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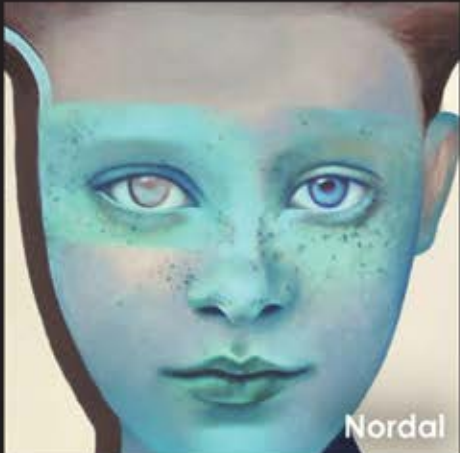
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OUR HOMES Oakville Burlington Mississauga is published four times a year.  
OUR HOMES is distributed to residents of Oakville, Burlington & Mississauga via direct  
delivery. Copies of OUR HOMES are available for free pick up at high traffic locations  
throughout the region. OUR HOMES is distributed to select business leaders via direct mail.  
**Please send all letters and/or feedback to OUR HOMES Magazine,**  
25 Elgin St., Collingwood, ON L9Y 3L6. Or email us at [editor@ourhomes.ca](mailto:editor@ourhomes.ca).  
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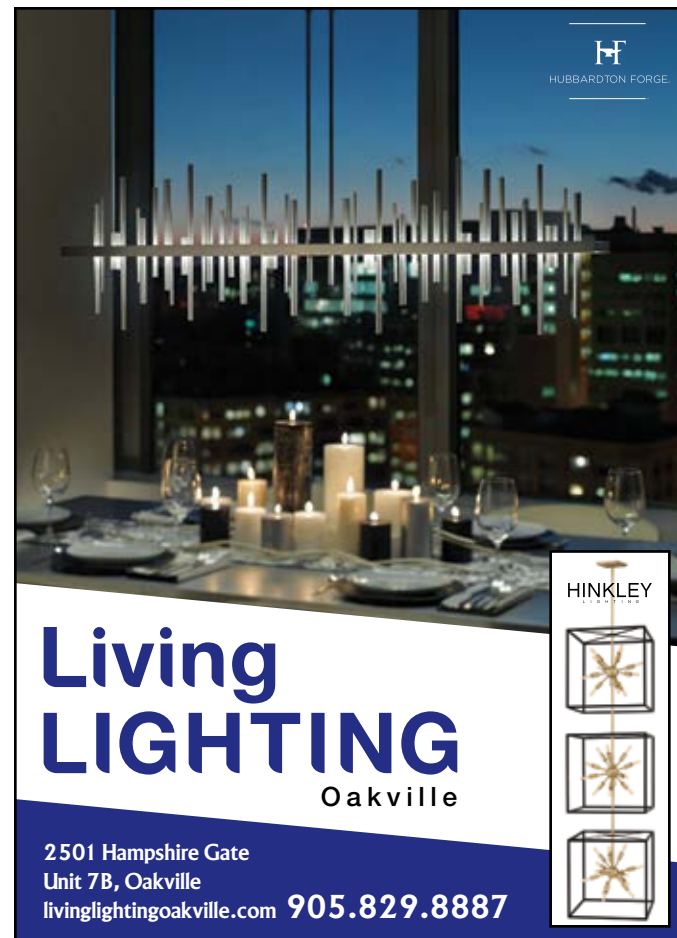


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## editor's note



Whatever you celebrate, the holidays are filled with love, laughter and parties. If you like to entertain, then winter is your season. The lights, the music, the warmth of a flickering fire – it's the ideal setting to host a party with panache.

My husband and I love to play host. We've held so many parties over the years, that with a snap of

the fingers, we can easily make a gathering for 50 or more people come together. Pulling off the perfect soirée takes work, but it's not daunting or stressful for us. It's a great way to bring the people we love together and celebrate, whether it's a birthday, a holiday or my book club.

We are a Christmas family. Our kids, now in their teens, start talking Christmas décor before Halloween is over. I love to set the scene, though my 14-year-old son Matthew and I are at odds on what holiday décor should look like. He thinks my woodsy, vintage-style theme is boring, and I'm pretty sure he goes to sleep dreaming of vibrant reds and greens and rooms falling down with oversize Santas and nutcrackers.

After many parties, we've learned what works for us, so I thought I'd share a little of our wisdom. First, we set the scene early. I like to start decorating a week or two before an event. It alleviates the last minute panic of finding out something is broken, lost or no longer works with the décor, and gives us time to calmly react.

Second, we plan a low-maintenance menu. If I'm adding anything new, I test drive it beforehand. I also choose items that can be prepared and pulled from the fridge or freezer. We always order a few favourites, like sushi platters, to make the menu diverse and interesting.

Third, we allocate jobs. My husband Emil is the drinks guy, while I take care of the food. The kids set up activities to entertain the younger crowd and take coats as people come in. It keeps the environment relaxed and festive, because a stressed host ruins the vibe of a party.

Fourth, we don't ask our guests to bring things. Yes, you read right. We've found that it's easier on everyone when there's no expectations. If people want to bring something, we welcome it, but making lists and allocating to-dos to our guests leads to stress for everyone.

Fifth, we leave the mess. It's stressful to buzz around a party trying to keep the mess at bay. We set up a recycling bin and garbage station, but leave the bigger mess until later.

That's it, some of my better tips from years of entertaining. No matter what you're celebrating, I hope it's happy, fun-filled and stress-free.

*Gina Makkar*

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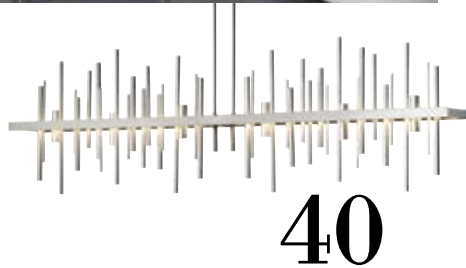
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Elegant holiday decorations in a magical winter retreat. Story, page 46. Photography by Kelly Horkoff.



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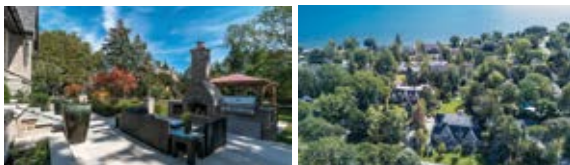
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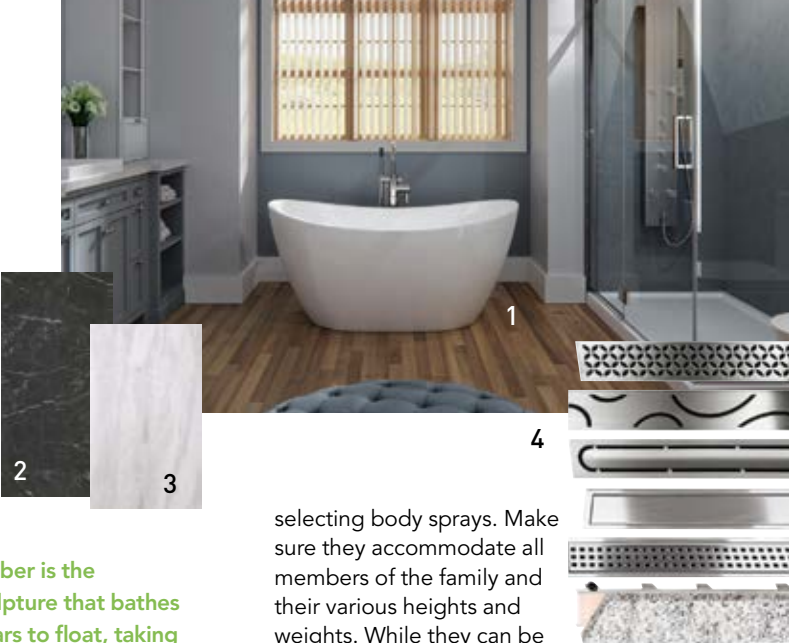




# KEEPING CLEAN

Interior Designer **Dolores Pian** shares her ideas.

Keeping clean has never been more luxurious and spectacular. The master bathroom, in particular, is the second-most-popular renovation after the kitchen. Visual appeal, functionality and unique design elements are what we are now looking for in our bathrooms. Tubs and showers are a great way to make your unique statement. Here are some tips that interior designers think you should know.



## TUBS

The new attention grabber is the freestanding tub. A sculpture that bathes you in comfort, it appears to float, taking less space than a built-in and easier to clean.

### Tips:

- Test your tub for body size when sitting. A taller person requires a longer tub. A small tub will result in knees to the chin and not comfortable at all.
- Statement lighting over the tub can add that wow factor. Make sure your fixtures are rated for damp or wet locations. Place on a separate switch.
- A soft white lighting colour temperature of 2,700 to 3,000 degrees Kelvin provides a warm, cosy atmosphere so you'll always look your best.
- Dimmers set the mood and can be pre-set to the timing of your choice. Place on a separate switch.
- Leave three inches or more around the tub for cleaning. The handle of a mop still needs to reach around the back.

## SHOWERS

The shower is where you stimulate your senses. Glass shower enclosures have eliminated thick tiled walls, allowing for more space. Glass doors can now roll or hinge effortlessly.

### Tips:

- Curbs virtually disappear with curbless shower systems made possible by Schluter Kerdi-Line Systems. They have shower kits that provide the necessary waterproofing membrane and floor sloping for drains. Linear drains, which are long troughs two-inches deep, lie beneath the floor and need to run in the direction of joists or can be carved out of a concrete floor.
- Water can rain on your head or jet you from three sides. Be careful when

selecting body sprays. Make sure they accommodate all members of the family and their various heights and weights. While they can be adjusted to suit your needs, jet sprays can be very powerful and you could end up with a mouthful of water or even injure sensitive body parts. You may need a grip rail.

- Large format tiles, quartz stone or Corian are now used for seamless shower walls, eliminating the need for those pesky, hard-to-clean grout lines. Ask your contractor if you have enough room to get them up the stairs or in an elevator prior to installation.
- Shower floors need small tiles for foot grip and safety so that you can avoid slipping. Make grout colour the darkest colour that coordinates with the tile.
- Install a waterproof light fixture overhead for safety. (Yes – you can still install an overhead shower.) Place the fixture on a separate switch with no dimmer.
- Shower benches are useful for a quick sit down during a long shower and also to perch your foot while shaving your legs.

## SPECIAL TOUCHES

- **Heated floors.** Made more affordable and doable with Ditra-Heat-E-Kit by Schluter. It has a quarter-inch profile that minimizes the thickness of the finished tile floor.
- **Wall niches.** Scavenge space from wall cavities with niches. Wall niches can come in stainless steel or tiled. A slight slope is needed to drain water. Not only are they a décor element, they make all items more accessible.

## EDUCATE YOURSELF

Check out bathroom manufacturers' sites for your specific needs. Tubs and showers are just two of the elements to explore so that you can create your own unique fabulous bathroom. **OH**



1. **PRODUITS NEPTUNE:** Florence Freestanding Tub  
2. **CASALGRANDE PADANA:** Marmoker Nero Creta Tile  
3. **CASALGRANDE PADANA:** Marmoker Olimpo Tile  
4. **SCHLUTER:** Kerdi-Line Floor Drains  
5. **PRODUITS NEPTUNE:** Malaga Shower Tower  
6. **MIROLIN:** Cruz Acrylic Freestanding Tub  
7. **SCHLUTER:** Ditra-Heat-E-Kit



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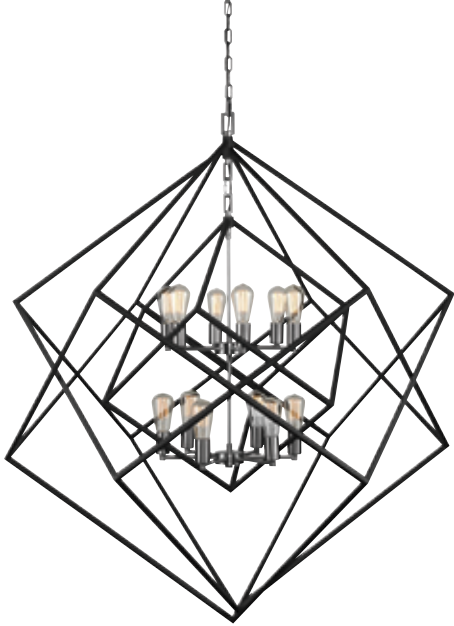
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good taste

# VEGAN *eggnog*

RECIPE AND PHOTOGRAPHY  
JENELLE MCCULLOCH



online

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An eggnog everyone can enjoy. This recipe is a play on the classic eggnog – vegan, dairy-free and made with natural sweeteners!

## INGREDIENTS

### Serves 4

2 cups cashew milk, store bought or homemade

1 cup full fat coconut milk

3 pitted dates

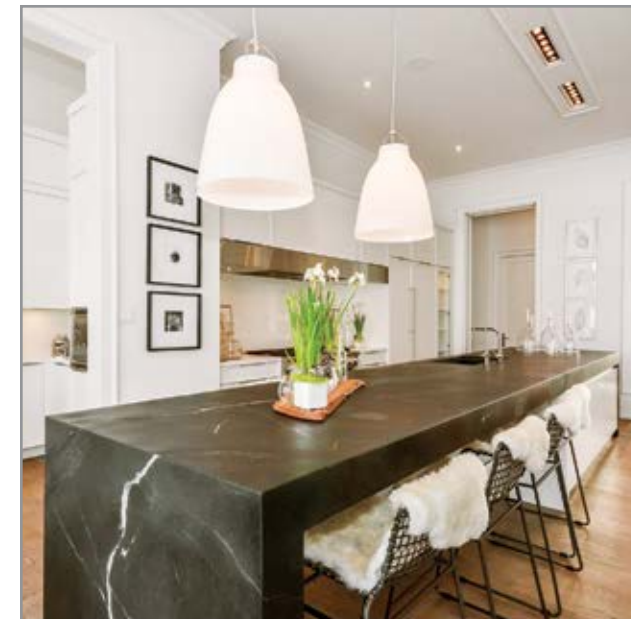
1 Tbsp maple syrup

1 vanilla pod or ½ tsp vanilla extract

Nutmeg and cinnamon to garnish

## DIRECTIONS

In a blender combine all ingredients. If using fresh vanilla, slice pod lengthwise and scrape out seeds. Blend on high. Strain through a fine mesh strainer. Chill for 1-2 hours before serving. Sprinkle with nutmeg and cinnamon to taste. **OH**



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### TOOLS & MATERIALS

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Permanent marker (we used a gold Sharpie)

### DIRECTIONS

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Using permanent marker, write or print name or message.  
Let tile sit until completely dry, about 1 hour.  
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## LIGHT BULB PLACE CARD

### TOOLS & MATERIALS

Large holiday string light bulbs  
Acrylic paint in your choice of colour  
Paintbrush  
Sealant (we used Mod Podge)  
Marker in contrasting colour (we used silver, black and gold)  
Waxed paper  
Twine or ribbon  
Glue  
Tiny trinkets for decoration

### DIRECTIONS

Cover workspace with waxed paper. Apply two coats of paint to the glass of each light bulb, allowing to dry between coats. Coat painted area of bulb with sealant.  
When dry, write or print names on bulb using marker. Wrap bulb stems with twine or ribbon and glue in place. Decorate with bows and/or trinkets. **OH**



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PHOTOGRAPHY **JASON HARTOG**

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Continued on page 26





Festive touches in the kitchen maintain the holiday feel throughout the home. **RIGHT:** An open area between the kitchen and great room creates the perfect dining space.



The traditional kitchen beckons guests for cosy holiday gatherings.



Sitting down with OUR HOMES one Sunday morning to give us the low-down on their big, beautiful house, Nelly and Derek Christensen could be a poster couple for the fashion forward. Nelly rocks a pair of high, chunky, sparkly silver shoes. It is just after 9 a.m., an hour when most of us are not obsessing about what socks to wear, but Derek's are perfectly matched to complement his pink paisley shirt. It stands to reason then that the couple's home – 7,500 square feet on 40 acres in North Burlington – would be just as stylish. But hang on a minute, stylish it is, “a show home it isn't,” says Derek. “We have four kids, including a foster child and two dogs. It's a home for family and friends

and we like to live in it. The kids and I do hoverboard on the main floor, so there are plenty of nicks and dents on the baseboards.” The house took six years to build, and the couple were quite frugal. They bought wholesale when possible. Kijiji finds are paired with auction or garage sale finds. Although they lead busy lives, they did a lot of the work themselves. When it comes to the holidays, Nelly and Derek, who aren't phased by entertaining 300 people, simply pick up the pace. In 2017, the Junior League of Hamilton-Burlington asked them to put their home on the **Annual Holiday House Tour of Distinctive Homes**.

For two days, the family moved out and the Junior League's team of decorators moved in. They rearranged furniture, added pieces and worked like elves to get it done on time. **Holland Park** added fresh greens to the entry, staircase and living room, scenting the home with evergreen. “When we came back to see the house two days later, I couldn't believe it was our home,” says Nelly. “It was so beautiful and it really felt like Christmas.” *Continued on page 28*



feature



The dining table shines with sparkle and glam.

**LEFT:** The dining room is layered with red, white and green decorations, creating a fresh, romantic and elegant space. **BELOW:** Beautiful blue takes centre stage in the two-storey great room.

The striking, chateau-like exterior boasts numerous turrets. **Festive Decor** outlined the shape with hundreds of white lights to let the house tell its own architectural story at night. Elegant containers overflowing with fresh greens and decked out with red velvet ribbon grace the steps leading to the mahogany front door.

Inside, Derek laid the hardwood himself. The older kids pitched in, gluing and hammering, with the promise that they could use the money they'd save for a trip to Walt Disney World. "Our motto is do it yourself, if you can," says Derek. The dining room's accent wall is another DIY project. Nelly found shades she liked in the returns section at the paint store, purchased stencils online and watched a YouTube video on how to do it. The stunning five-foot teardrop crystal chandelier over the table cost \$2.00 at a garage sale.

In the kitchen, the table was painted, and Nelly made her own chalk paint. "If you look closely, it's not perfect," she says. **Style Expressions Staging** and **Dal's Home Furnishings** were the creative muses behind the staging of the family room with its 25-foot ceiling. Rich jewel tones in hues of blue were an upbeat choice for a space that, next to the kitchen, would see most of the holiday entertaining.

*Continued on page 30*



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Ardent entertainers, Derek and Nelly loved the **The Casual Gourmet**'s holiday touches in their kitchen. "We love wine, cheese and fresh bread, so the long wooden serving boards edged with sparkling pine cones and cedar garlands really appealed to us," says Nelly. The kitchen, with its fireplace, dark wood and furniture-finish cabinetry, is quite traditional. The look works well with the vintage stoneware serving bowls on display. The travertine floor tiles were a Kijiji find. "The kitchen, in fact the whole house, smelled of fresh evergreens and a touch of cinnamon for weeks," says Derek.

Upstairs, the master bedroom is a light-filled space with french doors leading out to a balcony. Designer **Coreen Neal** of **AGD Interior Design & Decorating** was charged with layering a go-glam or go-home attitude onto its creamy canvas. The elegant jacquard-style comforter is the statement piece from which all colours, textures and patterns in the room evolved. Hung by the chimney with care are two pretty Christmas stockings. Silky cushions, faux-fur pillows, wool blankets and throws soften the design, because even during the holidays it's a room meant for relaxing. The large patterned rug, courtesy of **Rugs Bed & Bath Home Décor** is a perfect design anchor. In the master bathroom, the deep blue wall made a crisp backdrop for white Christmas décor. We have to mention the shoe closet off the master. For those who are shoe-obsessed, the word joy, prominently displayed on the windowsill, says it all.

**Josette Giacalone** of **JAG Design Group** created a whimsical storybook wonderland in another bedroom with swings covered in faux fur. It's a fun, magical holiday oasis. *Continued on page 32*

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Elements of shine were added to the ultra-glam master bedroom. **ABOVE:** The fireplace is the perfect canvas to dress for Christmas. **TOP:** Silver accents complement the beautiful blue in the en suite.



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Silver and gold add glamour to a pretty soft pink bedroom. **TOP LEFT:** Pink and grey elevate the luxe feel of the en suite. **TOP RIGHT:** Like stepping into a fairy tale, whimsical touches create a storybook wonderland. Josette Giacalone of JAG Design Group created this room.

So why do couples like Nelly and Derek open their house for a tour like this, knowing that plenty of people are going to traipse through their personal space over three days? “It’s fun, you have professionals doing the work, it’s interesting to see your own house through other people’s eyes because it makes you appreciate what you have and most important, it was for a really good cause,” Nelly says.

ABOUT THE JUNIOR LEAGUE OF HAMILTON-BURLINGTON’S ANNUAL HOLIDAY HOUSE TOUR OF DISTINCTIVE HOMES  
For the people of the community with unmet critical needs, the Junior League of Hamilton-Burlington acts as a bridge of hope by providing the gift of leadership, resources and solutions to empower individuals. In the true spirit of Christmas, proceeds from the Annual Holiday House Tour are used to help the league meet their goals. Contact Dianne Brown, House Tour Co-Chair, if you would like to offer your home for next year’s tour. Email her at [giftbaskets@divine-presents.com](mailto:giftbaskets@divine-presents.com). **OH**

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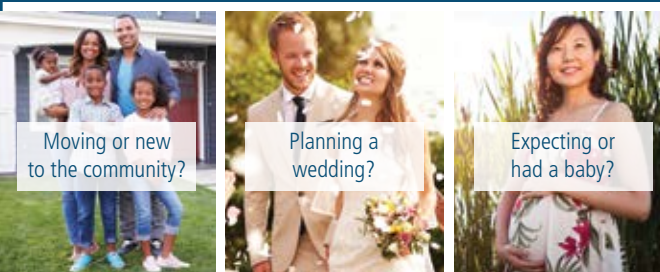
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# DOUBLE DUTY

Where there's space, there's opportunity. This home needed a small office and the right place just happened to be in the bedroom. Designer Lisa Canning details her design and offers tips on how to create a multi-use space in a master bedroom.

STORY **LISA CANNING**  
PHOTOGRAPHY **DANN TARDIFF**

## 1 Designate a spot for the office

Once you've found the spot, plan your design. I opted for custom millwork to utilize every square inch of storage I could. Going custom allowed us to paint the desk this gorgeous turquoise colour, Benjamin Moore Waterfall. Take note of the brass, hand-cast cabinet pulls from Shayne Fox – they're like jewelry on this desk. The chair is from CoreChair.



Furniture can also pull double duty: under-the-bed drawers provide storage for extra bed linens.

## 2 Find the perfect bed

Everyone deserves a beautiful bed. After a hard day a beautiful bed is worth the investment. This bed with its tufted, wingback headboard is from Wayfair and it offers great value with storage. A beautiful bed needs a quality mattress. Here we used the award-winning Casper Mattress. I also chose Casper's sheet and duvet set in a crisp white.

## 3 Add your personality

This is important, regardless of the kind of space you are creating. It has to reflect you and your unique personality. Here I just had to add elements like the Metrie door painted Benjamin Moore Yellow Highlighter. To ensure this was the focal point, we kept the adjacent sliding closet doors in white to ensure some balance. Again, to ensure the space didn't feel too overwhelming with all the vibrant pops, I wrapped the room in Metrie's tongue and groove shiplap panelling and painted it Benjamin Moore Decorator's White. I love interior mouldings. They provide such a beautiful textural element to any space.

## 4 Get cosy

Every bedroom needs to feel cosy and comfortable, which is why I added ample blankets and pillows in a variety of textures, all within our colour palette to stay harmonious, and displayed them on the ladder. Lighting also makes a big impact in the room. I added a stunning modern chandelier that adds an architectural element. Lastly, add some fun accessories. The ladder, chandelier, tray and pen are all from Bouclair. **OH**



Design elements come together to make this shared bedroom and home office cohesive.





STORY **TAMARISK MCNALT STEPHENS**

# BUILDING A NEW HOME

Part 1: Lessons learned

OUR HOMES Managing Editor and Interior Designer (I) Tamarisk McNalty Stephens and her husband are in the midst of building a new home in Grey County. She shares the dos, the don'ts and the best practices she's learned along the way. The number one lesson? Be prepared to make dozens more decisions than expected.



*Hire professionals. Their experience is invaluable when it comes to architectural and interior design.*

## PLANNING

**DO:** Evaluate your needs. We lived in a small cabin on our property for five years. This experience taught us what was actually important to us – insulation and enough space to entertain friends and family – and the things we could live without, like a basement and an en suite bathroom.

Hire professionals when it comes to the architectural and interior design of your home. Experience is invaluable especially if it's your first time building. Professionals can help bring your vision to life.

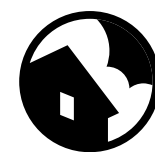
Decide on a budget figure that you are comfortable with and speak to your bank early to arrange financing.

## PERMITS

**DO:** Talk to all authorities having jurisdiction early. Your local municipality's planning department will have by-laws that apply to the planned structures and all associated parameters, setbacks, etc. Our project is located within the catchment area of the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority, and it took several months to receive the final approvals.

Submit a complete application when applying for your building permit to avoid delays.

**DON'T:** Forget to contact your insurance company to get builder's insurance for the duration of construction. *Continued on page 38*



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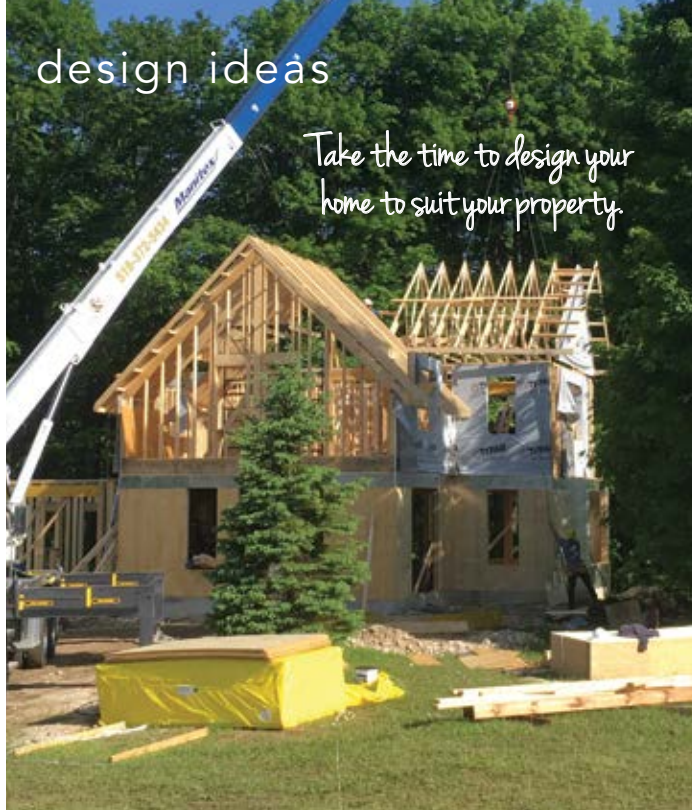


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## design ideas

Take the time to design your home to suit your property.



Consider various levels of lighting – general, accent and task – to create an inviting space and wire for it even if you don't intend to use it right away. It's easier and cheaper to do this before the drywall is installed.

**DON'T:** Rush the design phase. It takes a lot of thought and consideration to get a home that has a layout that meets your needs and is also aesthetically appealing from both the exterior and interior.

### COSTS

**DO:** Request quotes from two suppliers, which is generally sufficient. It is time consuming for suppliers to quote a job/project, so be mindful of that.

Decide where you want to splurge and where you can save. For me, the exterior presence of the home is really important. I didn't want to compromise on the exterior finishes (windows, doors and siding).

Create a spreadsheet to track expenditures and stick to the budget as best you can.

**DON'T:** Forget to include development fees when calculating the approximate cost of your building permit – they might be an unwelcome surprise.

### CHANGES

**DO:** Make sure you are able to devote the time required if you are taking on the project management. It involves being on site and scheduling trades and deliveries, pricing and ordering plus managing the budget.

**DON'T:** Make changes on site without considering the implications. Changes will invariably happen as the build progresses and it is important to be mindful of how these changes will impact other elements of the build. **OH**



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## DESIGN

**DO:** Design a home to suit your unique property. Each site will have natural restrictions, but take the time to consider the views and natural light, the location of outbuildings, where you'd like future gardens and outdoor living areas or a pool. Map out the footprint of the home in the proposed location. Morning sun is very important to me, and in our initial site I realized that I didn't have morning sun hitting the house until about 10 a.m. – that just wasn't going to work!

Pay special attention to the layout of doors and windows. It can be desirable for interior doors to align with windows.

Purchase the best quality windows that your budget will allow. Windows are a detail that are often overlooked, and aside from their thermal rating, they can truly make or break the overall exterior appeal and aesthetic of a home.

Think about kitchen and bathroom design, electrical layout, the switching plan and a furniture layout early on so you have all of the answers when your trades are ready to go. Select your appliances early, so, for example, you can plumb water to your fridge if you have an integrated water dispenser/ice maker.

Think about heating and cooling options early. Walk through with a mechanical contractor to understand how they need to run their duct work so you will know where you'll have bulkheads and registers.

Try to anticipate and integrate structural elements such as dropped beams and/or bulkheads needed to house mechanical equipment into the design – they could become an unexpected feature.

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STORY **GINA MAKKAR** | PHOTOGRAPHY **JASON HARTOG**

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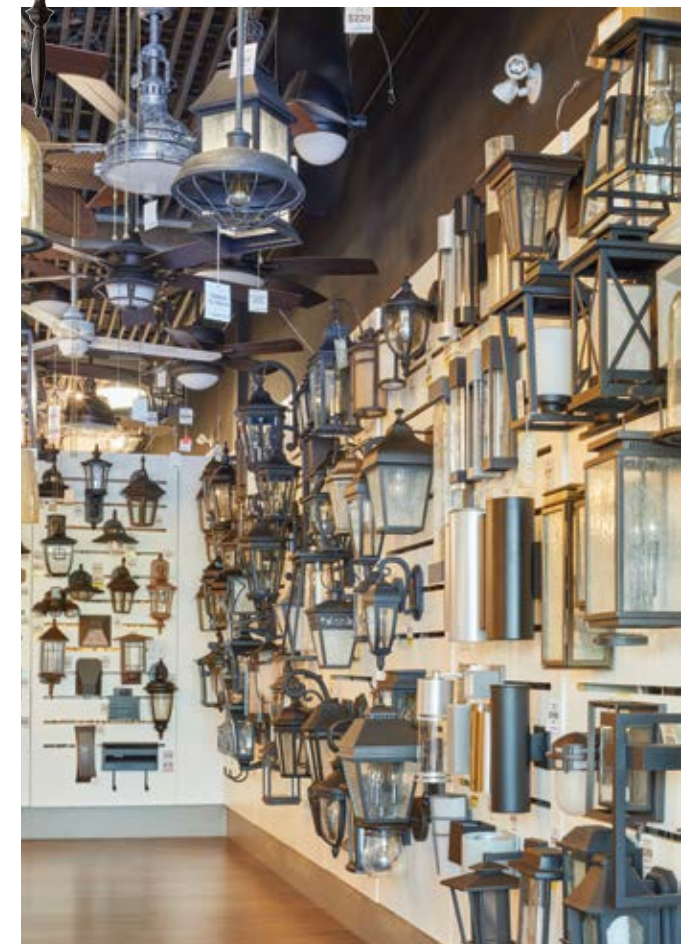


**WHAT'S TRENDING:** The best lighting design is one that a client loves and works best in their space. Modern options favour simple lines for a minimalist look. Mid-century and Art Deco pieces are making a comeback, with clean lines, unique designs and a balance of form and art. Mixed metals, like soft silver and gold, bring warmth for a mellow aesthetic that blends effortlessly with any kind of décor, from rustic to urban. The sparkle of a crystal chandelier is timeless and elegant.

**LED NEWS:** More and more homeowners are making the change to LED lighting for its power and money-saving benefits. Though they offer great savings in the long run, the downside to LEDs is the cost, but prices are becoming more competitive as technology advances and more homeowners hop on board.

**WHAT'S IMPORTANT:** The right choice in lighting changes from room to room. What works in a living room or dining room will not necessarily work in a kitchen or bedroom. The right lighting choice will reflect the function and feel of each individual space.

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# For the Birds – Suet



Whether your feathered friends are fall migrants or year-round residents, augmenting their diets with high-quality calories found in suet will help them survive and thrive.

Making homemade suet is about as easy as making hummingbird nectar. It's also more rewarding, affordable and often healthier than purchasing commercially made cakes, bells or blocks. Plus, making suet at home allows you to customize the ingredients to appeal to the specific birds in your yard as well as those you wish to attract.

Suet can be moulded into all sorts of shapes, allowing for personal creativity.



### SIMPLE SUET RECIPE

1 cup rendered suet (tallow)

1 cup chunky organic nut or seed butter of choice

1/2 cup wheat or quinoa flour

When it comes to making suet, the more natural, organic and local the food ingredients are, the healthier the results are for the birds. A homemade suet blend is also free from nasty preservatives and fillers.

Start by purchasing rendered plain suet cakes or chunks from a wild bird supply store, garden centre, butcher shop or pet store. These cakes can be used as-is or can be melted down and used in more specialized suet recipes. You can also save beef fat left over from cooking to make homemade tallow (rendered suet). Once you have saved enough to make the batch size of your choice, just add a bit of water and let it simmer on the stove for a few hours until it turns a golden brown. Then strain the liquid fat with cheesecloth to remove any contaminants and the resulting liquid will be beef tallow. Use it right away or store in the fridge or freezer.

Suet recipes need not be complicated in order to attract a range of hungry fowl.

- 1 Melt the suet and nut butter together until they are smooth and liquid.
- 2 Add the flour, mixing well. Allow the mixture to cool slightly to thicken, then pour it into moulds, containers, muffin liners, plastic wrap or foil as needed for desired shape.
- 3 Refrigerate or freeze suet until it is firm and ready to use. Extra suet may be kept frozen until needed.



## Make It More Tempting

While a simple bird suet recipe is a great starting point, adding other ingredients to the mixture before it cools will make it more tempting to birds. Through experimentation you'll discover what your local birds find the most appetizing. These customizable ingredients include:

- Organic and unsalted/unseasoned/raw chopped nuts of choice
- Sunflower seed chips or other shelled seeds (many birds cannot extract the seeds encased with shells once fat is introduced).
- Organic dried fruit and berries
- Mealworms or crickets (my home bird populace goes crazy for these!)

Suet can be moulded into all sorts of interesting shapes leaving lots of room for personal creativity in your own bird buffet offerings. Given my personal affinity toward natural Christmas décor, my favourite way to display suet is by using a large pine cone that I run a stick through the middle of and attach with twine (the stick acts as a perch). I then smush the suet mixture on and into the pine cone and freeze it to set. I add a pretty double twine and ribbon combo to the top of the pine cone for hanging and voila, it's a gorgeous, natural and edible outdoor Christmas ornament. Bring on the birds! **OH**



**TIP:** To avoid attracting unwanted rodents, only put out enough suet for birds to consume in one day. This will also help the suet stay fresh.



STORY **JOYCE TURNER-GIONET** | PHOTOGRAPHY **KELLY HORKOFF**

# CHRISTMAS COMES *Early*

THE 2017 ANNUAL  
MILTON UNITED WAY  
HOLIDAY HOUSE TOUR

“The holiday season for us is all about entertaining and creating a warm, inviting ambience so that our guests feel the magic that comes along with the holidays. We love to entertain and welcome both family and friends to celebrate. We often host multiple parties to ensure we spend as much time as possible celebrating with those we love. As this was our first Christmas in our new home, we were so blessed to have found **Diane Mackay** from **Rivercroft Interiors** who understood what we wanted to achieve and created the perfect winter wonderland theme that flowed inside and out. She created the most magical backdrop that made for an unforgettable Christmas for our little boys and loved ones who shared the season with us.”

– Homeowners *Airikka Passmore*  
& *Michael Nicholls*

*Continued on page 49*



The Rivercroft Interiors team: Owners Brittany Nagy and Diane Mackay with holiday helpers Caitlyn Clancy Orti and Kristin Weber.





The dining room is aglow with warm light from the pretty white tree. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The servery is made festive with holiday accents. **BOTTOM LEFT:** A bar cart in gold is a glamorous, functional addition to any holiday gathering.



Greens bring the outdoors in to create a festive holiday table.



Airikka and Michael were honoured to have their house showcased on the 2017 **Milton Holiday House Tour**, an annual event that raises money for the United Way.

During the holidays, we all want to create an unforgettable ambience. Nothing enhances special moments more than a home that looks, feels and smells like Christmas. For the precious hours we celebrate together, all of our senses are engaged, and everything feels right with the world.

The holidays are a time when people like designer Diane Mackay and her talented holiday team from **Rivercroft Interiors** (Brittany Nagy, Kristin Weber, Caitlyn Clancy Orti and builder/renovator Mark Nagy) should be on speed dial. It's a wonderful time, but it

can be stressful. Stepping back and letting the professionals "have at it" is a gift in itself.

Airikka and Michael visited Diane's design studio, a converted barn overlooking a river in Milton, and were happy to have her decorate their home – a modern take on a two-storey red-brick Georgian. "Airikka and Michael liked the vibe of Rivercroft and wanted to incorporate its rustic glam into their holiday decorating. They have a young family and a dog, so whatever we did had to be liveable and not overly precious. But as one of six homes on the tour, it also needed to wow visitors," Diane says. "As a design firm, we also had to show visitors how to incorporate different elements into their holiday decorating and have it all blend tastefully." *Continued on page 50*



Simple additions, like pine cones and pretty white trees, help tie the kitchen into the rest of the decorated spaces. **TOP RIGHT:** A live-edge serving board creates a wintry feel.




feature

At the front of the home, the walkway was lined with beautifully arranged birch and evergreen-scented candles, a Rivercroft signature item. White lights cradled in garlands of pine and cedar lit the windows. Birch branches arched over the front entrance. Diane described it as “simple and elegant.” All the greens were fresh and real – just completely natural. The house is set in a rural backdrop that stretches for acres, so the natural theme was appropriate for the setting. She carried the theme indoors, accenting the fresh greens and rustic elements with a few main colours – white, black, silver and various shades of blue.

Of all the beautiful rooms, the sitting room was Diane’s favourite to decorate. She brought in nail-studded black velvet chairs and a rustic black wood table. Black stockings trimmed with

creamy faux fur were hung against the white fireplace mantel for dramatic contrast. Arrangements of salal leaves and eucalyptus added a festive feel and a fresh minty scent. “I love using salal at the holidays, it’s lush and pretty,” says Diane. Although decorating with fresh materials can be expensive, salal is easy to work with; it winds easily around stair railings or doorways and its lustrous shine adds a special magic. As an added bonus, it’s relatively inexpensive. A 10-foot white flocked tree from Rivercroft was dressed from tip-to-toe in white and silver. Decorative white antlers, faux-fur cubes, silver candelabras and pillows in hues of blue, grey and silver complete the effect. A three-tiered silver tray of cookies (baked and wrapped by the Rivercroft team) was left on display – not for Santa, for visitors. *Continued on page 52*





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Reviews:  





It's cosy and warm with the addition of chunky blankets and faux fur accents. **BELOW:** The entryway is made pretty with wrapped gifts and the glow of a pretty white tree.



In the dining room, the table was set with Airikka's white porcelain dishes. A grey velvet table runner showcased a centre arrangement of eucalyptus branches and birch accents. Silk ribbon was added to each dining room chair. Pine cones and white boxwood-and-berry wreaths made a statement against the dark oak interior doors. The centre staircase was wrapped in salal, and each tread held a scented candle. In the living room, a flocked Christmas tree held a sparkling array of blue ornaments, including Disney ornaments (the family are fans!). Traditional nutcrackers sat

next to glass jars and champagne glasses filled with glittering silver and blue balls. It's all about the details for designers. Since the entrance presented a stunning intro to the home, there had to be an equally fab finale. As visitors exited, they passed through an enchanting arbour of lit birch trees. A live-edge table was strewn with homemade treats, including marshmallows. Wool and faux-fur blankets and cushions were tossed on easy chairs, and birch logs crackled in the firepit, with the requisite marshmallow sticks painted a festive white. *Continued on page 54*



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~ Trisha Murray Ross, Principal Designer





**TOP:** Stay outdoors a little longer with the warmth of a fire and soft wintry throws. **LEFT:** Decorative accents can be brought outdoors to help set the scene.

*A s'mores station makes winter festivities merry and bright.*



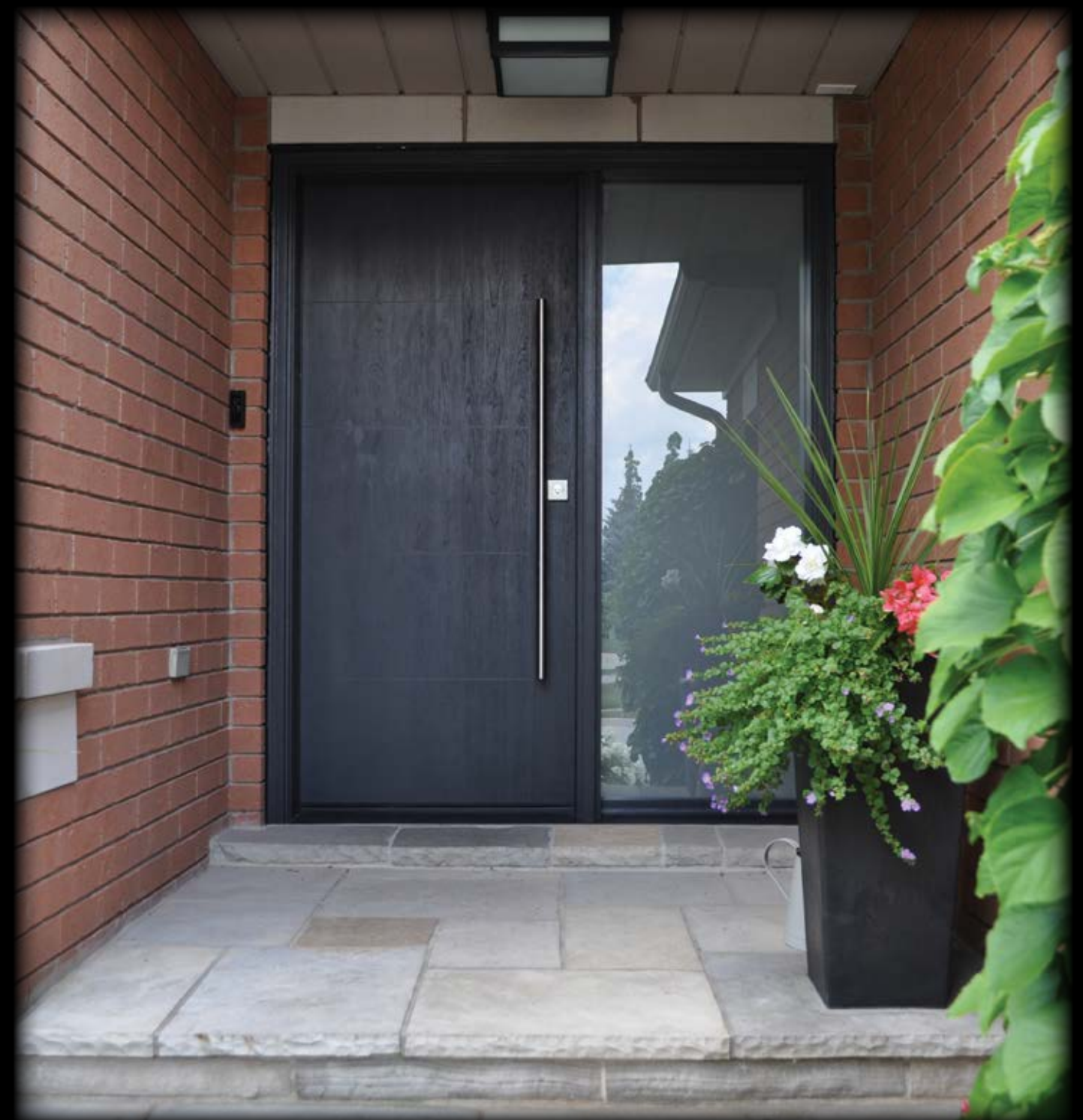
The homeowners and professional decorators on the tour volunteer their time and talent to help raise money for The United Way of Milton. Kudos to homeowners Airikka and Michael and to the team at Rivercroft for their talent, enthusiasm and unforgettable holiday decorating tips, and for embracing the true meaning and spirit of the holidays.

\*All furnishings and décor items provided by Rivercroft Interiors.

**ABOUT THE MILTON HOLIDAY HOUSE TOUR**  
All money raised from tickets sold in the Milton Holiday House Tour stays in Milton. Proceeds contribute resources to the community and the 29 agencies funded by The United Way, which provides services to area residents. **OH**

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# SENIORITY GOES HIGH-TECH

STORY **WALTER FRANCZYK** | ILLUSTRATION **SHEILA BRITTON**

Aging at home in the digital age can be a challenge as well as an interesting adventure that enhances and prolongs independent living. When it comes to adopting modern conveniences that help people live at home as long as possible, age-appropriate technology is essential.

Most seniors, already enjoying their retirement years, prefer low-tech, easy-to-use solutions, says Heather Mahon, who owns Heather's Home Healthcare, a medical equipment and supplies store that promotes independent living.

Low-tech solutions could include something as simple as soft rubber covers that slip over kitchen and bathroom taps, making them easier to turn. A portable phone or a cell phone, taken into the bathroom during showers or baths, is a simple safety measure. "If you fall, you can call 911," says Heather.

An ever-expanding universe of digital technology promises benefits unheard of when today's seniors bought their first homes. Retirement is an excellent

opportunity to explore emerging technology and to learn about computers, the internet, digital devices and all they have to offer. Technology is used in every facet of life to make tasks easier and faster, according to Aging in Place, a resource hub for seniors and families. "It's important not to underestimate how technology can help you in your golden years," the organization advises.

When travelling to see family and friends gets too difficult due to inclement weather, distance or mobility issues, people can keep in touch through email, text messages or live video links such as FaceTime and Skype. Simple training in using computers, smartphones and tablets is available through local libraries, recreation departments or seniors organizations.

Medical alert services, often the first aging at home improvement, are also easy to use. They typically provide clients with a small help button that can be worn as a pendant around the neck or on the wrist. Someone in need of help can simply push the button to



reach a monitoring service. Some systems have the ability to detect falls. With the home phone turned into a speaker phone, the monitoring centre can call the customer. "If they don't respond, they're going to call an ambulance," says Heather. Monitoring is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. "They don't care how often you press that button. They're there," she says.

With voice commands, mobile digital assistants such as Apple's Siri or Amazon Echo's Alexa can be used to find out the weather or traffic conditions, to send an email, make a phone call and more.

People with complex medical conditions that require multiple medications can take advantage of new technologies that help ensure they take their pills as prescribed. For example, a heart transplant recipient who takes more than two dozen pills every day uses an app called Medisafe to remind him what pill he should take, at what time and whether he should take it with food or water. The application for tablets or smartphones can be programmed to alert a designated relative or caregiver if someone has forgotten to take medication.

Spencer Heath Solutions has taken a step further and developed a medication dispenser. About the size of a toaster, it can be placed on a kitchen counter. It doles out pre-packaged doses of the right medication at the right time, as prescribed. It alerts users when its time to take medicine and can remind them when they've forgotten. The device can also alert caregivers and pharmacists when someone has missed taking medication.



Window shades can be automated to open and close and temperature can be adjusted remotely from a smartphone.



## THE SMART HOME

Sarah Love and her husband Stewart operate a Burlington company called PM WYRE that automates homes and cottages. Many of their customers are age 60 or older. "A lot of them are people who are building their retirement home and they're looking to stay at home forever," Sarah says. "So we work with the builder to provide a variety of solutions to make their home safer as they age."

A critical care nurse for 15 years, she worked closely with home care services in getting people home after they were discharged from hospital. "I think I bring a unique perspective," she says. The couple work with clients to design smart homes to be exactly what homeowners want. PM WYRE can install sound and television systems, security systems, panic alarms and sensors that detect whether their sump pump is working or if water is leaking into the basement. They can install a camera if homeowners want family to visually check on them via smartphone or computer. Doorbells can be equipped with a camera to show, on the home television, who's at the door. "The client will hit it and see if they want to get up and answer the door," Sarah says.

"We work with clients to develop light pathways. So, for example, if they frequently get up and use the bathroom, we can do a pathway of light that's set at 10 per cent or 20 per cent that's on at night from their bedroom to the bathroom. And when they get to the bathroom, we can put in an occupancy sensor in the bathroom so the light goes on. When they leave, it automatically goes off."

In bedrooms or other rooms, window shades can be automated to rise in the morning and descend in the evening, so homeowners aren't struggling to get behind furniture to open and close shades, she explains. Lighting can also be automated to turn on and off when homeowners want. The house can be programmed so when homeowners leave, they can press one button and the security system engages, shades descend and lights adjust to leave on only those that are necessary. When owners come home and punch in their key code on the door or their smartphone, the security system automatically disarms and lights come on at appropriate settings and locations. The door code can even turn on their favourite music or radio station.

The systems are user-friendly and not difficult to learn, Sarah says. "Our objective is to make it as simple as possible for our clients." **OH**

Medical alert devices and mobile digital assistants can allow seniors to live independently for as long as possible.



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# A Space THAT Sings

Expert tips help your home come alive with a symphony of sound, colour and texture.

PHOTOGRAPHY JASON HARTOG



## SARAH LOVE PM WYRE

**Tell us about PM WYRE:** PM WYRE designs and installs customized easy-to-use technology solutions to enhance the design and function of your home.

**What's new and exciting in the market?** We love Samsung's new lineup of QLED TVs and The Frame TV. Your television no longer has to be a big black blob on the wall, it becomes a piece of art! We are also excited about Seura's Smart Vanity mirrors that function as touch screens. These can be programmed to display your favourite TV channel, your calendar and your daily agenda.

**Advice to clients looking for home automation?** Integrate! Today there are apps for everything from doorbells to blinds, but these are largely one-off solutions that don't talk to one another. We have the expertise to integrate all your technology into one system, allowing you to manage your technology simply from one place on your device – at home or remotely. And an integrated system like those by Crestron allows for modifications to your system as new technologies emerge or as your needs change.

## MAINA MAZZUOCCO & CAROLYN COWAN *Salnek's Custom Window Treatments*

**Tell us about Salnek's Custom Window Treatments:** We are your local one-stop shopping destination for custom window coverings. Over the past 30 years, we have grown our locations to include Burlington, Dundas, mid-town Toronto, Markham, Barrie and Collingwood and we employ more than 25 consultants. Our products range from blinds, shutters and custom drapery to motorization and automation.



**What's new and exciting in coverings?** Motorization and automation offer comfort with ease of use. More people are choosing to enhance their window treatments with motorized blinds, shades and draperies. The sheer convenience is matched by their home-security benefits, but they offer many other features as well that delight the homeowners who purchase them. Best of all, they are more affordable than ever.

**Advice to clients looking for custom window treatments:** Plan ahead for seamless window coverings. Whether you are looking for privacy, light and sound control or energy-efficient window coverings, our team will guide and advise you from the initial consult to the final installation.

*Continued on page 60*



MARIE IANNACE,  
STEVE POXON &  
HILARY BARICHELLO  
*Shades of Home*

**Tell us about Shades of Home:** Everyone says it, most people wish for it and we get to live it: we love what we do. We love helping clients personalize their space, their home, their castle with window coverings. We love giving clients a designer look that wows their friends and family. We especially love it when clients come back to us or refer their friends and family.

**What's trending?** Motorized window coverings continue to be in demand. With Smart devices and voice-activated systems from Amazon, Google and Apple, clients can control window coverings, lighting and sound without investing in a stand-alone home automation system. Costs are decreasing and systems are easily upgraded without purchasing new hardware.

**What should clients consider when choosing coverings?** Consider resale value with functional treatments in neutral tones, and add personality, texture and colour with drapery, sheers or Romans. Think about the private spaces (bedrooms), casual areas (family rooms), formal spaces (living and dining rooms), each with different needs and functions. Whether looking for a designer look or something functional, we have a variety of options and suppliers to choose from.

*Continued on page 62*



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# Great EXPECTATIONS

STORY **CATALINA MARGULIS**  
PHOTOGRAPHY **JASON HARTOG**

Opening up the walls offers beautiful sight lines to the outdoors. A mural of the Palace of Versailles makes the room feel vast.

*THIS YEAR'S OAKVILLE PRINCESS MARGARET LOTTERY HOME IS TRULY DRESSED TO IMPRESS.* Continued on page 68





There's a theatrical feel to the latest **Princess Margaret Cancer Centre Home Lottery** home in Oakville. From the French-inspired facade to the Château de Versailles mural spanning the living room wall, this home is certainly all about grand gestures.

While the 7,050 sq. ft. home sits on a quiet corner in southeast Oakville, on an early fall day, the location is buzzing as visitors stop in for a peek at this year's Princess Margaret Lottery grand prize, and it doesn't disappoint.

"It's one of the top neighbourhoods in the GTA," says builder **Carlos Jardino**, owner of **PCM Inc.**, of the tree-lined setting. "The area

offers great value."

Upon arrival, the facade draws attention, with an entry flanked by french doors and a courtyard at the front of the house.

"I love the courtyard entrance – it's very welcoming and warm," says the home's architect, **Richard Wengle**. "There's symmetry along the facade, which lends a sense of history, but it's also very transitional inside, which is part of Brian Gluckstein's magic, and what contributes to the comfort of the home. It's a very elegant, timeless design, while inside is of the moment."

Once inside, the home's many windows

and open-concept design allow for maximum natural light, creating a bright, airy space.

"When you come in the front door, you can see all the way down the hall to the kitchen and family room," says designer **Brian Gluckstein** of **Gluckstein Design**. "When I design a house, I'm always thinking about sight lines and the connection between rooms. There really are beautiful sight lines wherever you are in this house."

The living room also has french doors, looking out to the courtyard at the front of the house on one side, and out to the backyard on the other, creating a gallery feel.

*Continued on page 70*







**ABOVE:** Layers of fabric and a tufted, upholstered headboard create softness in the master. **TOP:** Mirrors on mirrors on mirrors throw lovely light throughout the en suite and bedroom.

A waterfall console table in the middle of the living room separates two different seating areas and adds functionality to the space, as it can be used for work, or as a place to serve food and drinks. A large photo mural of the Château de Versailles, by Tony Koukos, spans one wall, tying the home's chateau-style exterior to the interior. "It adds a wonderful element to the house," says Brian. "I love art in the space."

While the dining room is separated from the living room by a fireplace, the kitchen and family rooms look onto one another. The kitchen also features a centre island the family can pull up a stool to, as well as a breakfast nook for additional seating. **Universal Lamp** provided lighting throughout the home. **Cosentino** supplied flooring, countertop and backsplashes.

Upstairs, the master suite is found at one end of the floor, while the children's rooms are on the other, along with additional bathrooms.

The master bedroom itself features a sprawling tufted headboard and coffered ceiling, along with a walk-in closet, while the master bath boasts a show-stopping mirrored vanity and freestanding tub.

Adding to the gallery impression of the home is a two-storey hallway, featuring elegant iron railings by **Maks Iron Art**. "It's not just a corridor upstairs and a corridor downstairs," says Brian. "You can be upstairs and have this beautiful view of downstairs. It visually connects the floors and adds drama to the space."

For all the glamour and drama, there's a sense of play throughout the home as well. It's most evident in the basement, which features giant board games in the recreation room as well as a bowling alley by Buffa Distribution. "It's really about entertaining," says Brian. "There are a lot

*Continued on page 72*

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of colours, velvet swivel chairs. It's very dynamic and will be a lot of fun for whoever is in the house."

The fun continues outside, with a putting green in the backyard by **Synlawn and Garden City Groundskeeping**.

Besides the games rooms and yard, Brian's playful spirit can be spotted in the use of wallpaper, such as the zig-zag patterned Missoni wallpaper in the shared en suite upstairs. "There's a lot of wallpaper in this house," says Brian. "I wanted to show people how wallpaper can transform a space and add dimension."

The designer was also liberal in his use of drapery and window coverings throughout the home. "Put in as many windows as you can; I always love as much light as you can get – you can always put in blinds," says Brian, who adds that he likes his drapes to reach the floor. "It elevates the room and adds softness to the space and visually extends the height of the room," he says.

It all adds up to a home that is as much a showpiece as a cosy place to retreat to at the end of a long day. "The house is really well designed," says Carlos. "The layout is really great; the house has great proportions."

It's sure to make one lucky winner a very happy homeowner – and all for a good cause to boot. "I love to be able to use design for a cause, and to raise so much money for cancer research," says Brian. "It's a disease that affects all families, and whatever we can do to help, that's why we're here."

The home is part of a \$6 million Grand Prize, which also includes a 2019 Mercedes-Benz and \$1 million in cash. For showhome viewing hours and more information, including a full source guide visit [princessmargaretlotto.com](http://princessmargaretlotto.com). **OH**



**ABOVE:** Playtime is fun with a lower level bowling alley. **RIGHT:** A pretty French-inspired room can serve as a guest suite or sitting room. **TOP:** A Jack-and-Jill bathroom connects two bedrooms.



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- Mixing bowl
- Large spoon
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Large bags for tea (either reusable muslin or disposable paper tea bags will work, we've chosen 4-by-6-inch muslin bags)
- Tags (for gifts)

Continued on page 76

A large outdoor pool at sunset with a waterfall feature and lounge furniture.

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rose coconut milk  
tub tea

- 2 cups Epsom salt
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- 1 cup coconut milk powder
- 1 cup dried rose petals and buds



lavender oatmeal  
tub tea

- 2 cups Epsom salt
- 1 cup coarse Dead Sea salt
- 1 cup powdered milk
- 1 cup oats (ground in a food processor or blender)
- ½ cup dried lavender



eucalyptus thyme  
peppermint tub tea

- 2 cups Epsom salt
- 1 cup coarse Dead Sea salt
- ½ cup baking soda
- 2 Tbsp dried eucalyptus leaf
- 2 Tbsp dried peppermint
- 1 Tbsp dried thyme



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- 1 For each recipe, mix the ingredients in a large bowl and divide evenly to fill 5 tea bags.
- 2 Once filled, close each bag tightly, knot the strings and tie on a pretty tag. Store in a cool, dry place.
- 3 When it's time for a bath, toss in a tea bag while you fill the tub with water. Let tea steep for 10-15 minutes (or desired strength) before removing the bag. Happy soaking... OH

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**Penwood Furniture** has just celebrated our 25th anniversary as the area’s leading destination for real wood handcrafted furniture. We are a small family business with 3 locations and provide custom furniture for all rooms of your house.

At Penwood, we believe our customers are our strength. We pride ourselves on our customer service and after sales care.

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**34 Queen St, Morriston | 519.837.3555**  
**1242 Garner Rd W Unit 5, Ancaster | 905.648.6888**  
**info@penwoodfurniture.com**  
**penwoodfurniture.com**  
*(Please see ad on pg 21)*



EASTVIEW HOMES

**Eastview Homes** encompasses award winning designs with 25 years of on-site construction experience through the leadership of journeyman carpenters.

Whether you are building a new home, embarking on a full home addition renovation, looking to change the current floor plan, or changing the exterior facade, we have the experience needed.

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Eastview is a proud member/trade affiliations with Baeumler Group, Homestars, Trustedpros, AECON and WSIB.

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**eastviewhomes.ca**  
**905.334.0445**  
*(Please see ad on pg 37)*



FILTER

After 21 years in business in Toronto, the owners of The Queen West Antique Centre have opened a new location on Ottawa Street North in Hamilton.

**Filter** carries on the QWAC tradition of providing the public, interior designers and film industry with a carefully sourced collection of midcentury, danish modern and antique furniture and accessories.

An ever-changing inventory showcases authentic vintage pieces by designers such as Eames, Nelson, Saarinen, Wegner, Juhl, Knoll, Kuypers, Jacobsen, Baughman, Hvidt and many others.

Filter sells only authentic vintage products by the original manufacturers. No unlicensed reproductions or “knock-off” items.

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**271 Ottawa St N, Hamilton**  
**905.522.3940**  
**filter.design**  
*(Please see ad on pg 11)*



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For over 30 years, **Blind Advantage** has gained the respect from our clients for our thoughtful and innovative window covering recommendations, after sales services and expert installation.

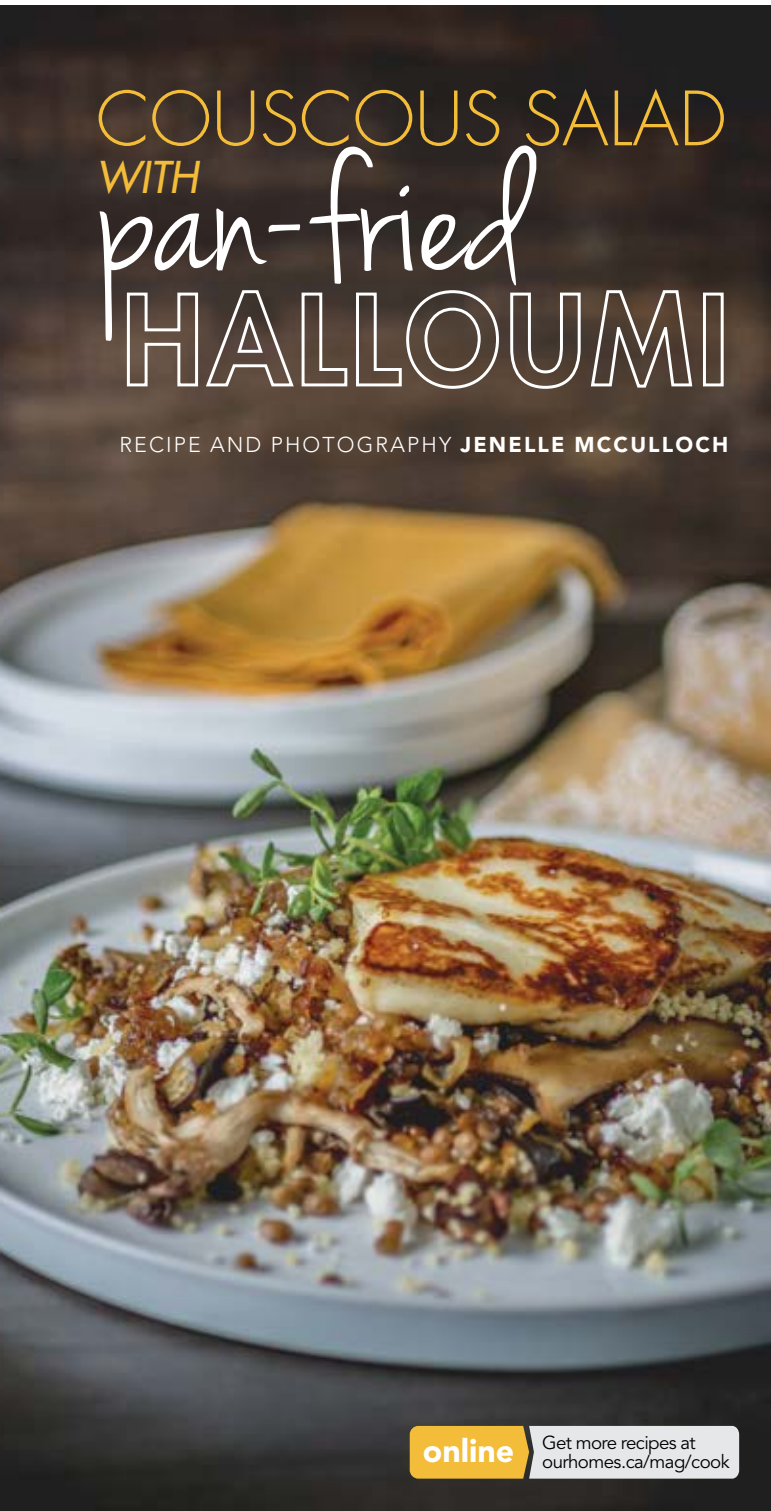
The team at Blind Advantage brings their creativity, design sense and passion into each project they work on. Whether small or large, each job is given their utmost attention, expertise and highest level of personalized service.

Most clients start by visiting the showroom to see the full range of products from **blinds, shades, shutters, draperies, home automation, luxury bedding by Eastern Accents and custom barstools by Trica**.

Or they may want to take a walk through the virtual tour online while in the comfort of their own home by visiting [blindadvantage.ca](http://blindadvantage.ca) followed by an In-home consultation, where you will be provided with their best advice suited to your needs, budget and décor style. Together with Blind Advantage – We’ll help you put it together!

**Visit Blind Advantage’s Showroom or call for an In-home Consultation**  
**905.336.5341**  
**4280 Harvester Rd, Burlington**  
**Check us out online!**  
**blindadvantage.ca**  
*(Please see ad on pg 17)*





# COUSCOUS SALAD WITH pan-fried HALLOUMI

RECIPE AND PHOTOGRAPHY JENELLE MCCULLOCH

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

This salad has deep, earthy flavours topped with smoky, salty and sweet halloumi cheese, which is made from goat's or sheep's milk.

SERVES 2

## HALLOUMI

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 pkg (250 g) halloumi cheese
- 1 Tbsp honey

Cumin and chili powder, to taste

Cut halloumi into ½-inch slices, lay on paper towel and pat dry. Season with cumin and chili powder, then drizzle with honey. Halloumi is a salty cheese, so there is no need to add more salt. The honey will balance the saltiness of the cheese and provide a caramelized crust. Set aside.

## DRESSING

### INGREDIENTS

- 3 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 Tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 1 tsp dijon mustard
- Salt and pepper, to taste

### DIRECTIONS

Combine all ingredients together in a small bowl and whisk until combined.

## SALAD

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup dry lentils
- 3 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 cup couscous
- 1 cup boiling water
- 1 large onion
- 1 Tbsp butter
- 2 Tbsp olive oil, divided
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp balsamic vinegar
- 1 eggplant, cubed
- 1 cup mushrooms of choice, sliced
- Cumin to taste
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- ½ cup feta cheese



### DIRECTIONS

Pre-soak lentils in hot water for at least 15 minutes, or up to 24 hours. Drain and rinse before use. Set aside.

Place couscous in a bowl. Pour a cup of boiling water over couscous and cover with a lid. Let stand for 5 minutes then fluff with a fork. Set aside.

Cut onion into ¼-inch slices. Add to saucepan with 1 Tbsp each of olive oil and butter. Cook slowly on medium-low heat and stir occasionally until onion reaches a golden brown colour. Add sugar and balsamic vinegar, stir and remove from heat.

Combine eggplant and mushrooms in a bowl and season with 1 Tbsp olive oil, cumin, salt and pepper. Mix thoroughly. Add mixture to frying pan over medium heat. Sauté until almost browned and add drained lentils. Cook until browned edges appear.

## TO ASSEMBLE

In a large bowl combine couscous, sauteed eggplant, mushrooms, lentils, caramelized onion and feta in a large bowl. Add dressing and season with salt and pepper to taste.

Just before plating, fry slices of halloumi in a dry pan over medium heat.

Fry and flip until both sides have a golden crust.

Plate salad and top with halloumi. **OH**



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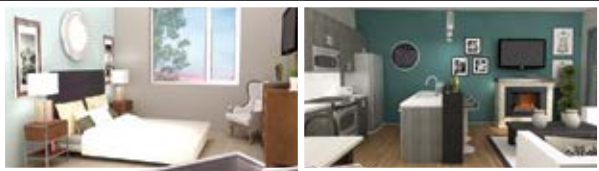
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8. KRAUS: Standart Pro 30-Inch 16 Gauge Undermount Single Bowl Stainless Steel Kitchen Sink



9. NATIVE TRAILS: Cocina 33-Inch Hand Hammered Copper Undermount Kitchen Sink in Antique Copper  
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