum cosiness this winter.







1 DON'S LIGHT HOUSE

Pendant Light

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2 VERMEER'S GARDEN CENTRE AND FLOWER SHOP

Crispy Wave Fern

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684 South Pelham Rd., Welland 905.735.5744 | vermeers.ca

3 LE VILLAGE

Pillow, Blanket & Ottoman

These decorative custom-made touches provide style and a cosy feel to any room. They also make it that much more inviting to hunker down on a blustery, snowy night.

304 Canboro Rd., Ridgeville 905.892.5959 | levillagedecor.com



4 BUDGET BLINDS

Smart Shades

Keep warmth from escaping with new blinds that ensure privacy at the touch of a button but let in the light on those sunny winter days.

905.309.0909 | budgetblinds.com

6 ALFIERI FLOOR EXPERTS

Flooring

Shine with new engineered hardwood that gives a metallic shimmer to white oak, or add the richness of onyx with this replica in porcelain tile. On those super cold days, dig your toes into Karastan broadloom that can be cut to size for an area rug that feels like silk to the touch.

19 Lincoln St., Welland 905.735.3882 | alfierifloorexperts.ca

6 THE FURNITURE GALLERY

Wingback Chair

Curl up with the season's best page turners in this comfortable chair that's suited to relaxing by the fireplace and more formal entertaining when guests arrive.

175 Dieppe Rd., St. Catharines 1.800.680.5553 | furnituregallery.com OH

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PICTURE FRAME WREATHS

Try a new angle on the traditional holiday wreath this year with a repurposed picture frame.

PROJECT SARA MARTIN | PHOTOGRAPHY TARA CHATTELL



Remove glass from frame along with any

staples, nails, screws or wire from the back.

Lightly sand the frame, apply primer to one

side and allow to dry. Turn over and prime

In a well-ventilated area, on a drop cloth,

of gloss paint, allowing to dry between

coats. Repeat on reverse side of frame.

spray one side of each frame with two coats

Your frame is now ready to be embellished.

the other side and allow to dry.

HOW-TO



1. PINE CONES AND BELLS

Pick two different textures of ribbon and tie into a shoelace bow. Leave tails that are as long as half the frame. Set aside.

Cut two-foot lengths of fishing line for each pine cone, and tie and knot each strand around the bottom of each cone.

Cut a three-foot strand of fishing line and tie to jingle bells.

Place bells on the floor and arrange pine cones in a staggered fashion above bells. Tie all strands of fishing line in a knot at the top of the last pine cone.

Set the dry frame against a wall.

Hang bells and pine cones in the frame to the length that you would like and tie to top of frame. Using fishing line, attach bows to the top of the frame.

MATERIALS EMBELLISHMENTS

Picture frames (new or used)

Primer

High gloss spray paint (colour of your choice)

Sandpaper (fine grit)

Hot glue gun

High test fishing line, 50 lb weight

Pine cones (we used seven)

Cluster of jingle bells

Ribbon, two styles

Plastic Christmas balls (we

used seven) Styrofoam bird

Fresh pine



2. CHRISTMAS BALLS

Repeat steps from previous wreath, using Christmas balls instead of pine cones.

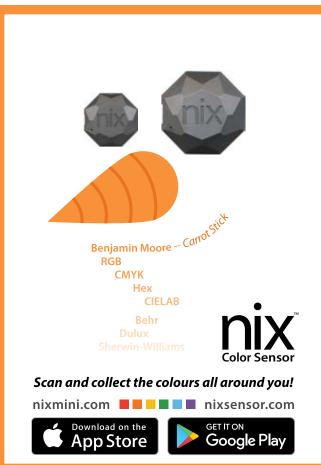
3. BIRD AND FRESH PINE

Using fishing line, hang fresh pine from the top of the frame. Secure bird and bow to frame with a hot glue gun.

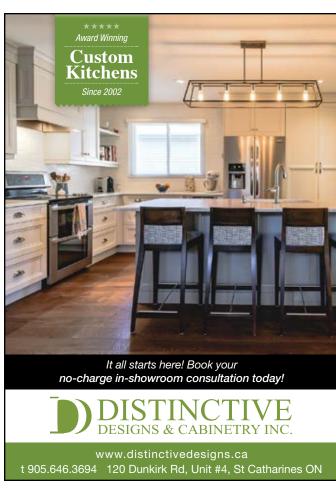
TO HANG

Tie a strand of fishing line to the top of the frame and secure to a door-wreath hanger or a small nail. он











iveable COLOUR



Whether you're looking to bring a leafy green to your home for warm, year-round vibes, or you prefer a different accent hue, these tips for adding liveable colour can help you have fun

with your palette – inspired by this cheerful Toronto Interior Design Group project.



GET COMFORTABLE WITH COLOUR

For this project, we wanted to create a look that respected the heritage details of the home, but didn't feel too safe. This meant adding some colour and taking a few strategic design risks, one of which was a cool sectional sofa. The modular style meant being able to use a contrasting upholstery for a few sections, and a neutral fabric for the rest. It also leaves the option open for switching up the look later by rearranging the pieces or changing just a few covers.

Pro Tip: Green is near-neutral enough to withstand changing trends and mix with new accent colours in the future. This colour family in particular is a smart choice for accents you can live with for years to come.

USE A NEW NEUTRAL

Enriching your colour scheme doesn't always have to mean tossing in a new bold hue: adding a new neutral to your scheme will make the palette feel more diverse in a subtle way. Here, a cool mid-tone grey for the fireplace brick plays against the warm wood floors. This stone shade also helps soften the appearance of the black fireplace surround, plus, it's repeated in a cosy blanket, tying the entire palette further together.

Continued on page 2





design ideas

THROW YOUR PALETTE TOGETHER

Does the unique sofa seem like too much commitment? This is where accent pillows and throws come in. Not only are these changeable pieces a smart way to add colour without a big investment, but they can also tame a bold palette and connect non-matching areas. By piling the sofa with multi-tonal green and neutral pillows, the colours of the sofa sections become repeated and tied together. A striped blanket is then used to bring this accent hue to a neighbouring seating area for a sense of harmony.

Get the look: Use pillows and throws in related but subtly differing shades, and in a rich array of fabrics and textures, to integrate your accent hues throughout the space in a sophisticated way.



FRESHEN UP YOUR WINDOW TRIM

Using a fresh minty accent hue for your window trim truly brings the outdoors in. First, it adds a pop of greenery in an unexpected way, but in a small enough dose that it's not overwhelming, or hard to repaint if you want a new look down the road. Second, it beautifully frames the view outside. We finished the look with elegant in-window shades rather than draperies, to suit the architectural appeal and leave the elegant trim exposed.







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A lot goes into building a home. Creating a space that will meet the needs of its occupants takes thought and planning. Do the homeowners entertain? Do they work from home? What are their needs now and what will they be in the future?

Few can say they understand this process better than the team at **Rinaldi Homes**, a company recognized for outstanding work year after year, including by the Niagara Home Builders' Association (NHBA), which named Rinaldi's **Optimist Village** townhomes the 2017 Community Development of the Year.

Other accolades for this Niagara Falls development include awards from the Canadian Home Builders' Association and NHBA for most outstanding townhome up to 1,500 square feet.

Optimist homeowners Robyn and Matt moved into their newly-built home this

past January. For them, the process – and the product – surpassed their expectations. Their unit, in particular, was named the Ontario Home Builders' Association's Most Outstanding Multi-Unit Home for 2017.

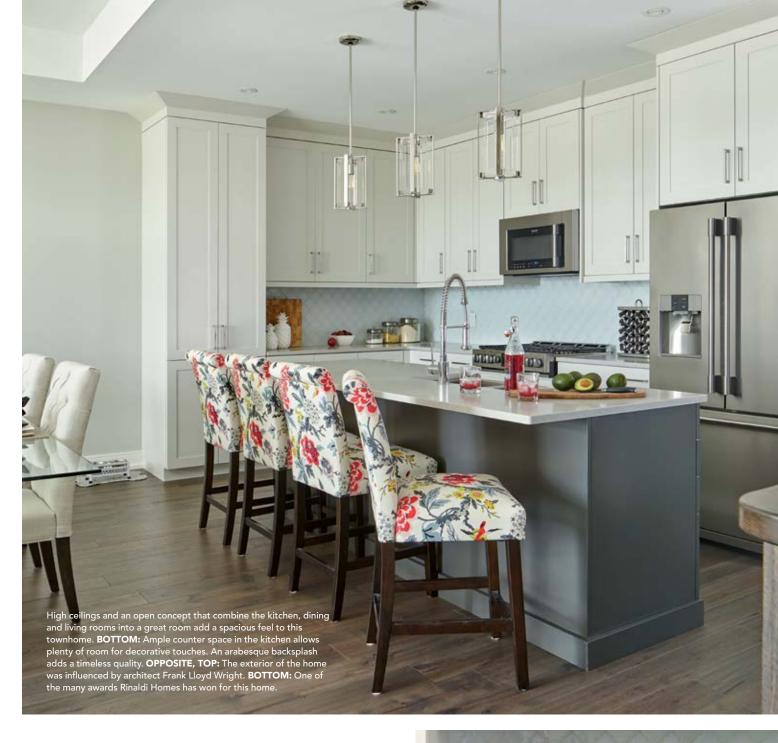
So what sets their home apart from other developments and makes it an award winner?

SPACE

Robyn and Matt's home boasts 1,373 square feet in its original plan and a finished lower level, connected by **Amber Stairs & Railings Inc.**, which allowed for an additional 750 square feet of space.

STORY CAELI MAZARA
PHOTOGRAPHY KELLY HORKOFF





The space could have easily felt cramped and dark being an inside unit in a development with 16 others, but it doesn't. Nine-foot ceilings add to the spaciousness, and big windows by **Crowland Sash & Frame Ltd.** maximize the light. Window coverings by Dave Cooper of **Budget Blinds** take care of privacy and temper the brightness when needed. Fixtures by **Don's Light House** take over when the sun goes down.

"At first, when we were buying an Optimist townhome, I really wanted an end unit," says Robyn. "But it wasn't available. I was nervous that I was going to be claustrophobic in an inside unit but it doesn't feel like one at all. It doesn't even feel like you're in a townhome. It feels like a big, open home."

The main floor offers an open-concept design with the kitchen, dining room and living area forming a great room that features custom



Continued on page 33

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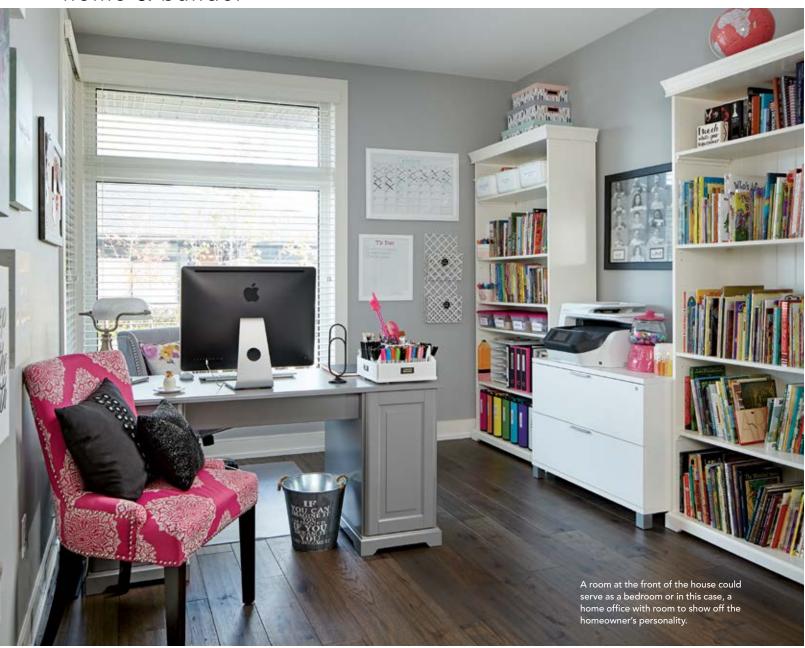




cabinetry and a recessed ceiling over the dining and living areas. The space is finished in neutral tones and gleaming hardwood floors by **Aristocrat Floors of the World**. Two full main floor bathrooms with fixtures from **Bathworks** mean no arguments in the morning, and provide privacy. "You walk in that home and you forget you're in a townhome," says Danielle Rinaldi, marketing and business development manager at Rinaldi Homes. "The layout is great – it's so spacious."

CHOICE

Rinaldi Homes sets itself apart by giving homeowners an exceptional amount of control when creating their home. This approach is by design, Danielle notes. "We want to make sure the plan fits the buyer's lifestyle," she says. "Once a new homeowner signs on with us, they're introduced to our design consultants. They are their guide throughout the process.



We don't have a design centre; we bring the homeowners directly to the suppliers. Instead of having a few samples for them to choose from, they can see the whole showroom where the possibilities are endless." Robyn enjoyed the process immensely. "The design consultant really makes you feel comfortable and not overwhelmed," she says. "They take your ideas and make them a reality." Rinaldi homeowners appreciate the opportunity to be as hands-on or off as they want. "They're surprised at how involved they can be," Danielle says. "We really value the personal home-buying experience."

QUALITY

Rinaldi Homes was founded in 1987 by **Jerry** and **Frank Rinaldi**. Their father, Osvaldo, was a furniture maker who left Italy for Canada and began building here in 1955. With such a venerated history, it's no wonder Jerry and Frank have high standards when it comes to their own developments. Robyn was impressed with the care taken while her home was built.

"Everything from top to bottom is thought of," she says. "Jerry puts a lot of thought into everything to figure out what works the best. The standards were very high. I fell in love with these five-panel doors, and I thought I was going to get up-charged for sure. I was so impressed to hear they were standard."

DESIGN

The home's exterior is one of sharp lines and modern features inspired by the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, including Permacon brick from **St. Catharines Building Supplies** and an eight-foot, stained wood door by Crowland Sash & Frame. Even the sleek, glass garage door by **Yarnell Overhead Doors Ltd.** stays true to a contemporary look and feel. Robyn was pleased to learn that each unit comes equipped with Nest technology, allowing for remote temperature control and energy efficiency. "We take a lot of time and effort with every design that we do," says Danielle. "Jerry gets very involved with the process, from the original







ABOVE: Joan and Jerry Rinaldi of Rinaldi Homes. **TOP LEFT:** Colourful office supplies are both useful and decorative. **LEFT:** The main bathroom.

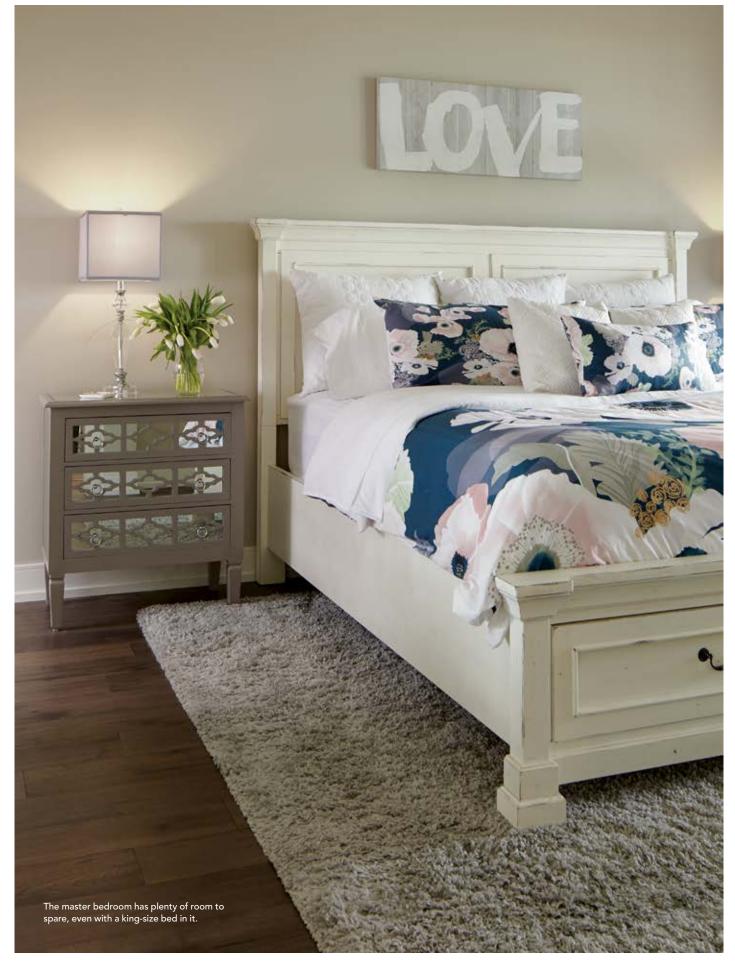
floor plan to picking the front door stain colour. We have a great team with a lot of experience and we treat every home as if it were our own." This means creating homes that fit in the community and serve their residents now and for years to come. For Robyn and Matt, their Rinaldi creation has been a dream come true. "Rinaldi puts their heart and soul into every single home," Robyn says. "We love being here. This home is completely amazing." Several rigorous inspections bring further peace of mind. Every Rinaldi Home is Mike Holmes Approved.

LIVABILITY

An award-winning home comes down to how it serves its residents. Robyn and Matt enjoy cooking and entertaining in their kitchen, with floor-to-ceiling cabinetry and a 98-inch island with Caesarstone Quartz.

ontinued on page 38

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No details were overlooked in this townhome.





They opted to finish the full, walk-out lower level with a built-in bar and home theatre. "It feels like we're in a two-storey," Robyn says.

The home, built using lumber from **Stark Lumber Co. Ltd.**, is conveniently located near amenities and major highways, but that's never been an issue, she adds. "There's lots of activity, and you can see it, but you can't hear it," Robyn says. "When you go on the patio, you're like, 'Oh I didn't know there was all of this hustle and bustle going on.' It feels like we're downtown in the city, enjoying beautiful downtown condo living." **OH**

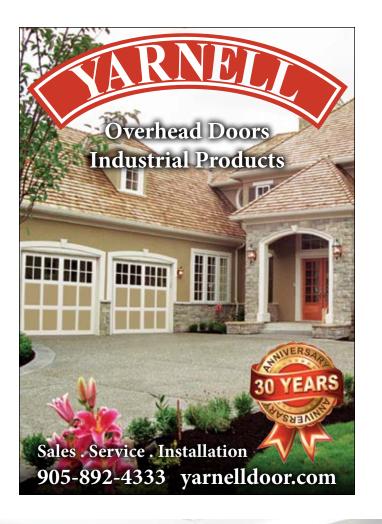
SOURCE GUIDE

• All Green Irrigation • Amber Stairs & Railings Inc. • Aristocrat Floors of the World • Artcraft Kitchens • Bathworks • Budget Blinds • Closets, Shutters & More • Crowland Sash & Frame • Cutting Edge Niagara • Don's Light House • Kirkpatrick Stoneworks • Lows Glass • Rinaldi Homes • St. Catharines Building Supplies • Stark Lumber Co. Ltd. • Yarnell Overhead Doors Ltd.



ABOVE: The homeowners opted to turn the lower level into a home theatre equipped with a bar well-stocked with snacks and drinks.

LEFT: A large sectional and a collection of movie posters contribute to the relaxed feel of the home theatre.



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In order to keep an open-concept space aligned with your overall design aesthetic, veer away from overt themes and bright, bold primary colours as kids' favourite characters and colours can change from month to month. Keep the walls, floors and furnishings in calming neutrals and integrate small doses of soft, muted colours. Fusion Mineral Paint's Tones for Tots come in a range of colours and feature an environmentally and health conscious formulation without sacrificing quality and durability. Generic wall murals are a great way to spark imagination while injecting personality and style to a space.

♠ 1. MURALS WALLPAPER: Dragonfly Illustration Wallpaper Mural & Scientific Chalkboard Effect Wall Mural 2. FUSION MINERAL PAINT: Tones For Tots in Little Lamb, Little Whale & Little Speckled Frog 3. INDIGO: CCR Walpops Learn To Write Chalkboard

At home, whether you have the square footage to dedicate an entire room to play or have carved out space in your main living area, it can be a challenge to maintain your overall design aesthetic when your space can begin to look like a toy factory in a matter of minutes. The following tips will help create a family-friendly play space without cramping your style.

Make it easy for your kids to access their toys, books and supplies as this fosters independence and means that if they can get it out, they can also put it away. Choose pieces that fit the overall style of your home and are decorative yet functional (while keeping in mind how they could be repurposed as your children grow). Open storage such as shelves, hooks, baskets and bins, and closed storage such as ottomans, built-ins, consoles and dressers are a great combination. Having adequate storage ensures there is a home for everything and makes for quick cleanup at the end of a play.

>> 1. THE LAND OF NOD: Wheelhouse Bookcase 2. NURSERY WORKS: Tree Bookcase 3. PEHR: Navy Stripe and Navy Speck Drums 4. TULIP: Rio Double Dresser 5. THE LAND OF NOD: Black & White Upholstered Storage Bench



Choose materials, fabrics and finishes that are durable yet comfortable and family-friendly. Avoid glass coffee tables, sharp corners and furniture and flooring with small crevices that can trap dirt and crumbs. Wipeable seating options such as leather and vinyl - work horse upholstery that wears well over time – and patterned fabrics that help conceal soils are great options. Also, ensure that pillow and chair covers are removeable for easy cleaning. As kids spend hours playing on the floor, selecting a material such as luxury vinyl tiles or planks is a good idea as they are waterproof and virtually indestructible (and are being manufactured to look increasingly realistic with some great installation patterns available). Add comfort and style by layering with a fun area rug (indoor/outdoor rugs are a great option), but avoid shags as they can trap allergens and are difficult to keep clean (and hidden Lego is bound to find the bottom of your foot!). Interlocking cushioned floor tiles are also now being manufactured in aesthetically pleasing patterns that can be a great addition to your home décor. **▶ 1. NURSERY WORKS:** Sleepytime Rocker **2. PEHR:** Rainbow Stripe Rug 3. LITTLE NOMAD: Roam Free Play Mat in Dusk 4. THE LAND OF NOD: Heritage Rug

> A height adjustable activity table allows
> 2 for longer use. Choose items that are fun, whimsical and engage imagination. Kids love hanging a place they can retreat to for play, stories and some quiet time. Lighting in various shapes can add to the design of your home while also engaging the minds of little ones. Designated activity areas for creating arts and crafts allow children to express themselves and a gallery wall is an easy way to display and rotate the pieces while providing a one-of-a-kind design statement. ↑ 1. THE LAND OF NOD: Gallery Wall Clips 2. LA SIESTA:

Joki Planet Koala 3. HINKLEY LIGHTING: Tryst Chandelier 4. POTTERY BARN KIDS: Tan With Charcoal Trim Teepee

5. THE LAND OF NOD: Complete Adjustable Grey Activity Table

Set 6. POTTERY BARN KIDS: Faux Fur Anywhere Beanbag OH

Kids love cosy

retreat to for

places to

quiet time





AIR APPARENT

STORY TIFFANY MAYER | PHOTOGRAPHY KELLY HORKOFF

THE PLACE: Mike Konderka was basking in the success of corporate sales when change was in the air. It was 2009, and the opportunity arose to buy a fledgling HVAC company from a friend. Four years later, Konderka traded his suit and tie to run Enviro-Niagara Heating and Air Conditioning in Welland fulltime, and grow it with gale force into a trusted source for heating, cooling, custom sheet-metal fabrication, and even barbecue solutions. Today, Enviro-Niagara, once Konderka's home business, operates out of three large storefronts on Highway 20. Konderka also recently added a metal fabrication facility to the

Enviro-Niagara portfolio, keeping more work in-house and up to his exacting standards. "Basically, now everything is all under one roof," Konderka says. "We can do everything gas-related that's residential, commercial, hearth, barbecue, and metal fabrication – the whole thing."

THE APPROACH: Konderka and his wife, Jennifer, have made Enviro-Niagara an integral part of Niagara's community. The couple operate by the motto "Dedicated to the community, committed to the environment." Over





20

THE TREND: Increasing energy costs have made efficient heat pumps a popular item. Big sellers also include boilers, ductless splits, WiFi thermostats and fireplaces installed to allow for residual heat to be used throughout a home. When it comes to barbecues, versatility is key, people are game for something that can bake cookies in the afternoon and roast prime cuts for dinner.

THE NEWS: Given the big things happening in barbecue technology, Enviro-Niagara is planning a spring series of cooking classes to demonstrate all that can be done with products carried in-store.

GET THERE:

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GET READY TO SELL

STORY MEHREEN SHAHID
ILLUSTRATION SHEILA BRITTON

Putting your house up for sale isn't just about listing it on the market. Experts say there's more to it than that.

GET FEEDBACK

"I think one of the first things people should do is to get a neutral opinion on their house on what is a good value to add," says Brendan Powell, broker and team leader at the BREL team, Sage Real Estate.

Getting an outsider to give feedback on what could make the house better helps homeowners decide on renovations that will be a real return on investment, he says.

"People often bring us in after renovating," says Powell. "That's usually too late because you can't do anything about it. If you spend \$100,000 on your reno, you can't add that much to the price. Just because you spent the money, it doesn't mean others will see the value, too."

SPRUCE IT UP

Be prudent in spending money, Powell says, but do fix the nitpicky items, such as bathroom or kitchen fixtures, creaky boards or crumbling brickwork.

Quick ways of sprucing up the inside of a house include a good cleaning, decluttering and a new coat of paint, preferably neutral colours, as they allow the house to look spacious and help buyers easily imagine their items in the same space.

Also, focus on getting rid of smells to which your nose is blind, be it cooking spices or pet odours, says Powell.

STAGE IT

If you still have no idea how to go about getting your house ready for sale, says Powell, real-estate agents can help stage or call in a professional stager for help.

Red Barrinuevo, professional home stager and interior decorator at Redesign 4 More says staging not only gives a fresh look to the house, but it also demonstrates effective use of space for buyers.

"If it's a living room, showcase it as a living room and remove other pieces that don't have to be there," he says. "For example, for a living room, all we need is a coffee table, a sofa and some chairs."

Another factor that helps determine a home's value and guides the preparation process for a house is its location, says Barrinuevo.



"If you're downtown, the buyer is probably someone working downtown and looking for a starter home. There, a small room could be staged as an office," he says, adding the quality of the furniture should reflect the value of the house. "If you're selling a house outside the city, an extra room could be showcased as a baby room."

IMPROVE CURB APPEAL

Make sure the exterior of the house is not neglected, Barrinuevo says. "That's the first thing buyers see."

Adding a fresh coat of paint on the garage door, taking care of the front yard and putting garbage bins in the back, instead of front, are just some items on the list. It should tell the buyer the house is well-maintained.

"The outside is like a teaser. If you get off on the wrong foot at the beginning, buyers will look for more faults," he says.

GET GREAT PHOTOS

Both Barrinuevo and Powell agree that once the inside and outside are taken care of, make sure a professional photographer takes the images shared for the listing.

"It has to be of professional quality, because this is one of the most expensive things you're going to sell," says Powell.

CONSIDER AN INSPECTION

Where most people focus on cosmetic fixes, it's also a good idea to get a pre-sale inspection done, says Graham Clarke, president of the Canadian Association of Home and Property Inspectors.

"It allows the homeowner to be aware of what conditions or deficiencies are going to show up when the buyer brings along an inspector," he says.

This helps reduce potential renegotiation after a potential buyer brings in an inspector.

"The more information you can disclose, the smoother the transaction will be and the more realistic the expectations of the buyer," says Clarke.

Some common items homeowners can fix before listing include safety issues that may arise from electrical, water or leakage issues and neglected porches and decks.

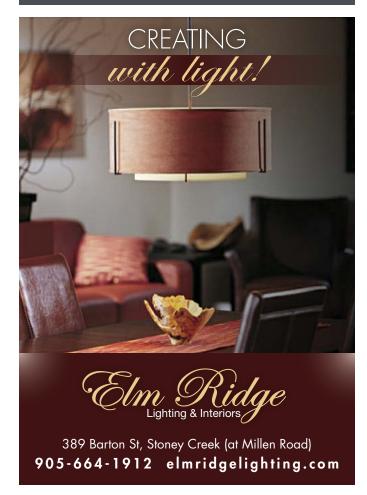
And it helps both the homeowner and their realtor understand what the real condition is and set a more realistic price for the market, he says. \mbox{OH}

WHAT WOULD YOUR IDEAL KITCHEN LOOK LIKE?



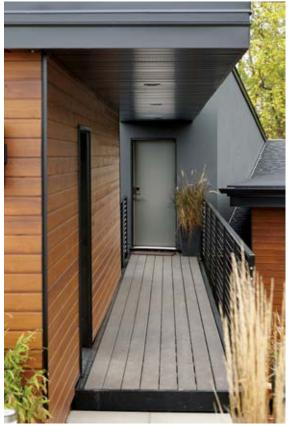
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Chris and Alistair Robertson's home is perched on the edge of a hilltop, like a bird about to take flight into the woods below. At 2,900 square feet, it boasts a unique layout dictated largely by the shape of the hillside lot it occupies, which slopes downward into a forested backyard ending at a winding creek.







the back," Alistair recalls.

Because of the stunning location, there was a great deal of interest in the home, and the Robertsons put in an offer the same day they saw it.

"The real estate agent called that night and said, 'It's yours,'" Alistair remembers. Continued on page 51

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"We knew we really had a gem, but we knew there was a lot of work ahead," Chris adds. "Alistair had flipped houses in the past and had done the work himself. This was a massive project. It would have taken us years to do it ourselves."

The Robertsons had a builder in mind from the start – **Tony Alfieri** of **Windrush Hill Construction**, whom the couple already knew, including through Chris's work at Loud+Clear advertising agency.

They took possession of the house in

March 2016, and got started on renovations right away, collaborating with Alfieri on how to achieve their vision. Their architectural designer, **Santy Yeh** of **Designs by Santy**, expanded on their ideas and put them on paper.

"There were a lot of clever things by Santy," Chris says. "We were asking ourselves, 'How can we use this space better?'"

Even after the drawings were complete, some layout decisions had to be made on the fly, Alfieri noted. The master bathroom,

with fixtures by **Bathworks**, and a walk-in closet were flipped for ease of plumbing, for example. "It was a real manipulation of the existing space and how to make it feel bigger and more user friendly," he says. "We twisted things around a bit."

Nearly all the walls and the roof were rotten. All that could be salvaged from the original structure was the framing and footprint. All lumber that needed replacing came from **Stark Lumber**. **Precision Drywall** redid all the drywalling. Continued on page 52

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RIGHT: Natural wood panelling on the wall of the master bedroom complements the view to the outdoors and surrounding forest. Cabinetry in the room is by Enns Cabinetry. BELOW: The master bedroom.

But that wasn't the biggest challenge. The home is set below street level, which meant carting demolition and building materials up and down a 2.5-storey incline.

"Getting building materials in and out of there was not the easiest thing to do," Alfieri says.

Still, it held great potential for a stunning home, and that's what the Robertsons got when Alfieri was done. The everyday entrance is via a narrow bridge by Niagara Ornamental Ironworks Ltd. The exterior is done in natural wood siding by Maibec and installed by **T-Daniil's Contracting Ltd.** and slate grey stucco by Modern Stucco.

The main floor features a half-vaulted ceiling finished in untreated cedar by Cedar Speciality Shoppes, measuring 14 feet at its highest point, and walls in Cloud Cover white by **Benjamin Moore** paints from the **St. Catharines Decorating Centre**. The great room occupies most of the space, comprising a kitchen, dining area and living room with a large Montigo fireplace with a dark tile surround by **Aristocrat Floors of the World**. The flooring on this level is polished concrete by Peter Santin of Innovative Concrete Work. Luxury plank flooring







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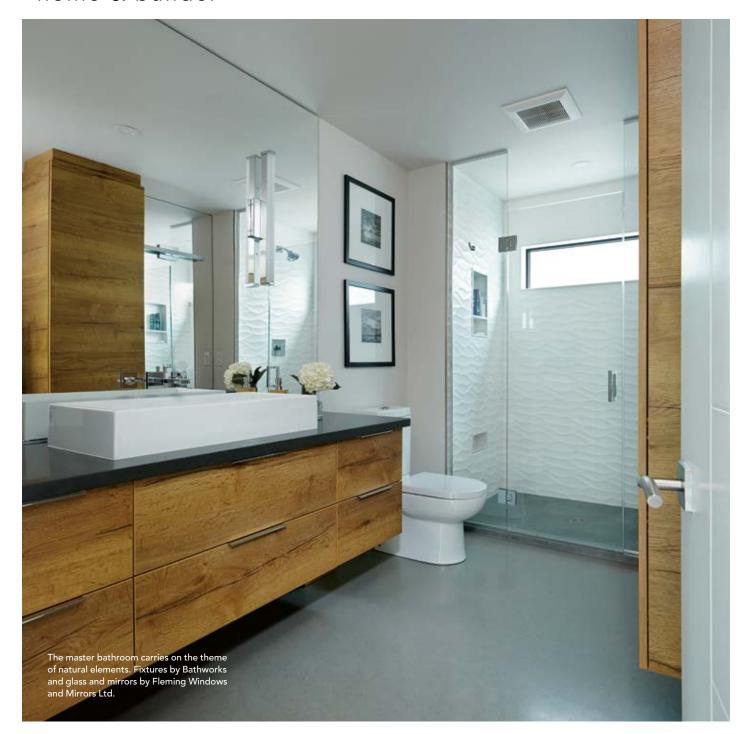












by McNamara & Reynolds rounds out the flooring in the home. Lighting fixtures chosen with care from Don's Light House and Thre3 Interiors draw the eye and are the art in a room with little wall space for artwork.

Across the back wall of the house is nothing but floor-to-ceiling glass by Dashwood, purchased locally from **Crowland Sash & Frame Ltd.** The home, Alistair says, features an impressive nine sets of patio doors, inviting colour and light from outside. It's the first thing a

visitor sees, stepping through the front door. The spectacular scenery is reflected in the home's neutral palette of greys, browns and whites.

"With all the glass and concrete, there were things we wanted to do to make it feel more natural," Chris says. "You really feel the seasons here. At the end of winter and beginning of spring, when the leaves are coming out, you feel like you're a part of it."

"Winter's amazing here," Alistair says. "I hate winter, but here it's awesome."

"It's very peaceful," Chris agrees. "We had a couple of crazy snow days last year. I was working from home and just enjoying watching the snow fall."

The walls do feature a few splashes of colour. There's a set of prints alluding to Alistair's work as a jazz musician that run up the **Amber Stairs &**Railings staircase between the upper and main levels with glass partitions by

Fleming Windows & Mirrors Ltd.

Continued on page 56



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LEFT: A music room with deck provides Alistair Robertson with plenty of creative inspiration. Shaw Floor luxury plank flooring by McNamara & Reynolds. **BELOW:** A once broken-up, dark lower level was made bright and spacious by removing walls and adding large windows and patio doors. The windows in the lower level are among the only in the house to have coverings, which are from The St. **Catharines Decorating** Centre. The same flooring by McNamara & Reynolds in the music room is also in the lower level.

They're in an abstract technicolor style and feature four jazz greats. A music room on the second storey keeps his saxophones, flute, and trombone. The room opens onto a veranda that offers the same extraordinary views as the rest of the house.

The home includes a lower level with walkout that has been transformed from the dark, cramped basement the Robertsons found when they first saw the space. Another wall of windows brightens a large open seating area and guest room.

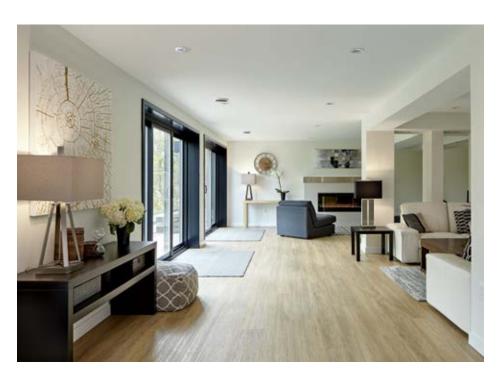
One of the biggest challenges for the property has been storage. Smart storage solutions like an upper closet in the music room and built-in storage in the laundry room have provided much-needed space. The Robertsons opted for custom European laminate cabinets by **Enns**

Cabinetry throughout the home.

"We had wood before in a previous home but it got worn so fast," Chris says, laughing. "With the dogs, the cabinets have to hold up to slobber and scratches."

The dogs seem to appreciate their new home. Angus plants himself on a leather couch while Casey checks her bowl hopefully at the builtin feeding station in the kitchen.

By next summer, the Robertsons hope to have finished the landscaping with the help of **Kiva Landscape**, including a large deck for the main level and patio for the walkout. In the meantime, they look forward to watching the seasons turn in the forest below, on a property that is utterly magical. **o**h



SOURCE GUIDE

- Amber Stairs & Railings Aristocrat Floors of the World • Bathworks
- Crowland Sash & Frame Designs
- By Santy Don's Light House
- Enns Cabinetry Inc. Ferguson Neudorf Glass • Fleming Windows & Mirrors Ltd. • Gary Wild Roofing
- Innovative Concrete Work Kiva Landscape • McNamara & Reynolds
- Niagara Ornamental Ironworks
- Precision Drywall St. Catharines
- Decorating Centre Stark Lumber • T Daniil's Contracting Ltd.
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PROJECT AND PHOTOGRAPHY TARA CHATTELL

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Not particularly crafty? No problem! Make the container part of the gift by choosing something fun and functional, like a small colander or pretty dish. To finish it off, wrap with cellophane and ribbon.







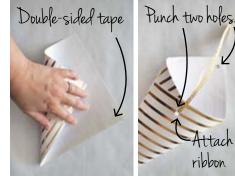
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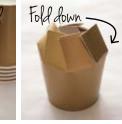














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have yourself a SCANDI-STYLE CHRISTMAS

Looking to simplify your holiday style? A minimalist Scandinavian style Christmas may be just the kind of uncomplicated holiday décor you are craving. Quiet your mind and transform your home into a chic winter wonderland without the Christmas chaos!

Nordic peoples know firsthand what a real winter is, making Scandi-style a natural fit for gorgeous Yuletide décor. It is rustic, minimalist and cosy all at the same time. Natural woods, a black-and-white colour scheme and handmade ornamentation provide the framework for a straightforward and inviting holiday home.

THE TREE

Initially, during the Winter Solstice, Norse pagans would bring entire evergreen trees into their homes to celebrate and sacrifice to the god Jul (now recognized as "Yule"). These massive evergreens were called Yule trees and it was believed that the spirits of the trees would bless the home's inhabitants and provide mystical protection from night-faring spirits during those darkest of days.

The current Scandi-style Christmas tree is humble by comparison. A modest evergreen simply placed in a woven basket or other unassuming vessel is all that's needed! Better yet, choose a few different sized trees, then group or smatter throughout your home for extra holiday allure (and possibly some additional mystical protection). There is a freshness found in the bare, standalone branches or add in just a few simple ornaments for hints of embellishment. Below the tree, instead of a typical tree skirt, place a faux fur rug or woolen mat. Add a few more woolly throws throughout your home for further cosiness. You'll be surprised how much warmth these can add to a space.

THE TRIMMINGS

Anything found in the forest (and sometimes your own backyard) lends well to Nordic style. Let nature be your inspiration! An artfully placed stack of logs, a set of plain vine wreaths or a wooden bowl filled with pine cones all fit in seamlessly. A single windswept branch with a few berries placed on the fireplace mantel may be all that's necessary as minimalist is the motto for classic Northern flavour.

THE TEXTURES

Handmade decorations and gift-wrappings made of natural materials such as fabrics, paper and jute offer the subtle textures required for any well designed composition. Simple cutouts of stars, snowflakes and hearts are classic shapes associated with Scandinavian flair. These can be used in lieu of a table runner, as gift tags or hanging ornaments. For the more adventurous sorts, 3D snowflakes can have just as many variations as do the natural ones. Fun to create and captivating when grouped and hung from a chandelier, these can be tied to a gift or anywhere else you need a bit of joy.

THE TABLE

A festive table comprised of a limited colour palette allows for appreciation of form and lets the all-important meal take centre stage. Layer on the whites, from linens to tableware, to achieve a gorgeous monochromatic effect. Tie a spruce twig with a simple ring of twine to create the perfect rustic napkin ring, adding a hint of holiday without going over the top. Plate garnishes made of evergreens are the perfect accessory as spruce, pine and cedar are all edible. Let your imagination run wild! Don't neglect the kitchen either as family often flocks here. Display your baking triumphs alongside their pretty forms and the cookie cutters, too. Finish off both areas with lots and lots of plain white taper candles in various sizes for a magical celebratory feel.

Growing up, my relatives would often joke that "everyone knows Santa Claus comes from Finland." Given my Finnish heritage I experienced this holiday style and subsequent traditions first-hand and well before its current popularity. Yet over time I still succumbed to the glittery charms of Christmas and collected a multitude of plastic ornaments and greeneries. But as so often happens, priorities change and life comes back full circle (along with some major recycling). Back to my roots, I have again found my forever holiday style of choice. OH

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City Lightz 443 Eastchester Ave Unit 3, St. Catharines Distinctive Designs & Cabinetry Inc. 120 Dunkirk Rd, St. Catharines

Don's Light House 296 Lake St, St. Catharines **Dunn's Furniture** 255 Bunting Rd, St. Catharines

Enns Cabinetry 36 Scott St W, St. Catharines Habitat for Humanity 150 Bunting Rd, St. Catharines 2499 Hwy 20 East, Fonthill

Henley Honda 308 Lake St, St. Catharines Subaru of Niagara 375 Lake St, St. Catharines Innovative Kitchen Design 443 Eastchester Ave, St. Catharines

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Jill Genno 905.520.2516 jill.genno@ourhomes.ca

Dee Svob 905.359.2063 dee.svob@ourhomes.ca



SILVER CREEK CABINETRY Silver Creek Cabinetry is a custom quality cabinetry shop located in Welland, Ontario. It was established in 2005 by Shawn Vezeau and has been servicing prestigious customers throughout the Niagara Region and Southern Ontario for the past 12 years.

Silver Creek Cabinetry creates the very best in custom cabinetry suited for your home. As a locally owned and independent company, we bring experience, skills and quality craftsmanship to every project we create throughout the entire production process - from the design stage, to the manufacturing of the cabinets, to the installation of all products.

Silver Creek Cabinetry uses high quality materials which are matched with intelligent, beautiful and functional designs that improve the look and feel of your home. We have recently added a CNC Machine to our custom facility to create precise craftsmanship, faster turnaround times and competitive prices.

We are committed to working closely with our clients to create all types of cabinetry from traditional to ultramodern.

Give us a call today at 905.714.1808 to come measure your space or make an appointment to drop by our showroom to see our quality of work or check out our website at silvercreekcabinets.ca

(Please see ad on pg 29)



DUNN'S FURNITURE FASHIONS

Dunn's Furniture Fashions

began when Andrew Artinian Sr. envisioned going into business for himself and so...the history of Dunn's began. For 64 years, Dunn's Furniture Fashions has been Niagara's premiere home furnishings showcase.

Its early years began as one of the Pen Centre's original stores to now showcasing its furniture brands in their 14,000 sq. ft. showroom on Bunting Road. Room after room of beautifully decorated vignettes allows the customer to visualize what their room setting could look like.

The talented staff are patient and very knowledgeable with respect to all aspects of the project at hand, from paint colours to the final aspects of furniture arrangement. There is never any undue pressure to purchase quickly, realizing that it takes time to make the process work. After all, we've been doing this since 1954! We love the relationships that have been created with our customers and their families

Always known as a leader for promoting Canadian-made solid wood home furnishings, once inside their door, you will realize that there is something very special here. It feels like home and Dunn's staff know how to deliver the look you want.

Gift certificates are available for those who wish to give the gift of quality for a home. 255 Bunting Rd, St Catharines 905.684.9414 dunnsfurniture.ca

(Please see ad on pg 27)



WHAT WOULD YOUR IDEAL **KITCHEN LOOK LIKE?**

N-Hance Revolutionary Wood Renewal is an innovative, affordable kitchen cabinets and

hardwood floors refinishing service, that makes your kitchen and hardwood floors look brand new again at a fraction of the cost of replacing or refacing them.

N-Hance offers a large variety of custom colours and finishes to suit your taste and needs. With the N-Hance proprietary products and curing process, jobs are completed with no dust, no mess and no odour.

Lightspeed® is the process of refinishing your cabinets, hardwood floors, and curing them with a powerful ultraviolet (UV) light that provides a professional and durable factory finish.

Airborne wood dust is a hazard that you do not have to live with. The N-Hance revolutionary process uses patented chemical abrasion technology, which simply means no airborne pollutants.

The Home Depot in USA has been the trusted partner of N-Hance Wood Renewal since 2008 with presence in over 1,500 locations, making N-Hance the largest most trusted brand in North America. No one else offers the same quality, durability and finish that N-Hance offers to its clients.

Our goal is to give you beautifully refinished cabinets and hardwood floors with little or no disruption to your life.

To find out more about N-Hance or to book your FREE in-home consultation and estimate today, please call us at 905.581.7166 NHanceontario.ca/niagarafalls

(Please see ad on pg 45)



LINCOLN FLOORING & DESIGN

Lincoln Flooring & Design has expanded our showroom, staff and hours to accommodate the growing community of Lincoln. Our staff has design experience you can trust. Once you step foot into our cosy showroom you'll find many options for your flooring needs, including new designs, textures and colours. The cold months are fast approaching and it may be time to decorate that empty room for the holidays or change your existing flooring to create a new look for the upcoming new year! The 2018 Colour Trend is Gold Rush warm and inviting, this new trend can change the entire ambiance of the room and with our design experts we can help coordinate your décor colours with new flooring ideas.

Our main focus is customer service, and with that comes trust. We listen to our clients. Our advice is free! Your home is an expression of you and it starts from the floor up. Let our experienced team help you make the best flooring choice We can turn your flooring needs into the dream home you always wanted.

Located in the Heart of Beamsville, we look forward to seeing you at our Ontario Street Location. We offer complimentary in-home estimates. Feel free to stop by our showroom, or give us a call to book your appointment today. 905.563.0070

4514 Ontario St, Beamsville lincolnflooringanddesign.ca (Please see ad on pg 10)



>> SOURCE IT

THE DECORATING CENTRES - YOUR LOCAL BENJAMIN **MOORE & HUNTER DOUGLAS RETAILER SINCE 2000**

Starting out in the painting and decorating industry, opening a paint store, almost 18 years ago, seemed to be the next step. In the following years we have expanded to having 5 locations, soon to be 6, in the Niagara and Hamilton

As an independant retailer, family owned and operated, we pride ourselves in having the experience behind the advice. We make sure to pass on our knowledge to our team All of our staff have passed a colour test and are extremely experienced with helping you choose the best colours and products for you and your home. We strive to give our customers what they need and aim to resolve any issues you may encounter completeing your project.

We love to help our customers, getting as much joy out of seeing your home beautified as you will!

We are extremely versatile, from in-home colour consultations to window covering suggestions, to dealing with the pros providing paint, stain and lacquers as well as problem solving to find the best possible solutions when looking for coatings.

Come in and check for

decoratingcentres.com (Please see ad on pg 55)



INTERIORS BY BETTER SHADE

Located on Glendale Ave, right between the two malls (The Pen Centre and The Niagara Outlet Collection), you will find Interiors By Better Shade. Interiors By Better Shade is a fourth generation, family owned and operated furniture and window coverings store that has been serving the Niagara Region and surrounding areas for over 60 years.

Most people know us for our beautiful custom window coverings, but we are eagerly trying to get the word out that we also sell quality Canadian-made furniture, and offer the best prices for furniture, this side of Toronto!

Not only do we have a wide selection of styles to choose from in our two-storey showroom, but we also offer excellent and personable customer service for our clients! We know choosing furniture can be a tad confusing at times. Not to worry, our knowledgeable design consultants make it easy, helping you choose comfort first and then style.

We also showcase Ontario's **LARGEST** selection of Palliser recliners! Available in a variety of designs and functions including power or manual, Rockers, Swivel Gliders, Wallhuggers, Zero Gravity Chairs, Power Lift Chairs, and Power Recliners with Power Headrest!

For quality modern interiors, furniture and window treatments for so many years...Interiors By Better Shade. Come and see for yourself, why we're Better! 469 Glendale Ave, St. Catharines

905.227.4555 interiors by better shade.com (Please see ad on pg 17)



THE ONE STOP FIREPLACE **SHOP**

The One Stop Fireplace **Shop** is Niagara Region's largest fireplace, hearth, barbeque and accessories

The ever changing trends and technology in hearth products can be very confusing. Let our friendly, knowledgeable experts guide you through our premium products to ensure you purchase the right fireplace for your home comfort needs.

We offer a full service experience with over 100 units on display, in-home consultations and licensed gas technicians along with prompt customer service.

Check out our new lines of linear gas fireplaces offering zero clearances to TV's and electronics, new heat transfer technology and complete one day installs.

If you fancy a wood burning fireplace, come and see our modern units with guillotine doors or a classy and sassy soapstone wood stove.

Visit us today and make your dreams a reality. Come visit our showroom: 4332 Drummond Rd, Niagara Falls 905.357.6333 onestopfireplaceshop.com (Please see ad on pg 20)



DISTINCTIVE DESIGNS & CABINETRY INC. DREAMING OF A beautiful

kitchen? As luck would have it, we specialize in that!!

We are entering our 18th year in business. Passion, Product and Precise Visions are what sets the tone for **Distinctive Designs** & Cabinetry experiences.

From the moment you begin your no-charge in-showroom consultation you will be embraced with the comfort of knowing your investment will be taken seriously. Rely on the expertise of our approachable educated designers, to create a timeless space that will surpass your expectations.

Be reassured that Distinctive Designs hand selects from the finest manufacturers and suppliers of luxurious kitchen products and tailor-made cabinetry. Combined with craftsman skill and state-of-theart facilities you will soon agree this is the perfect recipe for your renovation.

Don't have a renovator or trades to prepare your space? Many of the renovators and trades we recommend have been working with Distinctive Designs for close to two decades. Honouring our client's visions with the respect it deserves is why 90% of our clients are referrals.

Work with the team that is renowned for successfully **Executing Award Winning** Designs from concept to completion. Making life easier for YOU. We look forward to hearing from you!

distinctive designs.ca 905.646.3694 | 120 Dunkirk Rd, Unit #4, St Catharines

(Please see ad on pg 25)

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GINGERBREAD LOAF with BROWN BUTTER ORANGE GLAZE

RECIPE AND PHOTOGRAPHY JENELLE MCCULLOCH



SPICE UP YOUR NEXT GATHERING WITH THIS WINTER LOAF. WARMING SPICES ARE BAKED INTO THE CAKE AND TOPPED WITH A ZESTY BROWN BUTTER GLAZE.



LOAF

INGREDIENTS

1 ½ cups all-purpose flour

1 tsp nutmeg

2 tsp cinnamon

2 tsp ground ginger

½ cup butter

½ cup brown sugar

1/4 cup molasses

1 egg

2/3 cup milk, warmed

1 tsp baking soda

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat oven to 300°F and line a loaf pan with parchment paper.
- In a medium bowl combine flour, nutmeg, cinnamon and ground ginger and mix well.
- In a small saucepan over low heat, combine butter, brown sugar and molasses until melted. Add to flour mixture and combine until smooth.
- Beat the egg and stir into the batter.
- Combine warm milk and baking soda together and mix into batter until smooth.
- Pour batter into prepared pan and bake for 60-70 minutes or until toothpick comes out clean.
- Let cool completely before adding glaze.

GLAZE

INGREDIENTS

1 cup icing sugar

¼ tsp vanilla

1-2 Tbsp milk

Zest of one orange

DIRECTIONS

- To prepare brown butter, place butter in a saucepan until fragrant and golden
- Combine icing sugar, vanilla, brown butter, 1 Tbsp of milk and orange zest in a medium bowl and mix.
- The glaze needs to be thick and opaque but still pourable. If needed, add more milk to reach
- Pour glaze evenly down the centre of cool loaf and let fall

Get more recipes at ourhomes.ca/mag/cook

1 Tbsp brown butter

- over medium heat and cook brown. Remove from heat.
- desired thickness
- down the sides. OH

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BEATING THE Winter Blahs

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Local pros share how they make winter a wonder.

STORY TIFFANY MAYER
PHOTOGRAPHY KELLY HORKOFF

MATT PICKETT
OWNER

& RHODA CIPPARONE

PRINCIPAL DESIGN AND
SHOWROOM MANAGER
Aristocrat Floors of the World,
St. Catharines

Tell us what you do: Rhoda: Aside from giving clients the ultimate design service for new builds and renovations, I ensure our talented staff has the latest and best materials to offer clients. We pride ourselves on being ahead of the trend curve. Matt: I oversee our operations with a hands-on approach, focusing on building and maintaining loyal, long-term relationships with clients, suppliers and staff

Aristocrat is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year. What's been the secret to its longevity? Matt: We have a culture of excellence and trust. I joined Aristocrat more than 15 years ago as a Brock University business student and I was fortunate to apprentice under the previous owner, my uncle and mentor, Steve Gaida. He instilled the importance of customer service and ensured that I understood everything from all positions in the business.

Best thing about winter in Niagara? Rhoda: New boots. Matt: Skating outdoors with my children.





MARK, JEFF & TIM BEEKE, OWNERS
Niagara Pre-Hung Doors, Thorold

Tell us what you do at Niagara Pre-Hung Doors: Our father started this business nearly 50 years ago and we have continued the family tradition of building high-quality door systems. Tim and Jeff work side-by-side in sales and product development while Mark works in production. The three of us manage the company together. It's a lot of fun to work with family every day.

What are some of your biggest sellers

right now? We mainly deal in interior and exterior residential doors. Our biggest sellers right now are fibreglass entry door systems, and interior stile and rail doors. We also carry a wide selection of door hardware.

How do you most enjoy winter in Niagara? Our favourite winter hobby is watching the Leafs beat the Habs. We also really enjoy spending time with family and friends over the holiday season.



JOE HILBING, TAYLOR MERCURI, KRISTEN MACORETTA & TAYLOR BOUWERS First In Counters, Wainfleet

What is First In Counters? We are a custom stone fabrication shop that works with granite, quartz and marble surfaces. We specialize in stone countertops, fireplace surrounds and almost anything you can imagine made out of stone.

What sets First In Counters apart from the competition? We go over and above to give our customers a personable, one-on-one experience with our reputable and experienced sales team, a comfortable showroom atmosphere, our large hand-selected slab inventory and the state-of-the-art fabrication equipment. We stay a step ahead in stone fabrication and with new innovative products and tooling in our shop.

What's your favourite winter activity in Niagara? Joe: Hockey with my boys, snowmobiling and ice skating on the pond with family and friends. OH

SEE OUR DIRECTORY FOR ALL CONTACT INFORMATION.

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Pine cones dipped in clean-burning soy wax are an eco-friendly option to get your home fires burning. Leave them white or colour the wax and they become seasonal décor.

TOOLS & MATERIALS

Soy wax flakes, 2 lbs.
Pine cones, 10-13
Candle dye blocks, colours of your choice (optional)
Wired candle wicking
Wooden spoon
Small double boiler
Wax paper
Tinfoil
Knife
Scissors

NOTE: Any materials used in this project should not be used again for food preparation.



HOW-TO

PREPARE WORKSPACE

Cover your workspace with tinfoil to protect the surface from dripping wax – dipping will get messy!

Use wax paper to cover an area for pine cones to cool between dips.

Add water to the bottom of a double boiler and fill the top pot with wax flakes. Place on stove burner and gently heat until wax is fully melted, stirring occasionally.

Using a knife, shave off small bits from wax dye blocks, add to your hot wax and stir until completely melted and blended.





The colour will look much lighter once cool. Test your colour by dripping wax onto wax paper and allow to cool. It doesn't take much dye to colour the wax, so add small amounts at a time until reaching the desired colour.

Once satisfied with the colour, remove from heat and allow your wax to cool for 15-20 minutes before starting to dip. While wax is cooling, wrap pine cones

While wax is cooling, wrap pine cones with wicking.

WICK PINE CONES

Cut wicking into 12-inch lengths.
You may want them longer,
depending on the size of
your pine cones.



Fold each piece of wicking in half. Tie a small loop at the fold to use both as a wick and to hold the cones while dipping. Place the loop on the tip of a pine cone and begin wrapping each length in opposite directions around and between the scales. Finish by tucking in the ends (use scissors to push ends in).





Hold each pine cone by the wick loop and dip completely into the wax. If the pine cone is tall, turn on its side and use a wooden spoon to help fully coat the pine cone with wax. Remove the pine cone from the wax and allow excess wax to drip into the pot. Set on wax paper to cool for 10 to 15



minutes between each dip.



Repeat the dipping process three or four times until you're happy with the amount of wax on each pine cone.









After they dry, break off any excess wax from the bottom of your pine cone before dipping again. Recycle these pieces when you reheat your wax, which you will need to do once or twice during the process as the wax cools.

TIP: If the wax looks lumpy on the pine cone, fix it by heating the wax to a higher temperature and re-dipping the pine cone. You may need to give the pine cone an extra dip to rebuild the wax.



Once you're happy with the amount of wax on your pine cones, hold each pine cone upside-down and dip the tops to finish them off.

Allow pine cones to fully cool before transferring to a display container.



FIRE AWAY

When ready to use the fire starters, build a base of paper and dry kindling, then simply light the wick and place the pine cone under the kindling. Using two or three will start a roaring fire. Stay warm!



PINE CONE FIRE STARTERS

PROJECT AND PHOTOS TARA CHATTELL

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directory

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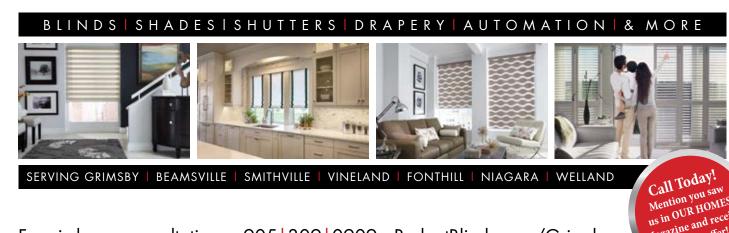






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