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**RETIRED &
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Jonna's
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plus
GET IN THE SPIRIT

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pg 112 **SCRUMPTIOUS CHOCOLATE TREATS**

pg 34 **MAKE YOUR OWN GARLANDS**



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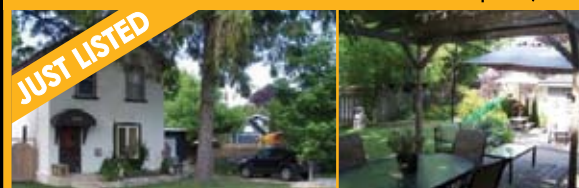
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3 Alyssa



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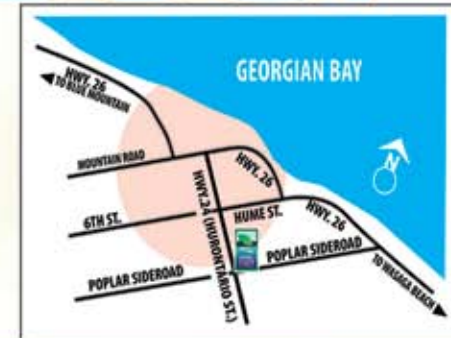
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PRETTY RIVER 28 acre private estate has the Pretty River crossing the entire property. Custom built 3600 sq. ft. 3 bedroom, 2 1/2 bath home features cathedral ceilings & a floor to ceiling stone gas fireplace. Open concept kitchen/dining area with lots of windows. Magnificent retreat located 10 minutes from the Devil's Glen Ski Club & 5 minutes to Osler bluff Ski Club. **\$1,500,000. MLS®#20124890**



UNIQUE & PRIVATE RETREAT. Custom built 2500 sq. ft. 3 bedroom, 3 bath chalet on 16 acres on the Niagara Escarpment. Forest setting overlooking Georgian Bay backing on to 900 acres of green space. Close to all amenities. Groomed trails leading to the slopes of Georgian Peaks Ski Club. Open concept main level with maple floors, floor to ceiling windows & large custom cherry kitchen. **\$1,495,000. MLS®#20125092**



ALPINE HILLS Luxurious mountain chalet. 3850 sq. ft. Architecturally designed. Loaded with character. 4 bedroom, 3 1/2 baths, wood burning fireplace, upgraded fixtures, reclaimed wood floors. Double garage with inside entry on treed lot with extensive landscaping. Winter view of Georgian Bay & ski hills. Close to Craigleith & Alpine ski clubs & Intrust village. Walk to Northwinds Beach. **\$1,450,000. MLS®#20115531**



NIPISSING RIDGE. Magnificent Post & Beam chalet custom built by Patrick Coulter & Associates. Over 7200 sq. ft. of finished space with 7 bdrms, 5 1/2 baths, towering stone wood burning fireplace, reclaimed Hemlock wood floors, gourmet kitchen. Views of Georgian Bay. Close to Craigleith, Alpine, Alpine Peaks Ski Clubs & Northwinds Beach. **\$1,950,000. MLS®#20123189**



GEORGIAN BAY CLUB Custom build 6 bdrm., 3 1/2 bath chalet by Patrick Coulter & Associates. 4000 sq. ft. of living space, soaring vaulted ceilings in the Great Room w/stone faced wood burning fireplace & 3/4" Hickory wood floors. Main floor master suite w/ gas fireplace. Stunning kitchen with quartz counters. Finished lower level w/ large family room. **\$1,550,000. MLS®#20122581**



ALLENWOOD BEACH Immaculate 4 bedroom, 2 bath, 1600 sq. ft. beachfront cottage. Open concept with skylight, wood burning fireplace, huge wraparound deck, walkout on lower level to an outdoor hot tub. Modern kitchen. **\$499,900. MLS®#20123973**



CREEKSIDE Beautiful 2 storey 3 bedroom, 3 1/2 bath home located in a desirable family oriented neighbourhood in Collingwood. Kitchen includes a pantry. Hardwood & ceramic flooring throughout the main floor with Berber carpet on the 2nd level. Fully finished & approved lower level bachelor apartment with separate entrance. **\$344,000. MLS®#20122575**



SILVER GLEN PRESERVE Immaculate end unit in Silver glen Preserve with 3 bedrooms, 2 1/2 bath. Upgraded kitchen with stainless steel appliances & a breakfast nook. Open concept dining / living area, hardwood floors & a gas fireplace. Bright fully finished basement with a 3 pc bath. Attached single car garage with inside entry. No HST!! **\$279,900. MLS®#20121014**



COLLINGWOODLANDS 5 bdrms., 3 1/2 bath French country home is located on 3 private acres. Spacious open concept floor plan is fabulours for entertaining. Great Rm. has soaring cathedral ceilings with exposed wood beams along with a limestone faced wood burning fireplace. Main level features custom wide planked Larchwood floors from Germany. Custom kitchen with heated Caribbean limestone tile floors. **\$1,495,000. MLS®#20125578**



SILVER GLEN PRESERVE Brand new end unit backing onto a well treed green space beside a parkette 2 + 1 bedroom townhouse unit with 2 ensuite bathroom. Finished lower level with 3 pc bath, walkout to spacious deck. Open concept on main level with a unique centre island counter in the kitchen. Single car garage with inside entry. **\$325,000. MLS®#20124219**



CHATEAU RIDGE .Ski-in Ski-out from Blue Mountain's Happy Valley ski run. This 2 bdrm, 2 bath end unit is the largest model with beautiful upgrades, vaulted ceilings & great views. Open concept living & dining area with main floor laundry room. You can easily walk to the Village @ Blue where you will find world class restaurants, shopping & family activities. **\$249,900. MLS®#20121104**



SIERRA WOODLANDS .Fabulous end unit. 3 bedroom, 3 bath town home back onto a protected green space, very private. Vaulted ceilings and a stone faced gas fireplace. Hardwood floors, granite counters & a custom kitchen. Huge deck off the living room. Oversized double car garage with an inside entry below. Just minutes to the Alpine Ski Club & a short walk to the Craigleith Ski Club. **\$495,000. MLS®#20124653**

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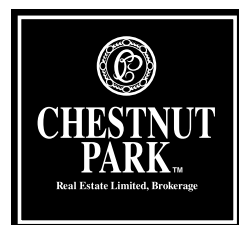
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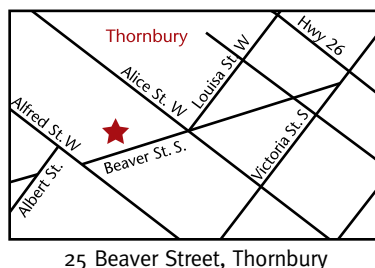
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Far Hills #14 \$324,900
3 Bdrm, 2½ bath, 1850 sq.ft,
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Rare end unit, 3 bdrm, 2½ bath,
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Views of Georgian Bay \$490,000
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cabinetry, mudroom, pool, 15 acres.



FarHills NEW 1 Bedroom \$153,900
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MLS®#20125412 **\$1,784,484**



INCREDIBLE LOCATION

5 bedroom chalet located on private, treed lot at base of Blue ski runs. Very unique property, walking distance to Village.

MLS®#20125082 **\$779,000**



ALTA SUBDIVISION

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MLS® #20125215 **\$995,000**



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Open concept main level, 3 bedrooms, 1 ½ baths. Unobstructed view of mountain from living room.

MLS® #20125069 **\$459,000**



GREAT HOME & LOCATION

Charming 1750 sq. foot home in desirable area of Collingwood. 3 bedrooms, 2 baths, 2 fireplaces, main floor master with ensuite.

MLS® #20124556 **\$369,000**



FAMILY CHALET AT BLUE

4 bedroom, 3 ½ bath 2 level chalet with finished basement. Wood burning fireplace, large deck, great view of the ski hills.

MLS® #20125226 **\$599,000**



PREMIER CHALET AT BLUE

4,000 sq. foot 4 bedroom chalet across from ski lifts & South Base. Incredible views from all rooms. Walk to Intrawest Village.

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MLS® #20124765 **\$449,000**



SNOWBRIDGE

Beautifully designed custom built home with 5 bedrooms, 3 ½ baths, 3700 sq. ft. Shuttle service to Village; use of community pool.

MLS® #20122654 **\$779,000**



SNOWBRIDGE

Stunning, custom built 6,000+ sq.foot post & beam chalet with 5 bedrooms & 5 baths. Unobstructed views of Blue Mount. ski hills & Monterra golf course.

MLS® #20122295 **\$1,249,000**



SUMMIT VIEW ESTATES

5 bedroom 3 ½ bath chalet located on a very large lot. Fieldstone wood burning fireplace, timber frame wood beams & hardwood floors.

MLS® #20125333 **\$739,000**



ORIGINAL BLUE MTN. CHALET

3 bedroom 2,000 sq. foot chalet located on large, treed lot on quiet cul-de-sac. Walk across the street to the lifts. Move in condition.

MLS® #20125492 **\$389,000**



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MLS® #20125470 **\$529,000**



SNOWBRIDGE

Stunning 5 bedroom, 4 ½ bath Post & Beam chalet backing onto 16th hole at Monterra. Beautifully finished home with many upgrades.

MLS® #20123914 **\$899,000**



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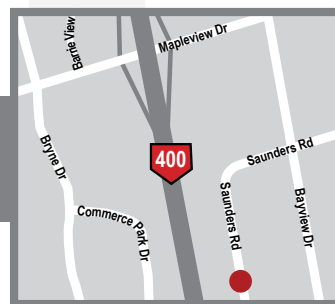
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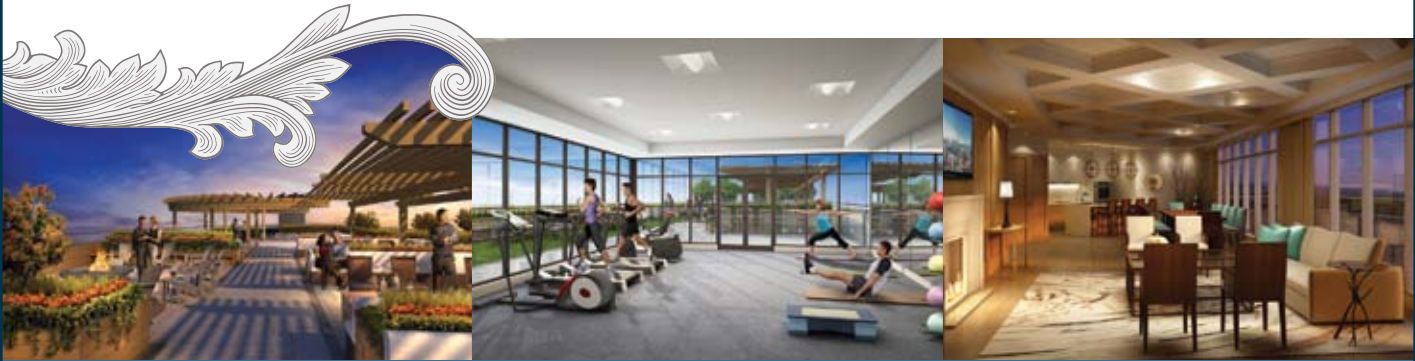


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EVERY CHRISTMAS EVE my Mom listens to The Peak FM Hospital Christmas Draw. She makes sure the house is nice and clean and that the radio's on in every room so as not to miss her name being read from one of the many ballots she purchased. As my sisters and I got a bit older, we joined in her tradition, often baking while we listened (though I'm more of an eater than a baker).

Our family has won many prizes in the draw over the years, including a drill set, a fire extinguisher and an ugly blue desk, but it's really not about the prizes or even the draw itself; it's the tradition.

Later after the draw, we would watch *It's a Wonderful Life* – a tradition Adam and I continue even if we're not with my Mom.

When we were kids, my sisters and I would stay in the same room, wide-awake, sharing the excitement of what Christmas Day would bring. We would creep into our parents' bedroom around 5 a.m. and beg our Dad to go downstairs to see if Santa had come and gone. Dad would always take his time while the four of us (Mom included) waited anxiously for him so we could all barrel down towards our favourite morning. After unwrapping our gifts and dressing in one of our new outfits, we would head over to my Grandma and Papa's house for a second round of opening gifts and the most delicious turkey dinner.

My Grandma was the spirit of Christmas. She put so much time and care into everything she did. All of her gifts were wrapped with gorgeous ribbons and bows and all the ornaments on her tree, thoughtfully collected over the years, were perfectly placed. When my Grandma passed away I was grateful to inherit her decorations. The reds and golds are more traditional than my personal style, but I let that go because every year they remind me of our traditions and of what's truly important during the holiday season.

What are your favourite traditions and memories? Mary Norris, the owner of this issue's cover home, celebrates Christmas morning with a breakfast of Eggs Benedict. You can see her beautifully decorated home on page 42, and in person. Mary's home is one of six on the Collingwood Holiday House Tour, which OUR HOMES has proudly sponsored. All proceeds go to the charity of the homeowners' choice. For more information about this wonderful event, go to www.ourhomesmagazine.com.

Whether you're continuing favourite traditions or creating new ones, make this holiday season a memorable one!

Cheers,

Shelby

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OUR HOMES™ is a registered trademark of
OUR HOMES MEDIA GROUP INC.

OUR HOMES™ is published four times a year (January, April, July and October) by
OUR HOMES MEDIA GROUP INC. For subscription inquiries please call 705.445.5065

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OUR HOMES is distributed via Canada Post to the majority of homes in southern Georgian Bay and via
addressed mail to the GTA addresses of everyone who owns recreational property in southern Georgian Bay,
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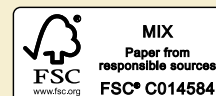
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Photography by Sandy MacKay.



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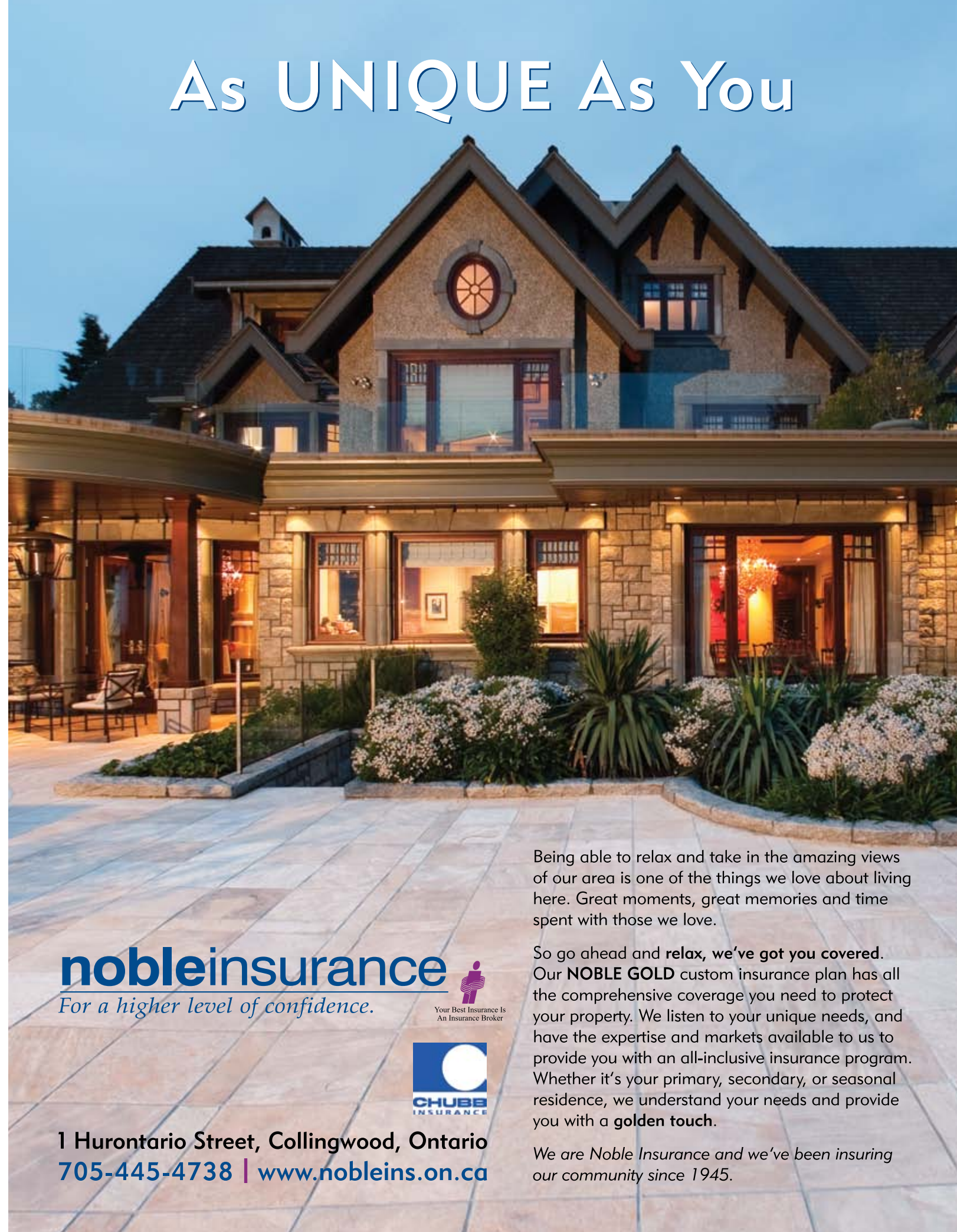


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publisher's note



IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE

that we
have been publishing
OUR HOMES in
Southern Georgian
Bay for seven full years!

As you likely know
by now, Southern
Georgian Bay is the
cradle of what has
become an Ontario-
wide magazine brand.
The first-ever issues
were published here,

and now, OUR HOMES is published in 17 different regions by our
many franchisees.

For our success, I owe a huge thank you to all of our supporters
– readers and advertisers – for creating a culture that has become so
much larger, more wonderful and far richer than I could have imagined.
I always chuckle when people congratulate me (me!) on the success of
OUR HOMES, when in actuality, it has been my team, not me, that has
created this wonderful publication. I give the credit to our franchisees
and our staff. I have been tremendously blessed to attract and retain some
incredible and loyal talent to OUR HOMES, and over the past seven years
I have seen this talent emerge and flourish.

I am a big believer in this business philosophy: hire people who are
better than you. I am happy to report that this concept is working very,
very well, and it's one that I'm currently building on here, with our
flagship magazine OUR HOMES Southern Georgian Bay.

Simone Sterio-Risk joined our team six years ago as a Senior Account
Manager. She has proven to be an excellent asset and has done an
incredible job with our business partners and advertisers, helping them
build their businesses through OUR HOMES. Simone is a tremendous
communicator, a hard (and smart) worker, and a knowledgeable and wise
marketer who is also very connected.

With such incredible company growth, a higher demand for my time
made me aware that Simone would eventually take on more responsibility
in helping me with my publishing duties. I needed to ensure I had someone
very capable at the helm of OUR HOMES for Southern Georgian Bay –
someone to ensure that our advertisers continue to receive the very best
value, and that our readers are always served with inspiring content, as
this will always remain our focus. And so, I am very pleased to announce
that Simone has stepped into the role of Associate Publisher here in
Southern Georgian Bay! We look forward to many, many more years of
exceptional issues under her direction.

Cheers,

Publisher, Southern Georgian Bay
President, OUR HOMES Media Group Inc.
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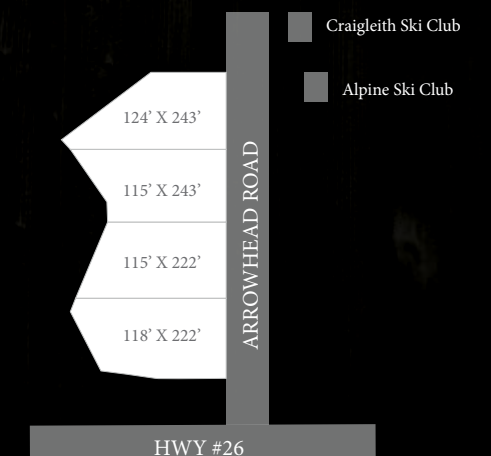
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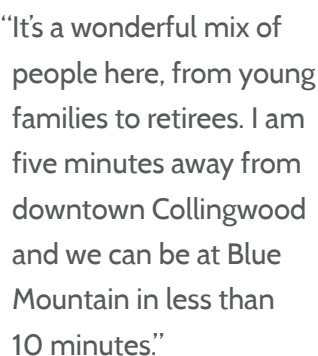
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a d v i c e

BATHROOM *renovation*

I would like to renovate my bathroom and make it more contemporary in feel, but I would prefer not to waste my existing vanity. Is it worth keeping and will I be married to its look if I do? – Helen

A bathroom renovation can be one of the most satisfying changes you'll make in your home and well worth the effort for both enjoyment and value. The key to this project (as always): Planning, planning, planning!

You can certainly give your vanity a facelift, changing the look and feel entirely, but it's only worth it if the piece is good quality to begin with. Also consider the amount you would truly be saving. In order to update that vanity, you need to send it to a refinisher, incurring a delivery charge plus the cost of refinishing. If you decide to purchase new, look into donating it for a tax receipt to offset some of the cost.

WHILE THE WALLS ARE DOWN...

There are lots of small cavities within your walls that can be made into storage spaces. With 16 inches between the studs, that leaves at least 10 inches (a safe measure) for the interior of a tall and skinny storage cabinet. Q-tips, soap, lotions – all of these smaller items – can be tucked into a convenient cabinet.

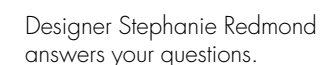
The same rules apply within the shower. Measure the largest bottle of shampoo that you would typically have on hand and design around that. Make sure the shampoo recess within your shower is large enough and has an extra shelf for soap and razors too. These can be tiled or made out of stone as a single unit and slipped into place. Glass shelves also work well, but I recommend thicker than standard to give a weightier look.

If you can squeeze a linen closet into your room, this will be a huge asset. Towels, toilet paper, plunger (measure the height and make sure it tucks discreetly under the bottom shelf) – all items remain hidden but still within the room for easy access.

UNDER THE GLOSSY FINISHES

The finishing touches are always the most fun, but don't forget about what goes on underneath them. If your floor was cold, consider radiant heat. This can be done with an electric pad that's set on a thermostat. It's a minor upgrade but feels like complete luxury.

HINT: Don't forget about accessories to complete your look:



If you didn't have good air circulation, now is the time to rectify that problem. Add a fan or re-route your current venting while the walls are exposed. Have an unwanted bulkhead? Maybe now is the time to see if that can be eliminated. Think while it's open. You won't fix it once you've finished.

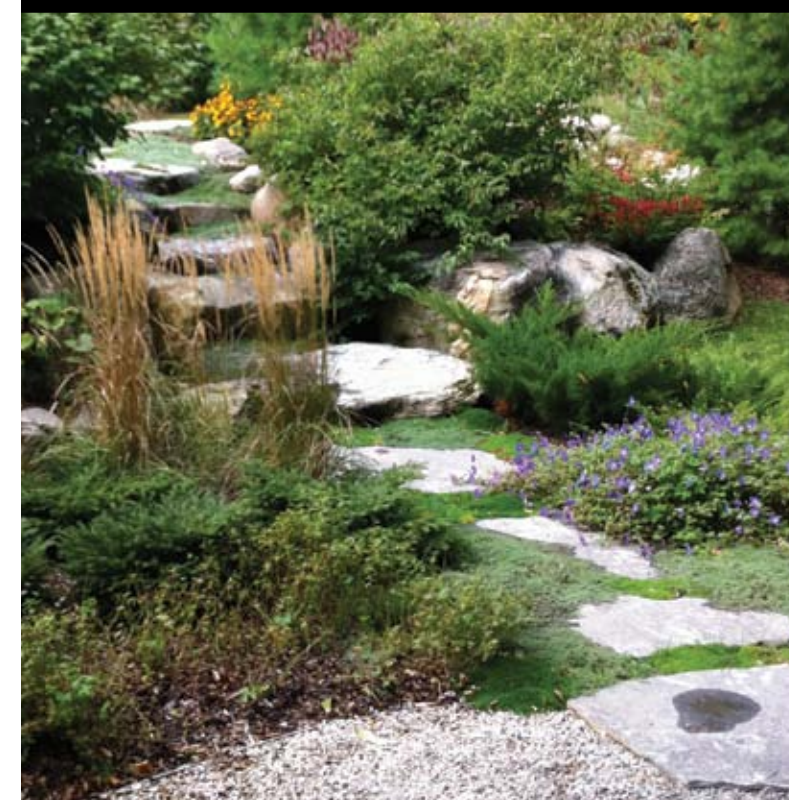
THE FUN PART

Whether you've kept magazine clippings or have a Houzz.com account, study your images to assemble the look and feel. Choose finishes for longevity, even if it means spending a little more than anticipated on one or two things. Spend on countertops and quality trades; save on items like mirrors, lighting and hardware. The best way to make these decisions? Go shopping and see what's out there! Suppliers are happy lending samples to take home and look at in the space.

Here are some tips to achieving a modern look

1. Run your floor tile into the shower and eliminate the “curb” (the step up into the shower).
2. Use a linear drain at the edge of the shower (these can be pricey, check your budget).
3. Consider a “floating” vanity (no legs) that is mounted to the wall.
4. Fill the space above the vanity with mirror rather than using a decorative piece.
5. Investigate wall-mounted toilets and freestanding tubs.
6. Choose small, simple sconces.
7. Use wall-mounted faucets set into your backsplash.

Creating a more contemporary look comes down to simplifying the aesthetic but the key is to do it well. Good quality finishing and well thought-out details make or break a project. So, can you re-use that existing vanity to create your modern look? Likely yes, but you better start planning! **OH**



The logo for Belmont Landscaping & Design features the word 'BELMONT' in large, bold, white capital letters. To its right is a stylized yellow pine tree. Below 'BELMONT' is a horizontal yellow line. Underneath this line, the words 'LANDSCAPING & DESIGN' are written in white capital letters, followed by 'est 1988' in a smaller font. At the bottom, the contact information 'Creemore | 705 466 2007 | belscape.com' is displayed in white.

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— Max Beerbohm*

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Continued on page 30

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HOMEMADE HOLIDAY *garlands*

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TIPS FROM PFISTER ON WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A NEW FAUCET.

- 1. Style:** Be sure to choose something that not only complements your personality, but also suits your décor.
- 2. Finish:** The finish should fit your décor, but should also complement the style of faucet. For example, if deciding on a traditional faucet, one may choose a warmer finish such as Tuscan Bronze. If contemporary is more your speed, a cooler finish such as Polished Chrome may be more of a fit.
- 3. Function:** Make certain that your new faucet has the functionality that you desire. Kitchen faucets offer different options when it comes to pull-out spray heads, spray and stream functions, and pause options.
- 4. Configuration:** Nothing is worse than picking out a faucet you love only to realize it won't fit the sink you have. Keep in mind the configuration of your sink when picking out faucets. For example, how many holes do you need?
- 5. Water conservation:** With the cost of water continuously on the rise, another consideration is to choose a faucet that can conserve water. You can save money and benefit the environment all at once.

We love our water. Every Canadian uses, on average, about 329 litres of water per day, according to Environment Canada. Do your best this season to conserve water.

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For tips on conserving water go to www.ourhomesmagazine.com/faucets

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HOME SWEET HOME

— *the natural way*



Whether we're greeted by soft, cushiony chintz, or sleek mid-century modern, every time we come through the door, we want to look around, as if to say, "Ahh, I'm home."

BY MARY HATT



Furniture and artwork engage us with their obvious visual statements. But let's not forget about the subtle power of other elements, like fragrance, to layer the personal ambience of our homes. Of course, it's smart to stay away from artificially scented plug-ins or canned sprays. These smell fake and, worse, may contain harmful chemicals.

Instead, we can infuse our homes the natural way with clean, organic aromatherapy. Many non-chemical fragrances are available through specialty retailers. Lynda Phillips, who owns and operates Lyn-Dys in London carries "Air Therapy," a USDA certified bio-based product. One of several scents available, "Original Orange," is a concentration of essential oils distilled from orange peels only. While it freshens the air, this spray is also meant to restore balance, joy and harmony.

In fact, the therapeutic attributes of essential oils are considered as important as the scents themselves. Eucalyptus's herbal pungency is believed to clear the air of viruses. Citrusy lemon cleanses and bergamot, the source of Earl Grey tea's familiar scent, should alleviate anxiety, stress and nervous tension.

Lavender is another effective aromatherapy staple, according to Suzanne Steed, a former nurse who now runs Steed and Company Lavender Farm in Aylmer. "It's a really interesting herb," she says, adding, "It has a calming fragrance that also makes the home very fresh."

Steed reports that her linen spray, made from the pure essential oil of English lavender, is now her number-one seller. She praises lavender's pretty purplish-blue plant for its antiseptic quality as well as its compelling, pine-like scent. "People are now spraying it on their mattresses to get rid of dust mites," Steed says. "It's a natural pesticide, as well as a natural relaxant."

Lavender spray can be purchased from retailers or it can be homemade using pure essential lavender oil. "Just play around with the proportions of oil to water," Steed advises, adding the strength of scent is a highly personal choice.

Versatile lavender is often used in potpourri, as well. Making potpourri is time consuming, but if one is up to the task, the end result will be a mixture that's as decorative as it is fragrant. Even consider an old-fashioned simmer pot, which will have the aroma of citrus peels, spices and dried flowers and herbs wafting through the house in no time.

When it comes to natural fragrances for the home, choice is limited only by our imaginations. It's a creative exercise... and one best finished with a deep, cleansing breath.

HOME FRAGRANCE RECIPES

1. ROOM SPRAY

It's easy to make your own room sprays using pure essential oils and purified distilled water (avoid synthetic oils and tap water containing chlorine and fluoride). Try this clean and uplifting lemon-bergamot combination.

What You Need:

8 oz. distilled water
10 drops bergamot oil
Lemon oil

Directions: Mix and shake well in a clean spray bottle. Shake well before every use. .

2. POTPOURRI

What You Need:

A fixative – such as oak moss or sandalwood chips

A filler – such as dried lavender, rose petals or eucalyptus; wood chips, leaves and spices such as cinnamon sticks or vanilla beans (you will need four cups of fresh filler to render one cup of dried)

A fragrance – the essential oil of one of your fillers, such as lavender, rose or eucalyptus

Directions: Mix your components in a glass or ceramic bowl or jar. Use a mortar and pestle to crush ingredients. Store the mix in an air-tight container in a dark place for about six weeks. Shake every few days to blend. Add drops of oil as required and display your potpourri in a pretty glass bowl. **OH**



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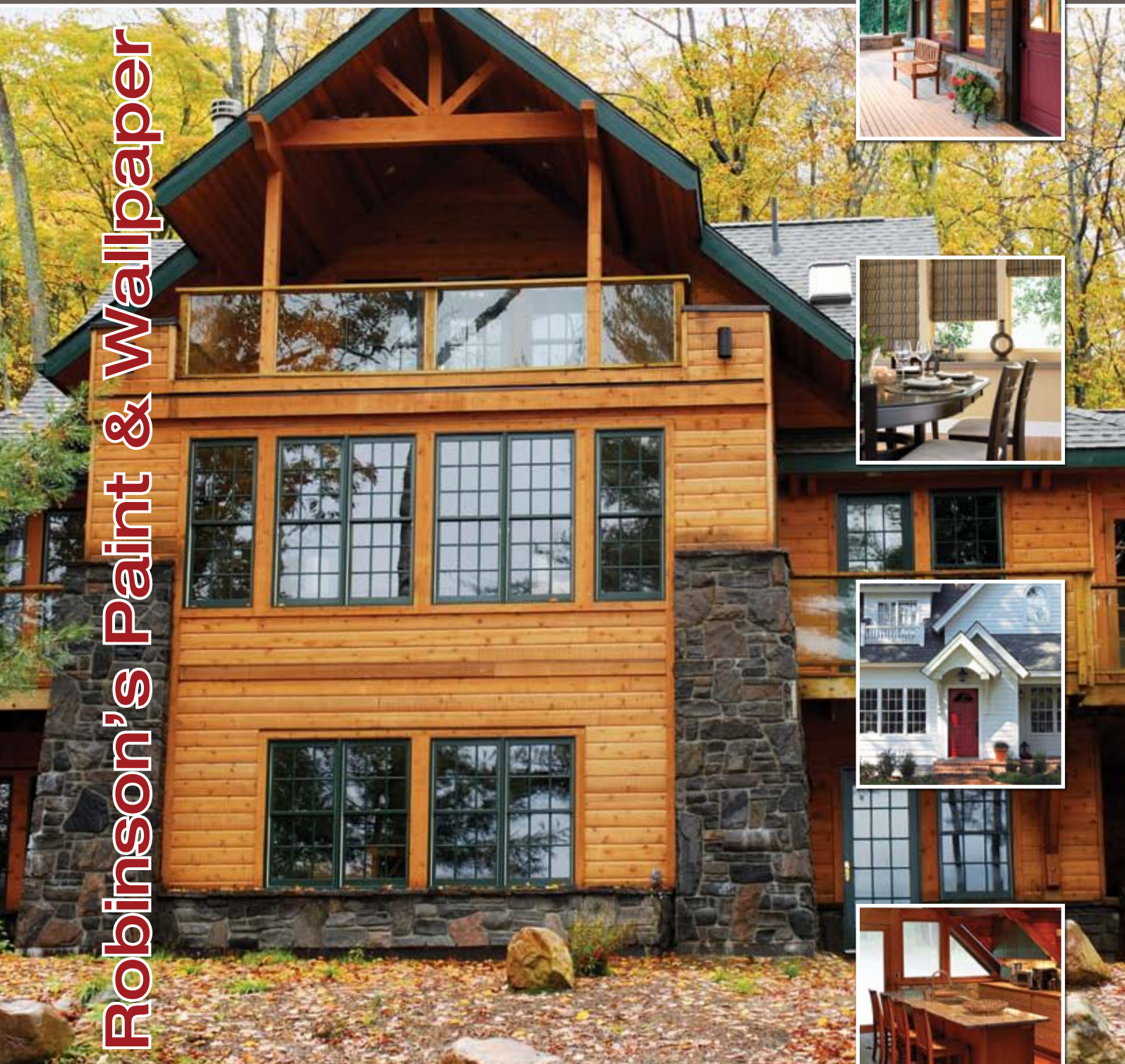


Photo of the Dining Room is courtesy of Levolor window fashions.



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feature

2 DESIGNERS, HOLIDAY LOOKS

BY SHELBY HILSON // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY



Colleen Wittlin's simple, elegant decorating style suits her small Thornbury home just right. Most of her furniture and decorating accessories are from Cherché House of Design.

feature

Meet Colleen Wittlin and Mary Norris, owners of **Cherché House of Design** in Thornbury. As business partners, Colleen and Mary run a successful home furnishings and design shop, offering in-house design to clients. As close friends, they and their families spend much of their spare time and holidays together.

There's no question that they both have style, but Mary and Colleen enjoy different looks – especially when it comes to the holiday season. OUR HOMES visited both designers at home to see how they decorate for Christmas and to inspire you with fresh new ideas for your home this season.

COLLEEN'S HOME: *Simple Elegance*

In describing her personal decorating style, Colleen Wittlin quotes one of the greatest artists of all time – Leonardo da Vinci. He said, “Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication,” which to this day continues to inspire home design and decorating around the world, and is ever so evident in Colleen's stunning Thornbury home.

“The simplicity of my design makes me feel relaxed and calm,” says Colleen. “I love creams and whites, which make a space easy to accessorize and to change-up when the seasons change.” This tone-on-tone colouring is seen throughout Colleen's home; the walls are painted in Benjamin Moore's Cloud White with bright white trim (painting by **Jimmy Keast**); the living room furniture (Cherché) is upholstered in a light cream and the fireplace surround is a warm, creamy marble (**Georgian Design Centre**). The small space leaves no room for a Christmas tree, but if there was one, Colleen says it would be tone on tone as well. Instead, mini trees made of mercury glass adorn surfaces throughout the main living areas, as do other mercury glass accessories, like planters and candleholders, from Cherché. Preserved boxwood brings traditional warmth and a splash of colour to the space, complementing the winter greenery on display through the dining room solarium, which features custom blinds (**Ashton's Blinds Draperies Shutters**) in a simple Irish linen.

Continued on page 46



Using tone-on-tone whites and creams, Colleen has created a sophisticated and relaxing living space. Her intriguing collection of books embeds colour and interest. **TOP LEFT:** Mary Norris and Colleen Wittlin hint to their personal decorating tastes with their gift wrapping styles. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Subtle hints of Christmas include mercury glass trees, simple wreaths, glass reindeer and preserved boxwood.



A touch of greenery gives Colleen's stunning entranceway a seasonal flair. Her cherished blue/white china collection adorns a contemporary console and two ottomans offer additional seating.

Adding to the natural feel of Colleen's home is a soft basswood deer head above the fireplace. This is also where you'll find a few pieces of her cherished china collection. "We live in a relatively small home," she says, "therefore, I don't like a lot of clutter but I do love my blue/white collection, which makes my home warm and inviting." Guests are introduced to the stunning collection at the entranceway, where three gorgeous pieces adorn a white console table along with a large square mirror, two tall candles on silver holders and Colleen's other love: books.

Large, beautiful books of art, design and fashion fill the rooms with interest and character. "A home should be filled with books, not only for reading, but also for the aesthetics they provide in accessorizing a room," Colleen says. Although holiday decorations are modest at most, Colleen tries to keep things fresh by adding something new each year, to suit her simple style of course. For her annual dose of traditional Christmastime cheer, she heads to Mary's house... *Continued on page 48*

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MARY'S HOUSE: *Tasteful & Traditional*

In contrast to Colleen's style, less is not more in Mary Norris's home. Warm, eclectic and family-oriented are the words Mary uses to describe her personal taste. They are likely the same words a guest would use after being treated to a hot beverage by the fire or a tasty meal in the glow of the Christmas tree.

Reds and greens, characteristic of the holiday season, unify each space

with Christmas spirit in the form of fresh greenery, wreaths hanging on the windows, garland along the fireplace mantels and running up the staircase railings, tiny, sparkly red Christmas trees and an impressive collection of nutcrackers that Mary started 25 years ago. "My husband adds to the collection every Christmas," she says. "They all represent something meaningful." *Continued on page 52*



ABOVE: Fully outfitted in traditional Christmas décor, including a full and vibrant tree, Mary's great room is where most of the holiday action occurs. **FAR LEFT:** Visitors are greeted with seasonal spirit at the front door. **LEFT:** Silver reindeer candleholders light up the kitchen table.



The formal dining room is where family and friends enjoy holiday feasts each year. Like Colleen, Mary also has a lovely blue and white china collection on display. **OPPOSITE:** Two bay windows are decorated with fresh flowers, nutcrackers and glass Christmas trees, which softly reflect the natural light. The main staircase features a beautifully embellished garland that pops against the creamy wallpaper (Jane Armstrong Painting).

feature

Visit Mary's home on the Collingwood Holiday House Tour. Go to ourhomesmagazine.com for more details...

Nutcrackers of all colours and sizes take charge of Mary's home during the holiday season, especially in the library where Georgian Woodworking built a wall of bookcases. Mary has been collecting the toy soldiers for 25 years and her husband adds a new member to the troop each Christmas.



For Mary, Christmas is all about family and friends, and she loves nothing more than sharing a delicious meal with loved ones. "One of our traditions is starting Christmas morning with a breakfast of Eggs Benedict," she says. With lots of space to entertain, including a great room with a living space, dining area and kitchen with breakfast bar, Mary can comfortably host guests and holiday get-togethers.

Decorating her tree is another beloved tradition. Mary believes in a full tree. "A pet peeve I have is a tree lacking in enough ornaments. Don't be afraid to go over the top when decorating your tree," she advises.

Although Mary's decorating style differs greatly from Colleen's, both women stay true to the design principle of starting with a neutral backdrop (painting by **Just Ask Judy**) and adding personality and colour through accessories. Many of Mary and Colleen's neutral furniture pieces are from Cherché and work beautifully in both spaces. Both ladies have made wonderful use of decorative items like mercury and Murano glass, preserved greenery, glass reindeers and silver trays and candlesticks.

When decorating for the holidays, Mary follows her heart and encourages others to do the same. "Don't hold back if Christmas means a lot to you," she says. **OH**

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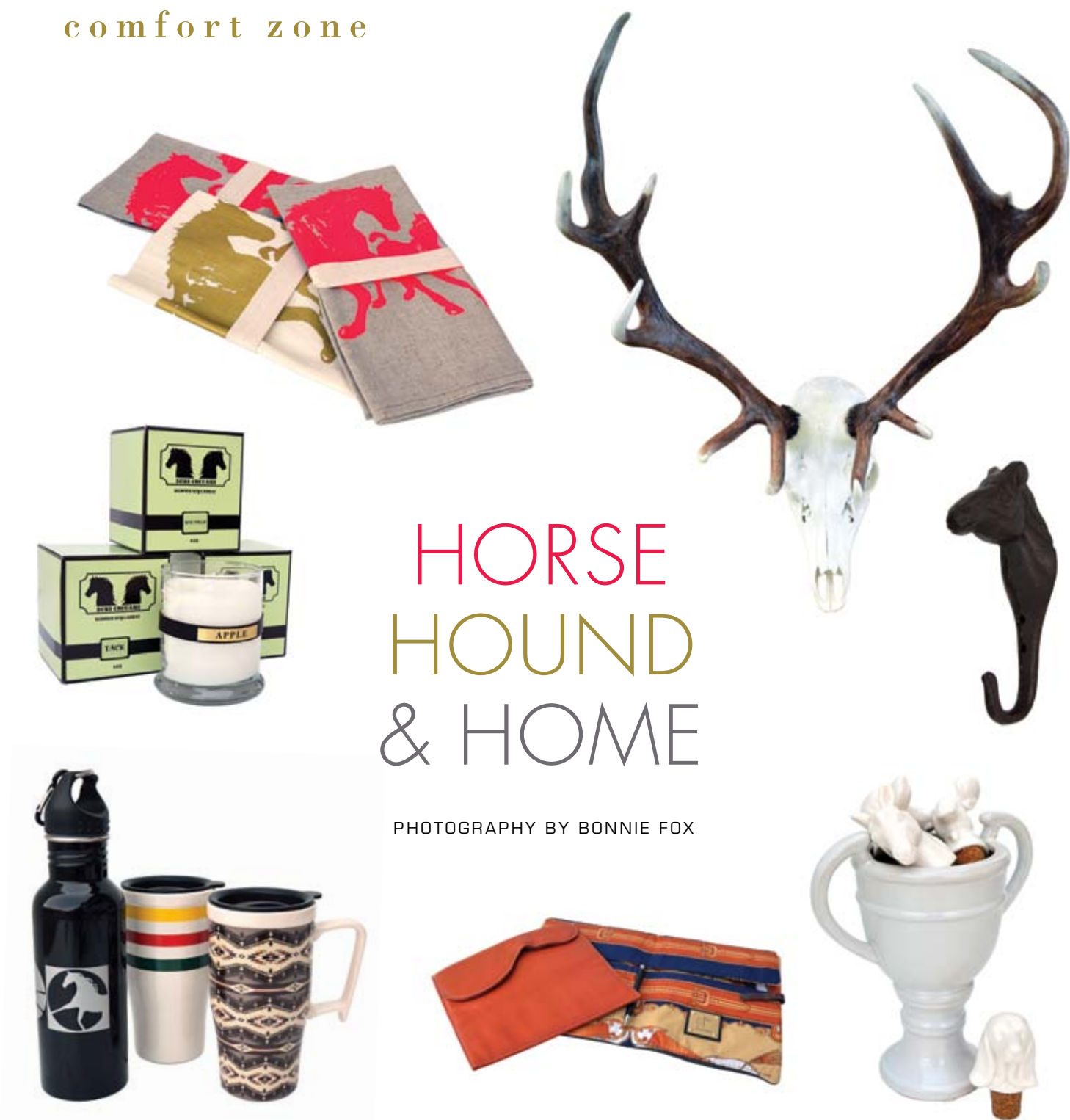
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HORSE HOUND & HOME

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE FOX

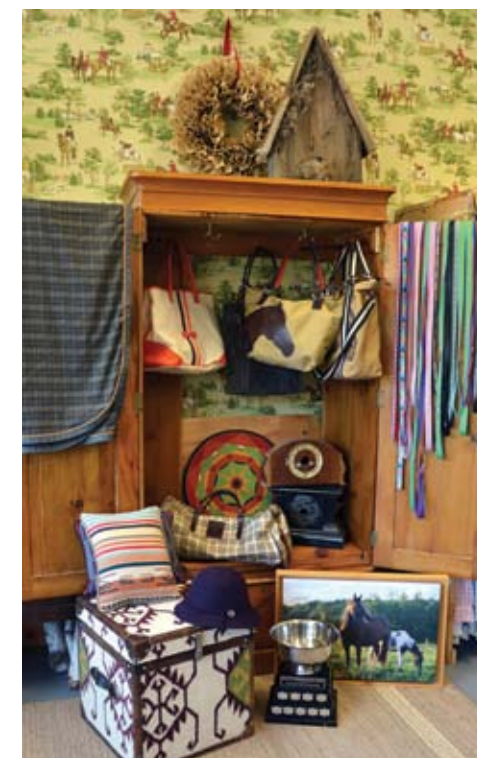
THE PLACE: With a personal history in the local equestrian scene, Kristy Pakstas-Lake knew there was an unfulfilled niche, just waiting for a shop like **Dapple Gray**. “I grew up in the area riding and showing on the Trillium and A Circuit,” says Kristy. “I always had to travel to Toronto to get specific items that were part of my ‘show kit’ and that my coach approved of.” It was meeting this local need that sparked the idea of Dapple Gray, but today, in its true form, Dapple Gray is much more than an impressive tack shop and offers something for everyone, equestrian or not.

THE STYLE: Focusing on “horse, hound and home,” the shop offers everything for the competitive equestrian, including head-to-toe apparel and tack, but also a variety of related home furnishings and décor, as well as canine accessories. “I wanted to inject some impertinence and fun to an otherwise serious and austere sport,” says Kristy, “and that is where I get to stretch my creative wings sourcing new, innovative and interesting products to bring to market.”

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RIGHT: Kristy Pakstas-Lake and her dog Finnigan.



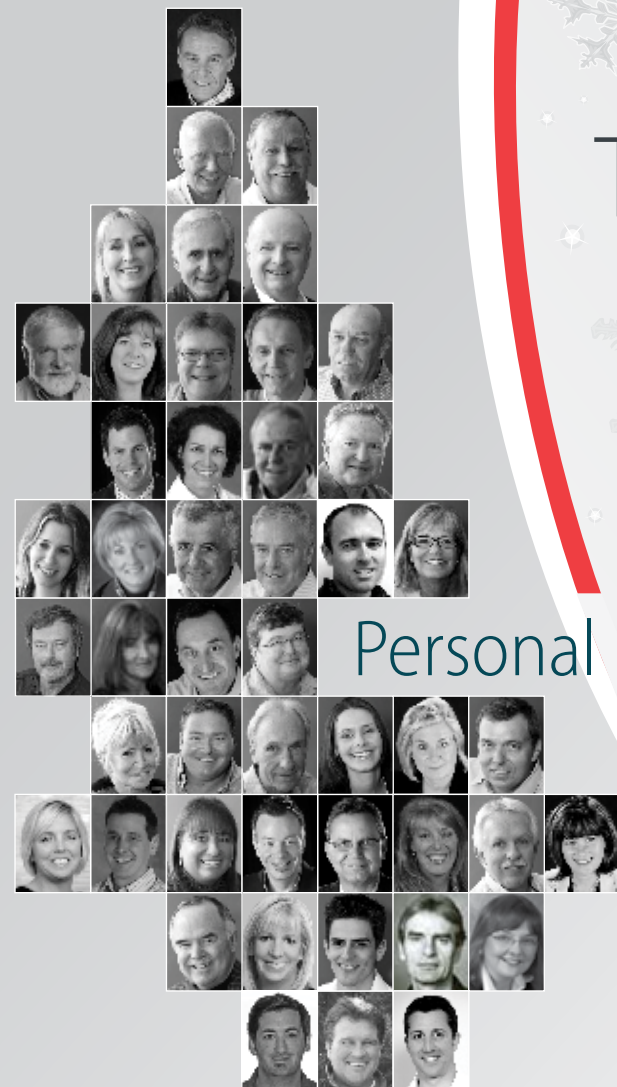
can be found throughout Dapple Gray in the form of wool blankets, toss cushions, ceramic travel mugs, oversize towels and handbags. Deux Chevaux soy candles are also flying off the shelves in scents like Hay Field, Apple and Tack.

GIFT IDEAS: Black Knight Competition Accessories makes unique show clutches out of vintage silks and reclaimed leathers, which can be used to hold a horse’s passport and keep show documents organized, but they’re also fabulous iPad cases, making them great gifts for the rider or techie in your life. Dog, moose and horse-

shaped wine stoppers make great hostess gifts, and for your furry friends, choose a leather dog collar or custom pet bed.

SEASONAL: Consider booking a private shopping party at Dapple Gray. Invite six or more friends and Kristy will shut down the store, provide drinks and music, and offer a discount for every purchase. What a great way to get a bunch of holiday shopping done at one place, without the crowds!

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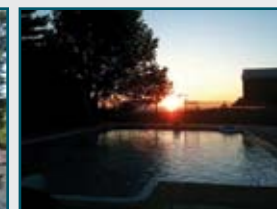
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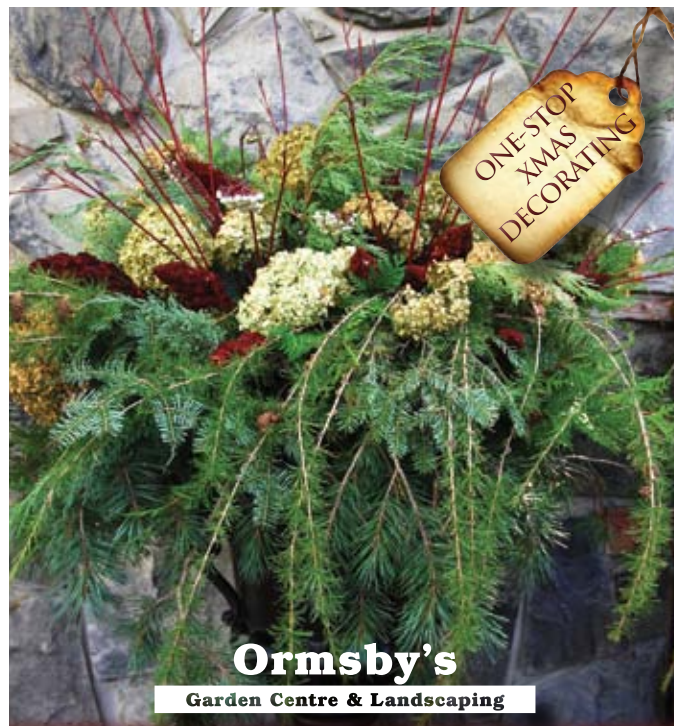


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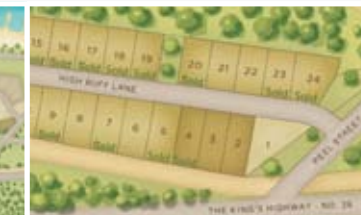
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Dave and Myrna Bumstead

WHERE HAVE YOU RETIRED? We retired to **Maple Meadow Homes** in Meaford. It attracted us because of the private access to the Georgian Trail, Clubhouse and indoor saltwater pool. The brick bungalows are well built and we're just a short walk to the beach, harbour and shopping.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT RETIREMENT? We get to do during the day what we used to have to wait to do at night.

FAVOURITE WINTER ACTIVITY: We discovered snowshoeing two years ago. From our unit at Maple Meadow Homes we are just minutes from some lovely bush trails.



Lee Rosenzweig

WHY DID YOU RETIRE HERE? I love the natural environment and the pace of Collingwood.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR TIME AT Chartwell Select Georgian Traditions: I was recovering from knee replacement surgery – they were truly remarkable, very professional and I was grateful for that atmosphere in which to recover.

FAVOURITE WAY TO SPEND A WINTER DAY: Sitting on the beach in Florida, inhaling the salt air, reading a good book on my Kindle.

FAVOURITE HOLIDAY MEMORY: The time we took the kids to Club Med St. Lucia and we decided to go into the "circus" activity... don't ask!

Continued on page 64

people

Margaret and Norbert Pirk

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT RETIREMENT? In one word: Time. Time to do the things we choose to do and time to savour the moment. In Southern Georgian Bay we're part of a year-round, active community with all the amenities one could desire, but close enough to Toronto for the occasional city fix.

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FAVOURITE HOLIDAY TRADITION: Baking some 700 "Pirk family" German-style Christmas cookies and distributing them to the rest of the family. *Continued on page 56*



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Chris and Norma Desjardins

WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO SOUTHERN GEORGIAN BAY? Coming here as weekenders, we always experienced a sense of comfort and peace when we walked in the front door on a Friday evening. It's a great convenience to have relatively easy access to Toronto when we feel the pull of the big city, but for day-to-day living, life in a small, friendly community with a broad range of activities is hard to beat.

HOW HAS YOUR NEW SPACE IMPROVED RETIREMENT? A comfortable, warm and inviting home can't help but have a positive impact on our outlooks. **Missy Sharp** of **Bramwell Sharp Design** was able to merge our sometimes differing tastes and satisfy both of us, especially with the great room and master bedroom/sitting area design.

Continued on page 68



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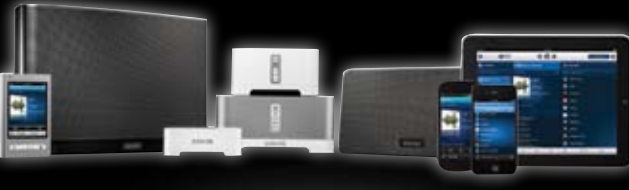
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Pete Russell

WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO SOUTHERN GEORGIAN BAY? My wife Bonnie and I moved to the area so we could pursue all the outdoor activities that we enjoy, keeping us active and healthy. I have cycled all my life, in Europe, the United States, and many parts of Canada. Here in the Thornbury area, there are many quiet roads with challenging hills and beautiful vistas. This is one of the best areas I have ridden in.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO RETIRE AT FAR HILLS? We chose a **Far Hills Thornbury** townhouse first because of its location - within walking distance of downtown, the library, the beach on Georgian Bay, and the fact that there is no further construction to the development. We have our own private pool, tennis court, and beautiful recreation facility. *Continued on page 70*



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SOUNDS LIKE *home*

BY LAUREL FORTIN // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY

If all homes have a story to tell, Lee Bartel and Linda Cameron's manor overlooking the Beaver Valley is a synthesis of a children's fairytale about whimsical discovery and an operatic symphony of drama and history. *Continued on page 77*



When Lee and Linda's century farmhouse burned down in 2003, they rebuilt a Tudor-style home and had the great room designed around Lee's 1800-era Karm pipe organ. Flowers by Paperwhite Flowers. **OPPOSITE TOP:** The couple's granddaughter enjoys the view outdoors from the great room. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** A clay relief depicting the mythological Greek gods Apollo and Dionysus offers visitors insight to the homeowners' musical passions and personalities.



Their custom home, built in 2005 by **Valleyview Construction**, reflects their individual passions and their joint pursuits. Lee is Associate Dean – Research in the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto where one of his focuses is the effects of music on health. Linda is Professor of Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto where she specializes in children's literacy.

In 2003, the original century-old wooden farmhouse on the property that served as their weekend retreat tragically burned to the ground. They were away at the time so the house was empty, save for their belongings, including family photographs and heirlooms. After recovering from the shock, they determined to rebuild a home on the property that would honour the farmhouse's legacy. *Continued on page 79*



OPPOSITE: A semi-sheltered outdoor eating area offers the most magnificent views of the Beaver Valley. **TOP LEFT:** A stunning 65-foot labyrinth of Hidcote lavender and Walker's Low Catmint attracts many tourists and meditation groups to the couple's backyard. **LEFT:** Lee and Linda welcome OUR HOMES to photograph their weekend home. **ABOVE:** The picturesque courtyard looks like it was plucked right out of an Italian countryside winery.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: (1) The dining room harvest table is beautifully dressed to host guests for dinner. (2) The gourmet kitchen features a huge centre island just a few steps from the wine bar – making the space ideal for entertaining. (3) Homebuilder Paul Rogers (right) catches up with Lee in his favourite space, the wine bar. (4) Two glass cabinets flank the entranceway to the kitchen and display some of Lee and Linda's crystal and china collection.



Drawing on their influences in music, literature, spirituality and history, the couple began to imagine the possibilities: a Tudor style with many rooflines; a great room to house Lee's 1800-era Karn pipe organ and space in which their collective five children and families could gather; a library and master suite facing the valley; three guest suites that might allow them to open a bed and breakfast in the future and saving as much of the original gardens and trees as possible. Their concepts came together where the home and yard centre on a social space – the one element of the original home that remained: the outdoor pool.

They approached renowned local architectural technologist **Pamela Farrow** to draw the plans. She designed their master suite to sit in almost the same footprint as the original farmhouse. "We wanted it to look as if there were still a main house to which, over the years, additions had been added," recalls Lee. The master wing is a brick house made with

reclaimed Chicago brick from the early 1800s. To connect the master wing to the central kitchen and great room, Farrow suggested a timber-framed glassed conservatory. The great room exterior façade is Yorkshire buff tumbled limestone from Ottawa. The exterior window trim is also different on the three styles – some of it is pointed; some is round and the shutter treatments vary from one to the other (windows by **Cedarport Window & Door Centre Inc.**). To unify the house, Farrow designed a soldier course of brick all the way around.

With music and literature so central to their lives, when Lee and Linda found a clay relief depicting the mythological Greek gods Apollo and Dionysus – the gods of music – leading a party of the seven muses, it encapsulated the theme of their home so well they knew it must adorn the front of the house. The builder installed it in the stone plaster below the great room's large dormer, greeting visitors and hinting at the tone of the home.

Continued on page 80



LEFT: The busy lives of the two university professors are most evident in the study at the back of the home, where both Lee and Linda have desks on either side of a lovely gas fireplace.
BELOW: The master bath is bold and warm in blues and reds. **BOTTOM:** The master bedroom opens to the couple's study and offers incredible views of the valley, as well as access to a back patio.



Paul Rogers, owner of Valleyview Construction, remembers the project well. "It wasn't a build where you take a set of drawings and away you go," he says. "Linda and Lee loved to be intricately involved in the decision making, and we had a lot of opportunity to adjust details as we went. We give most of our clients a copy of *The Not So Big House*, by Sarah Susanka – it really opens your imagination to what you can do in your home to maximize the space." As they were framing an upstairs hall, for example, there was an area where two roofs came together and Rogers suggested they could push the walls back to create a seating area. Cameron embraced the suggestion and added bookshelves and toy cupboards to turn the space into a play area for visiting grandchildren.

"We did a lot of custom finishes, such as milling an ash tree Valleyview had fallen at a previous job to use as decorative beams in the couple's library," says Rogers. The wood was tinted to get the rich, dark brown colours of the Tudor style.

Rob Perry from **Riverside Custom Cabinets Ltd.** was brought in to create the cherry and maple wood cabinetry in the kitchen and wine bar, as well as the long refectory table in the dining area. The couple bought a full lot of Italian limestone and separated the tiles. Those with more corrugated colours were installed in the conservatory, darker orange-ish shades went into the kitchen, the more pinkish tiles went into the main floor guest bathroom and the lightest tiles went into the front foyer. *Continued on page 82*

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The colour palette throughout the home was inspired by Lee's pipe organ: greens, golds and beiges (paint from **Birch & Benjamin Inc.**). Many design accents were collected by Linda: birdcages and bird ornaments perch high in the great room; decorative metal motifs flank the walls of the conservatory and exterior patios; stained glass panes act as transoms above the doorways of the great room.

Rogers has remained friends with the couple over the years. "Our notion at Valleyview is that we have to do a good job and keep the project looking good, because we live in the area and our clients are my sales people now," he says. The couple welcome Rogers to bring potential Valleyview clients to tour their home. "We do a bit of a wine tour, I call it, where we show the house to prospective clients and leave behind a bottle of wine for homeowners," says Rogers.

Lasting, trusting relationships are the hallmark of Valleyview, operating since 1980 with Rogers supervising construction and his wife, Anne, managing the accounting and paperwork. "We have craftspeople that are long dedicated, working for us for 10, 15, 18 years," he says.

At the hands of Valleyview, Lee and Linda's home has gained a mythical presence in the area. Their music and stories abound. **OH**



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ABOVE: Upstairs, a spacious hallway cove is the perfect place for Lee and Linda's granddaughter to play while visiting. **LEFT:** The lower level games room was painted to match the pool table. It's a favourite space for all to gather for some fun on a chilly winter day.



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KEEPING *reno costs* BELOW THE ROOF

BY YANIC SIMARD // PHOTOS BY TED YARWOOD



PHOTO BY BRANDON BARRE

Nothing beats the feeling of walking into a freshly renovated home – especially when you didn't do the work or pay the bill! If you're thinking of taking on a reno project yourself, I've got some smart tips on how to keep your sanity and avoid driving into debt!



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The Importance of Planning

The time you spend planning will be the most valuable time you spend in the renovation process – so don't look at it as a waste of time because good planning will make for a good renovation. Going into something like this “blind” is never a good idea. Make sure you have a clear plan and have carefully thought about what you want and what you're trying to achieve at the end of all this. If you think that handling a renovation on your own might be too overwhelming, then hiring an interior design company will be the best money you ever spend, because everything is taken care of for you. A professional and experienced design firm can help you from start to finish, including space planning, finish selection, bringing trades, project management and execution.

Realistic Budgeting

You can never determine what you'll find when you begin opening up walls and tearing out flooring. You might find water damage or mould – just prepare for the unexpected and know that you should always have a “cushion” of money set aside for what you never saw coming. For example, if you plan on spending \$30,000 on your bathroom renovation, in actuality you'll probably end up spending at least \$40,000. Costs are almost always about 30 per cent higher than what you expected (or more – sometimes doubling).

Allocating Your Money

A renovation is much more than the materials needed (such as paint, tile, hardware, faucets, etc.). Keep in mind that on top of material, you have to pay for the trades people (like an electrician, plumber and painter) who will perform the work, and labour always costs around the same amount as the material. If you're hiring an interior designer, you will need to budget for design services as part of your renovation, however keep in mind that designers will save you money in many situations by using their resources wisely, increasing creative thinking but most importantly by avoiding costly design mistakes.

Avoid Risking Your Home

You should have a separate savings account at the bank exclusively for your renovation. Don't bite off more than you can chew and risk losing your house if you can't afford the payments. The safest bet would be to take out a home equity loan or a home equity line of credit, just be sure that you're willing to have the added debt. If the renovation goes as planned, you'll meet the goal of paying for the renovation and end up with some extra bucks in the bank.

The Right Trades

How do you know if the person you're hiring is going to perform quality work? It's hard to judge based on a website or a conversation had on the phone. Another one of the added benefits of hiring a reputable design firm is that they work with trades people on a regular basis that they know and trust. This way you can be sure that the people working for you are reliable and provide good service.

Be patient and take your time – renovations should never be rushed because when they are, more problems seem to occur. **OH**



Smart Renovation Suggestions

- Find inspiration from homes you love before you plan – look at magazines for ideas on architectural detail, space planning, finishes, etc. If you really like something specific from what you sourced, ask yourself if it will work well in your own home. Just because it looks good in the style image doesn't mean it will fit with the overall look of your house.
- I always say, “Work with what the space and the architecture of your house has to offer you, don't fight it.” Be sure to give your layout/floor plan careful consideration (how will you use the space, how much room do you need, traffic flow).
- Consider installing heated flooring as this needs to be done before your floor is laid. It is a luxurious feature to have, surprisingly without the price tag you'd think would be associated. (My personal favourite manufacturer being Nuheat.)

Yanic Simard – Toronto Interior Design Group, Principal Designer

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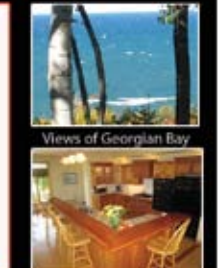
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BY ADRIENNE BROWN // ILLUSTRATION BY SHEILA BRITTON

You're finished your shopping and you've picked out the perfect gifts for all your friends and family. Now it's time to wrap each one up in a pretty package that's just as special as the gift itself – and the recipient.

If you have an at-home wrapping station (whether permanent or temporary for the holidays) you'll find wrapping easier and more enjoyable. Here's how to set one up in your home.

CREATE A WRAPPING STATION THAT WORKS

It's a hassle to wrap on the floor one day and in the dining room the next, spending time moving from room to room, squeezing in wherever you can and trying to avoid rogue dog hairs and carpet fluff.

Dedicate a small space for wrapping to make things easier on yourself. Corinna Vangerwen, an editor, writer and stylist who offers creative gift wrapping services and workshops in the Toronto area, says "crowded equals crinkled." A large dining table made to seat six to eight people is great, but you can manage with a smaller table, desk or kitchen island, as long as it's not too shallow. You need space to spread out. Vangerwen suggests a surface that's at least five to six feet long and two to three feet deep.

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Rolls vs. Sheets: Not sure which type of paper to buy? Sheets of wrapping paper will have creases, but they're also easier to store. Rolls are smooth but take up more space and can get squished more easily.

HOW TO KEEP YOUR SPACE TIDY

Vangerwen's number one rule for creating a gift wrapping station that works: have a spot for everything. Pick up a few plastic containers to store your supplies so you can tuck them away when they're not being used. Try a wastebasket for storing your rolls of paper – "when it's full, you know you need to stop buying paper," laughs Vangerwen.

T-shaped ornament and jewelry stands are perfect for storing rolls of ribbon.

Most importantly, keep everything in one place so you always have it handy when you're ready to wrap.



CORINNA'S TOP TIPS FOR PRETTY GIFTS

1. "Enjoy it, don't stress about it." As soon as you relax, wrapping becomes more fun and is easier, so you end up with a nicer finished product. Take your time and don't rush. "It's a pretty present – don't forget you're celebrating something!"

2. Give yourself time to wrap carefully: "Fold corners nicely and pay attention to the small details," says Vangerwen. Take care to have good craftsmanship. Even a gift wrapped in the plainest paper can be turned into something special.

3. It's always fun to add a topper. Try a sprig of cedar, jingle bells, small toys for kids or a candy cane. Anything other than a bow will jazz up your presentation. "You can have so much fun with those," says Vangerwen. "You have the opportunity to get really creative."

4. You can do a lot with material selection. Choose a fun, patterned paper and some nice ribbon. It doesn't have to be expensive, but nice materials will make wrapping more fun. Get creative by trying different materials like a map, wallpaper scraps or pages from old books. **OH**

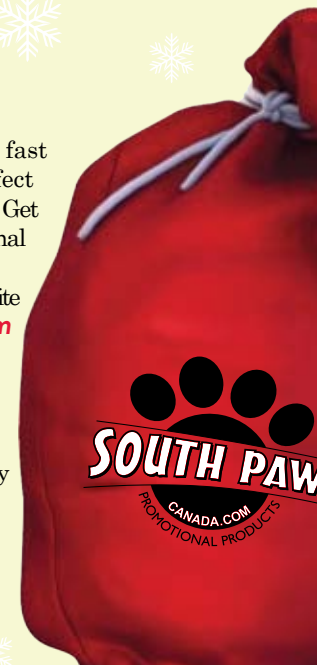
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What colours and styles are hot for wrapping this season? Visit ourhomesmagazine.com/getwrapping for Corinna Vangerwen's top picks.

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Jonna Chalmers adds a pinch of contemporary to her rustic home with a round dining room table and upholstered chairs. Place settings feature quality china and wine glasses with a deer motif, available at Jonna's Rustic Refinement, along with the cowhide rug. **OPPOSITE TOP:** A mix of equestrian paraphernalia and antiques gives the entranceway an old western feel. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** Situated at the top of a hill outside Meaford, Wind Haven certainly lives up to its name.

Rustic, DEFINED

BY WILLIAM SHELLEY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY

Nothing exudes character like an original North American log cabin. This sort of character can't be imitated – the knots of the old-growth trees and the notches on the hand-hewn logs give these buildings a distinct time signature. *Continued on page 97*





Such structures are rare in Ontario today, though a few survive. Wind Haven, the home Jonna Chalmers shares with her husband, Ralph Kertcher, near Meaford, is the happy marriage of two heritage log cabins. The front portion of the home is a cabin made of rock elm dating from the early 1800s that was probably one of the first European-built structures in Sullivan Township south of Owen Sound, where Jonna found it 37 years ago. The excellent condition of the wood attests to the durability of rock elm, a tree prized by pioneer builders, but all but wiped out by Dutch elm disease. The back half of the home is a pine log cabin, well over a century old, that Jonna found in Quebec. She had both structures dismantled, the logs numbered and then painstakingly reassembled. She originally envisioned the home as a chalet and planned to keep her house in Toronto, but she became attached to this area. She soon made Southern Georgian Bay her permanent home and today owns **Jonna's Rustic Refinement**, a décor and furniture boutique near Blue Mountain.

Jonna made the architectural drawings for her home and then brought in an architect to check them. Both cabins were two storeys but Jonna removed the second floor of the back cabin to open it up, retaining a loft as the master bedroom, accessed by a spiral staircase. The front cabin has a second floor containing an office, guest bedroom and second bath. The unifying element between the two original structures is a large brick fireplace and chimney. When Jonna found the front cabin, it had been converted into a barn with an oversized doorway. Instead of filling it in, Jonna saw an opportunity to use this space. "Looking at this big opening, I thought, 'this is the perfect place to put a fireplace.' I wanted it double-sided," she says. "When I had company here and I was cooking, I wanted to see the fire." The fireplace provides comfort and a cheerful spectacle for anyone seated in the dining room or in the living room. Jonna keeps her holiday décor low-key and natural, using pinecones and pine and cedar boughs. "It's always festive in here, so I don't have to add a lot," she says. *Continued on page 100*



ABOVE: Jonna's collection of native North American handicrafts is prominent throughout her home. Hanging on the wall is a circa-1900 Navajo rug. **LEFT:** In the kitchen, antique windows serve as cupboard doors and a lime green backdrop makes the white dishes pop. **OPPOSITE, LEFT:** Kim Hall of Pinetiques built the distressed kitchen island, which offers both seating and storage. **TOP RIGHT:** Jonna enjoys a hot cup of coffee at home. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** A country-inspired whiskey decanter set – just one of many entertaining accessories available at Jonna's shop.

feature

Her home may be small, but it's full of character and style. Jonna had her sofa custom-made from 19 cowhides, to last her lifetime. It's the ideal spot to cuddle up by the double-sided, wood-burning fireplace. Flower arrangement by Paperwhite Flowers in Thornbury.





feature

In a cosy nook on the other side of the living room is a mid-19th century thick-hewn pine school desk from Quebec. **TOP LEFT:** Modern and rustic come together in the main bathroom, which features a glassed-in shower with stone walls. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Antique sports equipment - wooden skis, a handmade toboggan, leather saddle and old ice skates - offers the nostalgia of winters passed.



The living room with its two-storey height and pine floor (not original to the cabin, but installed by Ralph in more recent years) is the showcase for much of Jonna's custom furniture and collectables. She sells many of the items in her store - the Mongolian sheepskin throw, the copper-shaded Lodge-style lamp, the slate-topped tables and iron lamps made by her son, John, and the cowhide rugs and furniture, to name just a few. The sofa is custom-made from 19 cowhides. "I wanted this to last me the rest of my life," she says, turning the cushions to show that the quality is consistent. "Leather looks better the older it gets." The rugs and accent pillows are also cowhide, as are the dining room chairs. "I love cowhide rugs and I sell a lot in my shop," says Jonna. "They last, you can vacuum them, and if you spill on them, you just wipe it off."

Every piece of Wind Haven has a heritage story behind it. Against the

living room wall stands a thick-hewn pine school bench and desk, dating from the mid-19th century, from Quebec. Like most of the antiques in the house (and the logs and beams of the house itself), it is old and rare. "It's a double bench, meant for two kids side-by-side. There's even graffiti on it," says Jonna.

Her extensive collection of antique native North American handicrafts, including hides, leatherwork, baskets, blankets, prints and twig furniture, is one of the home's dominant themes. One of the rarest pieces is a circa-1900 Navajo rug that hangs on the living room wall. Jonna points out how native art is increasingly rare. "I can't find these anymore," she says, referring to an Ojibwa reed basket decorated with sweetgrass and porcupine quills. "And very few people make new ones anymore." *Continued on page 102*

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TOP & BOTTOM LEFT: At the top of the spiral staircase is the master bedroom loft, outfitted with warm, plush bedding and another cowhide rug. A small antique desk and open shelving serve as bedside tables. **ABOVE:** The upper level of the front cabin has a second, more traditional bathroom with a claw-foot tub.

Jonna had the kitchen, dining room, bathroom and front hall renovated recently, and re-floored in stone. **Kim Hall** of **Pinetiques** in Clarksburg, oversaw the kitchen renovation, which embodies a rustic style similar to the rest of the home, with antique windows serving as the cupboard doors, and detailing like old-world lime green inside the cupboards.

The iron pot rack-lamp over the island is one of several forged pieces in the house made by Jonna's father, Ernst Mortensen. Fascinating decorative details abound throughout the home, including panels, picture frames and other detailing in birch bark and twigs by the late Diane April McVittie. On the living room wall is a colour print from an early 20th century automobile calendar in which a native man in traditional dress, paddling a canoe in a lake, looks up at a shiny new car passing on a winding road. This sums up Jonna's sense of style: a deep regard for the past and an eye for the contemporary. **OH**

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sweater CUSHIONS

BY ILEANA PALERMO // PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE FOX

Do you have a favourite sweater that you no longer wear? Pull it out of the drawer and make it into a throw cushion for a chair, sofa or your bed. With some basic sewing skills, the right tools and an insert, you can get warm and cosy with that sweater all over again.



Sweater Cushion Dos

- If you don't have a sweater on hand, visit your local thrift store.
- Hand-wash the sweater before starting your project.
- Consider adding a lining if your sweater is thin.
- Measure twice, cut once.
- Think outside the box. You can also use old leather or suede jackets. **OH**

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www.ourhomesmagazine.com/cushions

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good taste

the season of giving

INCORPORATING WINE & SPIRITS INTO YOUR HOLIDAY GIFTS

BY TONIA WILSON

The season of giving is upon us and for many of us, the list is long. What to give the boss? What to give the person who has everything? Is there something interesting to take to a holiday party other than the old standard of a bottle of cabernet sauvignon? Well, hopefully I can help in this department, as there's a world of fun gift-giving options out there. Of course there are all sorts of budgets, but I'll try to at least point you in the right direction for possibilities. Consider the following as a shopping list for all your gift-giving needs! (If you are unfamiliar with any of these wines or beers just ask for help while in your store, they should all be readily available).

HEADING TO A HOLIDAY PARTY?

Try taking a bottle of prosecco or cava, both are festive sparkling wines that won't break the bank.

A BOTTLE FOR THE BOSS?

A cabernet sauvignon from California, an Amarone from Italy or a burgundy from France are always solid choices. Or try a 10, 20 or 30 year old tawny port, this will last longer than one bottle of wine and will remind your boss how great you are over and over again.

THE FATHER, BROTHER, FATHER-IN-LAW, AND SO ON...?

Put together an interesting basket of beers, choose all different varieties to allow a real taste experience. Fill it with wheat beer, stout, Abbey-style ale, an India pale ale and anything else that seems interesting.

THE MOTHER, SISTER, MOTHER-IN-LAW, AND SO ON...?

Why not try a bottle of something floral, sweet and pretty. Dessert wines such as icewine, Beaulieu de Venise, moscato or late harvest wines are a real sweet treat and are the perfect way to finish off a meal or to sip chilled as an aperitif before dinner.

THE FOODIE IN YOUR LIFE?

Choose a region in the world such as Spain or Niagara and then fill a basket or wine crate with wines and food products from that area. You can add olive oil, cheese, mustards, preserves, etc.

If you have a little extra time on your hands you can always make some gifts that incorporate wines and spirits. Here are a couple of suggestions that are easy and delicious!

CLASSIC FRENCH CHICKEN LIVER PATÉ

Give this as a hostess gift with a nice baguette and a bottle of Chardonnay from France or Niagara.

2 tbsp unsalted butter

½ lb chicken livers, cleaned

½ cup white onion or shallots, finely chopped

2 tsp fresh thyme, finely chopped

½ cup dry white wine

Salt and pepper to taste

- Melt butter in a pan, add onions and thyme and cook until onions are translucent, about 10 minutes.
- Add wine and reduce for 1 minute.
- Add livers and cook through, 3-4 minutes. Place everything in a food processor, pureé to smooth and season to taste with salt and pepper.
- Place mixture in a glass crock or decorative ramekin and keep refrigerated until ready to give. Spread paté on bread slices and serve with chilled white wine.



LIMONCELLO



Here is an easy recipe for the sunny liqueur from the Amalfi coast in Italy. The first year I lived in Rome I made this as a Christmas gift for everyone in my family. On returning to Canada for the holidays I was stopped at Customs with a suitcase filled with the yellow bottles. Fortunately for me

(and my family), the Customs agent was Italian and let me pass through with my clandestine stash!

5 large lemons, washed well

750 ml vodka, a mid-priced brand is sufficient

2 ¾ cups sugar

2 ¼ cups water

- Peel the zest from all the lemons, making sure to avoid the white pith. Place in a large glass jar along with the vodka. Cover and let stand for 2 weeks in a dark place.
- When ready, heat sugar and water in a small pot, stir until sugar has completely dissolved. Let cool to room temperature.
- Strain vodka into sugar mixture and divide into decorative bottles for gift giving. Make sure to serve Limoncello straight from the freezer in small sherry glasses or shooter glasses. Salute! OH



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ALMOND GINGER CHOCOLATE BARK

+ *lots of topping variations*

BY MARIA DASILVA // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT HUNTER



ALMOND GINGER CHOCOLATE BARK

(Makes: about 20 pieces)

1 lb (450 g) dark chocolate, chopped

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup toasted whole almonds, coarsely chopped

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup candied ginger, thinly sliced

- Melt chocolate in a heatproof bowl set over a pot of gently simmering water, stirring often until smooth.
- Stir in about one third of each of the almonds and candied ginger. Pour mixture onto parchment paper-lined baking sheet and gently spread with the back of a spoon until about an even scant $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch (1 cm) thickness.
- Sprinkle with remaining almonds and candied ginger.
- Refrigerate until solid, about 20 minutes. Break or cut into pieces.
- The bark will keep refrigerated in an airtight container for about 1 week.
- For gift giving, package as desired.

Every year about this time, as the mercury drops and the days get shorter, my mind naturally turns to the fast-approaching holiday season. And one of my favourite holiday traditions is poring over cookbooks looking for inspiration for this year's homemade gifts from my kitchen. Nothing is sweeter than stirring, swirling and baking up tasty treats to wrap and deliver to friends, family, co-workers, teachers and other special folks in my life. While the cookies, candies and breads I bake may vary from year to year, a staple gift from my kitchen is chocolate bark. It's appealing because of its simplicity and opportunity for variations. Plus, it's chocolate – and who doesn't love the gift of chocolate?

There are few ingredients involved, so I like to splurge a little and choose the best chocolate I can find. Dark chocolate is my favourite base for bark – its rich, deep flavour complements the roasted nuts and sweet fruits that dot the surface. But milk chocolate and white chocolate (or perhaps all three!) work wonderfully as well. As for the nuts and fruit, anything goes. Peanuts, cashews, pecans, pistachios, hazelnuts, apricots, cranberries, raisins, cookie bits, candy pieces, pretzels, marshmallows – you get the point! Stick to three toppings at most so that each flavour gets a chance to shine without getting muddled in the mix.

For this year's bark, I'm going with the combination of dark chocolate, almonds and candied ginger – a little bit toasty, a little bit spicy and perfectly decadent. Happy holidays!

VARIATION:

Pistachio Cranberry
Apricot Swirl Bark - Melt separately 10 oz. (280 g) dark chocolate and 6 oz. (170 g) white chocolate. Stir one third of each: $\frac{2}{3}$ cup roasted shelled pistachios, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup dried apricots, quartered and $\frac{1}{3}$ cup dried cranberries into the melted dark chocolate. Spread onto baking sheet. Drizzle with melted white chocolate. Use toothpick, skewer, or back of knife to swirl the chocolates together. Sprinkle with remaining pistachios, apricots and cranberries. Continue as recipe above. **OH**



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WRAPPED UP *in style*

BY DEBORAH MASTERS // PHOTOGRAPHY BY TARA CHATTELL

For some gift-wrapping inspiration we turned to Deborah Masters of Deborah Masters Designs and she wowed us with three stunning styles!

1. GLAMOUR GIRL

Try an elegant colour palette of black, white and silver. Deborah used a black, corrugated gift bag to wrap a gift, covered it in lace paper and glammed it up with a jeweled ribbon, a light aqua ribbon and a silver clip-on bird.

2. NATURE LOVER

Venture out to your backyard to find some fresh greenery, like boxwood, to add to your wrapping. Deborah found some mini pinecones, a moss basket and some sticky-back cork paper at a local craft shop. She wrote the lucky recipient's name in chalk against a recycled piece of corrugated black paper.

3. CHIC CHICK

Using scrapbooking paper means you don't have to buy a whole roll and can personalize each gift. Playing off the gold in the design, Deborah chose beautiful gold and copper ribbons, added a few sticky jewels to the paper and topped off the gifts with embellished clip-on birds. **OH**



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For more gift-wrapping inspiration visit
www.ourhomesmagazine.com/wrapping

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