

feature

The house appears to rise in greeting as you ascend the large stone steps that lead from the river to the backyard. (Potted flowers from J.A. Laporte Flowers & Nursery)

RIGHT: A garden view can be enjoyed from the large terrace.



the best of BOTH WORLDS

BY ANDREA TOMKINS // PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM COCHRANE

Bernard and H el ene Marcil knew the perfect home for them would combine the benefits of city living with the tranquility of cottage life. They wanted the best of both worlds and seem to have found it... in a custom home built on the banks of the Ottawa River.

Their thoughtfully designed bungalow features two levels of spacious living complete with grand windows that showcase a gorgeous view of the river. Designed by **Denis Laporte** and built by **Lemay Homes** in 2001, this home features two finished levels of open concept living. The main floor encompasses a large living and formal dining area and a stylish kitchen.

Open concept living might be a challenge to some, but the Marcils say they are happy with the design. "It isn't the ideal place for little children," laughs H el ene, referring to hardwood flooring and high ceilings, which echo every word and footstep. "But we love it here." H el ene says she likes the open feel of the home's design. "At first we thought about a raised counter in the kitchen to act as a barrier, but we changed our minds," she says. In fact they did the very opposite. The breakfast counter, the ideal place for her visiting grandchildren to colour while the grownups are busy in the kitchen making dinner, is lower than the rest of the counter. This also allows for an unobstructed view of the vast living area. *Continued on page 20*

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Strategically-placed custom windows on the home's main floor, by **Dalmen Windows and Doors**, frame the view of the river like a piece of art, while a large octagonal window placed higher up in the dining area serves the dual function of letting in plenty of natural light while minimizing the view of the neighbour's roof line. Lighting by **Multi Luminaire** illuminates the spaces the grand windows can't easily reach.

A graceful spiral staircase leads down from the main floor to the home's lower level; a space decorated in a palette of soft colours. This is where the Marcils' grandchildren watch TV and cuddle by the fireplace. Three bedrooms and one bathroom easily provide for the occasional sleeper.

Bernard and Hélène are also wine collectors and connoisseurs, and they recently had a wine cellar built in the lower level of the home. "We wanted a place where we could come and enjoy the wine," says Bernard. "We wanted to admire the wines. There's a story behind each acquisition."

Eric Schuller of **Choice Vintners** created a 1,500-bottle cellar for the Marcils where they can store and enjoy their fine vintages. Armed with an original design plan by **Sonia Grenier**, which incorporated rich warm tones and stylish decorative finishes, Schuller was able to create a gorgeous space that provided proper display, storage and climate control for the Marcils' collection. *Continued on page 22*



The main floor's open concept living space is perfect for entertaining.

RIGHT: The light airy feel of the home's main floor is accentuated by a cathedral ceiling and large picture windows.



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ABOVE: The large kitchen has an unobstructed view of the vast living area and a scene of the river beyond.

LEFT: Bernard and H el ne Marcil enjoy a glass of wine in their private wine cellar. Copper ceiling tiles and warm cherrywood add to the rich feel of this special room.

When designing a cellar, it is important to create a balance between storage and style. "With all of our design work in every cellar we do, we always try to have maximum storage and maximum display to be able to showcase the vintages properly," says Schuller. "When you're looking at designing a wine cellar you really want it to show nicely. You don't want it to just be about basic storage."

The coolness of the slate and the warmth of the wood binds the elements in a way that works for a space that could easily have given way to the practical side of storage instead of the beautiful side.

The place where the city and the country truly intersect is only steps away outside the home. One-hundred-and-fifty tons of rock was trucked in by Gilles Sarault of **Leo Sarault & Fils**, who designed and built roughly hewn stone steps, which lead from the back of the home down towards the river. It's a truly organic transition between the two; the stairs bridging the space as if the ancient riverbed itself was rising up in greeting.

Denis Br l  of **Br l  Enterprises** and Rossignol Landscaping perfected the natural feel of this outdoor space with a style of landscaping that solidifies the connection between home and water, country and city. While they enjoy their view of the river, Bernard and H el ne say they don't spend much time by the river anymore. It's mostly their children and grandchildren who take advantage of the new deck (the old one floated away - complete with furniture - after a storm) and the proximity to the water.

Regardless, it is certainly the Ottawa River that is the star of the show here. Although the vista is visible from almost every corner of every room, it's the main floor terrace that has become a favourite place to eat dinner and share a quiet glass of wine. "The sunsets are magnificent," says Bernard. "We spend a lot of time out here."

Views of the river, a glass of wine, the company of family... it's no wonder it's one of their favourite places. **OH**

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