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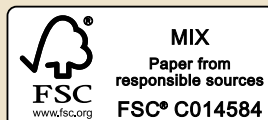
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LORI FRANCYK PHOTO

**BENIGN OR BELLIGERENT, NATURE CAN ALWAYS SURPRISE, DELIGHT OR SHOCK US.**

Anne and Russell Duncan endured a frightening thunderstorm after moving to their new log home near Huntsville. Secure in the knowledge that their house was protected with lightning rods, they knew this was just another facet of their new life in the country. Earlier, they had had a more unusual encounter with nature – this one involving a reptile.

The white pines that Matt Davidson used to build the couple's Norwegian dovetail log home were harvested in Northern Ontario where the Ministry of Natural Resources takes special precautions to protect threatened species, such as the Blanding's turtle. This slow-moving critter lives in shallow lakes and ponds. Although it moves slowly, it travels farther overland than any other Ontario turtle, sometimes several kilometres between nesting sites and summer habitat. To protect these reptiles, the ministry imposes restrictions on loggers to keep their trucks and skidders from crushing the turtles and disturbing their habitat.

Last spring, construction of the Duncans' new log home had to wait for these reptiles to get out of the way before their pine logs could be harvested and delivered to their master craftsman.

"Believe it or not, at that time there were turtles that were migrating and because the turtles were migrating across the logging area, they were not allowed to get the logs out of the woods," says Anne Duncan. "We had to wait for those turtles." They waited an extra two months for their timbers, but still managed to get their beautiful home finished in just over a year.

As Anne and Russell settle in at their country home, nature is generous with pleasant surprises. White-tailed deer continue to graze among the oaks surrounding the home. A black bear crossed the road, about 100 feet from the house, just days after they moved in. "People joke around about bears, but I never thought I'd actually see one, especially the first week we moved in," Anne says. She bought herself a bear bell. "We live in the country. The odds of us seeing another bear are pretty slim and, quite frankly, I'm not afraid at all, but it is still reality," she says.

See the results of their efforts on page 48.

*Walter Franczyk*

Walter Franczyk, *Managing Editor*  
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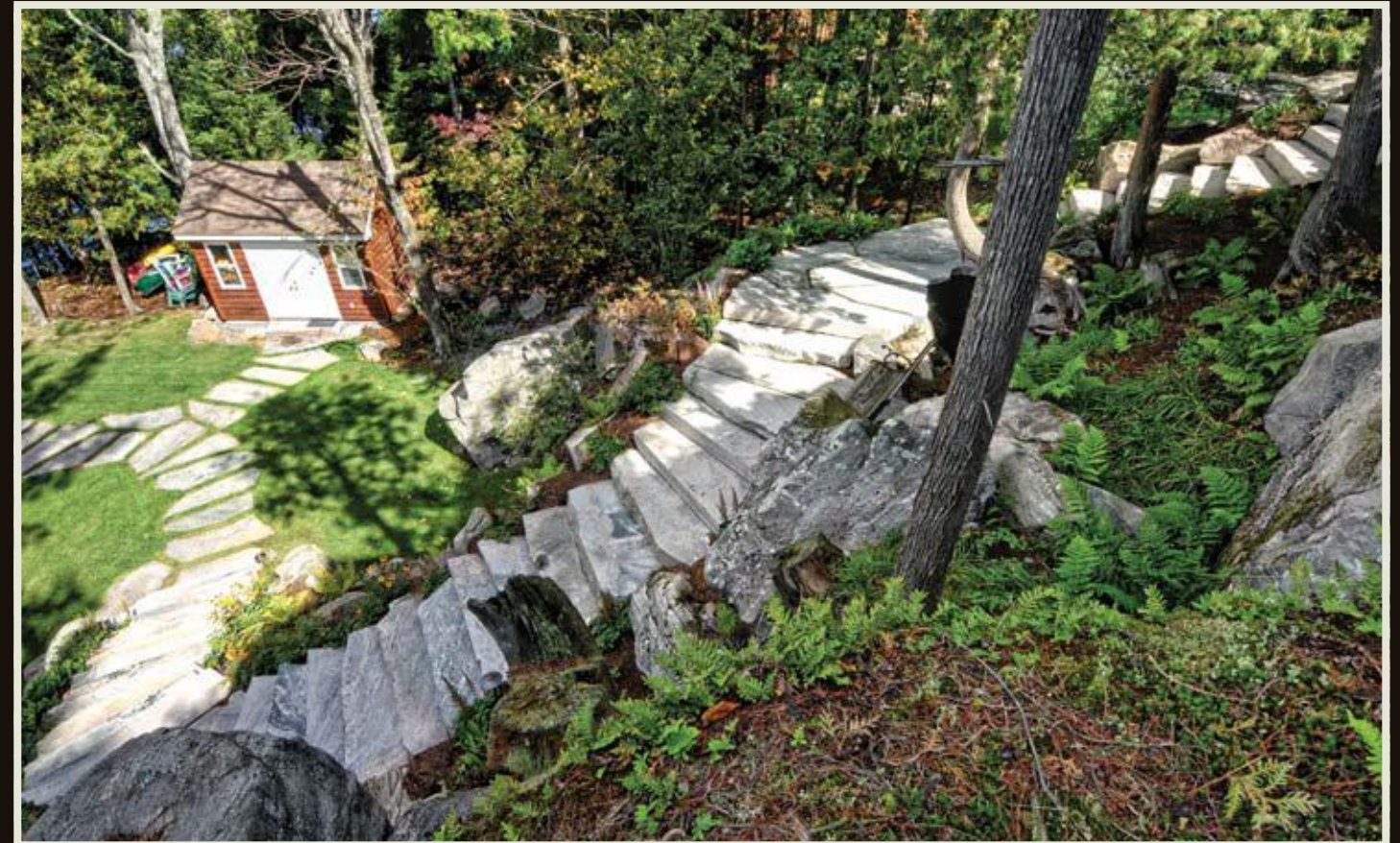
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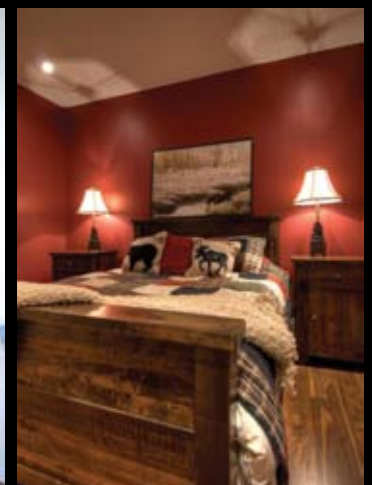


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advice

# TRENDING forward

## RAW & INDUSTRIAL IN 2013

With watermelons and popsicles a distant memory, it's time to forecast the upcoming trends for 2013. Ironically, when I look at the number "2013," I think of space travel and futuristic design. Maybe we're not quite there, but we are definitely heavy on industrial style – metals, glass and a whole lot of technology and innovation.

Have designers been drawing inspiration from manufacturing plants? Not sure. But we will certainly be able to decorate our homes to look like one.

### METALS

Hot rolled, cold rolled, powder coated, you name it; steel is an unbreakable trend. Tables, chairs, tiles; the industrial trend is becoming more refined than factory, but the presence of steel will be huge.



Another metal that will continue to make its comeback is brushed brass. Not the shiny kind. That disappeared after the financial crisis in the 80s. Brass evokes quality and timelessness. Cabinet hardware, faucets, lighting; brushed nickel hasn't gone by the wayside, but we now have a serious contender.

### WOOD

Completely contradicting what we'll be seeing in paints, woods are appearing softer, muted and grey-washed. We'll see a lot of smooth looking oak in the market, wide planks, very Belgian in feel. From flooring to furniture, this natural aesthetic will make the jump from high-end to mainstream.

### CONCRETE

Concrete flooring, faux wallpaper and products (yes, there are concrete lights out there!) are just some of what we'll be seeing.



Designer Stephanie Redmond answers your questions.

The wallpaper is fascinating because the optical illusion that it's concrete or another material is so realistic you literally have to go and touch the paper to see if it's the real deal.

### WALL COVERINGS

Poor old paint may just not be enough anymore. Glass, leather, metals and wallpaper are just some of the wall cladding we'll see in the upcoming year. Using back-painted glass panels in a shower creates a completely seamless wall leaving you with a translucent feel and no grout lines. Leather tiles will also become more popular as a wall material (and floor, actually) adding richness and texture to an otherwise drab piece of drywall. It's becoming available in several patterns and colours taking the place of wallpaper for a slightly more luxurious effect.

### COLOUR

For the colour enthusiasts out there, it's definitely your year! With this natural base of wood, glass and metal, colour will be hot and anything goes. It may just be a pop of colour, but the pop is definitely more dramatic – more of a go big or go home approach. Admittedly, after so many beige years, it's uplifting.



PIXEL CUSHION BY BEV HISEY

### TECHNOLOGY

Trending forward we have to touch on technology. We've seen USB outlets added to regular power outlets and thermostats that teach themselves your schedule and that you can adjust from your phone. I can't wait to see what comes next but I know it will make our lives easier and of course, more stylish! **OH**



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## style picks

*'Courage is not the towering oak that sees storms come and go; it is the fragile blossom that opens in the snow.'*  
 — Alice M. Swaim

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## feature

Carved wooden posts with hand-hewn brackets frame a warm welcome on the porch of Debi Latham and Steve Hutchings' neo-gothic style cottage. Denise Adams-Lawrence of West Eden Design Studio helped plan exterior timber trusses and decorative wood details. Charles A. Murray & Co. Ltd. installed the copper work and cedar roofing.



# heavenly HAVEN

BY RICK SHURMAN // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY

Nestled comfortably on the quiet northern shore of Lake Joseph rests a wonderfully inspired tribute to gothic architectural design.

From the steeped gables and dormered roof lines to the period-accurate scrolled trim borders and lead-taped windows, this stunning 2,000 sq. ft. cottage presents the elegance of 18th and 19th century classic church design with the very best that contemporary construction has to offer... and then some. A heavenly haven of the highest order.

When Debi Latham and her husband, Steve Hutchings, decided to sell their quaint log cabin on Lake of Bays some six years ago, they knew precisely what they wanted for their new retreat. The decision to be on one of the big three Muskoka lakes was clear from the onset. They purchased a boat, enlisted the help of their good friend and real estate representative **Dan Imrie** of **Chestnut Park Real Estate Ltd.** and

began a year-long hunt to discover just the right location. Debi and Steve inspected potential properties with a compass in hand and a very keen eye to ensure they found exactly the desired positioning.

When they finally came upon the current site, they knew, distinctly, that this was the one. Four plus acres, 285 feet of frontage and a flat and level building area with a gradual slope to the lake. "The site faces northwest, which naturally offers the rising sun and the glorious Muskoka sunsets as well," says Debi. "What else would you want but a coffee at sunrise in the sunroom and a glass of wine at sunset on the dock?" The fact that they most often have the prevailing breeze drifting through to keep the bugs at bay in the early spring was icing on the cake and sealed the deal. *Continued on page 27*



After much investigation, they discovered and downloaded a set of cottage plans from the Internet. Created by Architect Rodney L. Pfothauer, the neo-gothic design, by and large, met their criteria. They paid \$750 for the plans and got Pfothauer's blessing to make whatever changes and adaptations were necessary.

Steve would suggest that Debi has a serious penchant for detail, but is quick to add that she also has the skill-set to back it up. She and Steve own a business that deals with the fabrication and installation of high temperature insulation for industrial furnaces. "I'm pretty familiar with software programs such as AutoCAD and Chief Architect because they are tools that I employ at work," Debi explains.

Her facility with these programs would ultimately allow her and Steve to flesh out and experiment with the architectural drawings to include their own take on dimension, material finishes and elements such as window heights and trims. Debi was able to zero in on much of the detail before a nail was driven. *Continued on page 29*

**OPPOSITE:** Bateman Custom Furniture & Cabinetry put a distressed finish on the black cabinets lining the walls of the cookery. **RIGHT:** Seen from the second-floor loft, the great room's towering windows flank the granite fireplace by Felsman Masonry Ltd. **BELOW:** A plaid rocker, a comfortable arm chair and a plaid and leather sofa offer intimate seating by the fire in the great room.





**FAR LEFT:** Avignon ladderback chairs surround the dining table with French provincial style. Brenton's Interiors refinished the home's antiques and provided drapes, upholstery and bed skirts. **LEFT:** Morning sunlight beams through lead-taped windows and bathes the Muskoka room. **BELOW:** Hot water heated racks keep towels warm in the bathrooms.



As it was to be just the two of them, plus occasional guests, it was important to keep the size down to a manageable square footage. It would allow them to focus on construction details and finishes. "With a contained size, the fine finishing becomes far more affordable. Better to have less space and better finishings than the other way around," Debi says.

**Joe Ball** of **MPS Engineering** drafted plans for the new building and did the engineering. Once they had the basic design in place they decided that because of the traditional style with all its filigree, it needed to "man-up," according to Debi. They contacted **Denise Adams-Lawrence** of **West Eden Design**, to discuss adding timber frame details to the gothic structure. Denise offered up some stunning truss work to add strength

and weight to the dormers and archways. She even managed to add a traditional carved pineapple, a symbol of welcome, beneath the main truss. Twig panels, reminiscent of the Adirondack camps in upstate New York adorn the outside walls, bringing a rustic, but intricate measure to the house, along with twig webbing and hand-hewn support posts for the decking and porches. All of these rugged details, along with the board and batten exterior wall surface, lend a more masculine feel to the structure.

It was time to make official contact with **Harold Blower** of **Rose Point Contracting**, a man and a company they had researched thoroughly and clearly decided was the firm for the task ahead. Debi and Steve were confident that Harold, along with his superb suppliers and sub-trades would be not only competent, but additive. *Continued on page 31*



Debi felt compelled to personally supervise each and every step of the building. For the better part of a year and most often three to four days a week, she was on site to participate in the project.

As an example, she and Steve decided the fireplace was to be a Rumford design, which demands a shallow box, roughly 12 inches deep. But in this case, they wanted a tall opening with shallow depth so that the heat would radiate outward with more intensity. **Felsman Masonry Ltd.** was up for the challenge. They did the research, brought in the appropriate material and executed the design without a hitch. "It turned out exactly as planned and works wonderfully well on those lovely fall and winter days when the fireplace is put to good use," Steve and Debi remark.

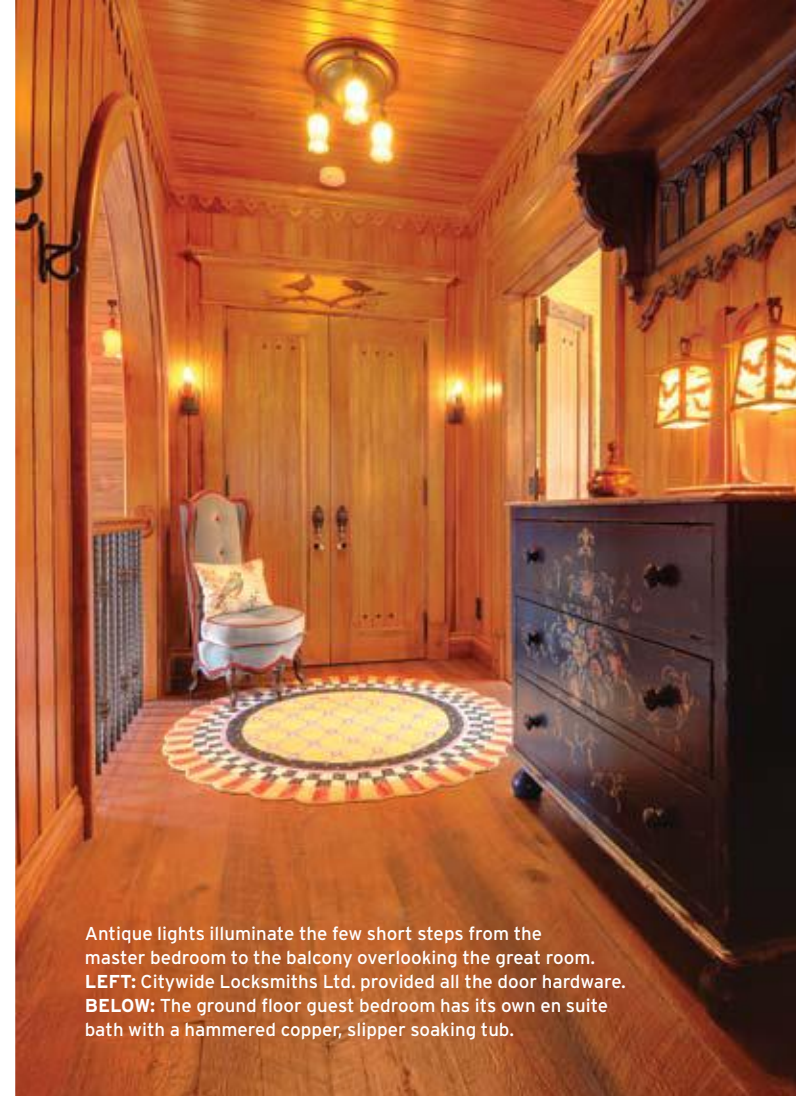
The heating system, designed and installed by **Ryman Plumbing and Electrical**, is another remarkable example. It was preordained that home comfort would be managed using a radiant system with water heated by two boilers in the basement control room. The house is warmed with gothic styled, flat black cast iron radiators, imported from England.

*Continued on page 34*

**OPPOSITE:** A gothic-style window and claw-foot tub create a cathedral of comfort in the master bedroom en suite bath. **TOP LEFT:** The bathroom sink and matching toilet from Kohler are decorated with an English Trellis design. **LEFT:** Iron railings by K-W Ornamental Iron Works Ltd. guard the stairs of reclaimed hemlock. **ABOVE:** A tall dormer provides ample head space for the second-floor master bedroom.



feature



Antique lights illuminate the few short steps from the master bedroom to the balcony overlooking the great room. LEFT: Citywide Locksmiths Ltd. provided all the door hardware. BELOW: The ground floor guest bedroom has its own en suite bath with a hammered copper, slipper soaking tub.



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# feature

Everything from the door hardware supplied by Citywide Locksmiths, to the hemlock flooring from **Century Wood Products Ltd.**, the kitchen and bathroom millwork from **Bateman Custom Furniture & Cabinetry** and the window and door design and construction by **Ross Windows & Doors**, are second to none.

The time, research, and resources put into constructing every inch of the place is really quite apparent. No stone was left unturned, including the stones that make up the magnificent landscaping and patio bordering the lake side of the house. Mark and his son Sean of **Brent Quarries** spent five months on the project. It is more sculpture garden, than simply a patio and stairs.

Steve and Debi naturally love their Muskoka getaway for all the right reasons, but high on the list is the fact that they were directly involved in the design and construction every step of the way. They sit back and look around, impressed and positively thrilled with the final result. "It is absolute stress relief," Steve says. "A place to shut down and unwind."

Steve and Debi feel very lucky all the way around. Fortunate in life and blessed with this vision realized, they are Muskoka-bound as often as possible and that includes three out of every four weekends in the winter.

Morning breakfast in the glass porch or sunroom and then a glass of wine at sunset on the dock, just as planned. Truly, a marriage made in heaven. **OH**

**RIGHT:** The home's tall chimney and roof are an impressive sight in the front yard where Windermere Garden Centre planted the landscape. **BELOW:** Sturdy wooden deck chairs overlook the view of Lake Joseph.



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# BEHIND THE SCENES

BY WALTER FRANCZYK



**Eric Doetsch**  
Owner, **Bacher Construction Ltd.**

**BEST ADVICE:** Use a reputable excavation company that's up to date with all building codes. Bacher provides demolition, excavation, foundations, landscaping and full-site preparation. With one company responsible for all these facets, the grading, elevations and co-ordination are all done properly. Work with your architect to design exactly what you desire at the start of the project – that will save thousands of dollars and provide the results you want.

*Continued on page 38*

**Matt & Brenda Ryan**

Owners, FAD Architects

**BEST ADVICE:** When it comes to designing a building by FAD, all you need is the property and vision. "We will put it all together," says Brenda. "The key for us is getting to know the clients, how they live and what they want the experience to be," says Matt. "It's more about designing a lifestyle than designing a building. We'll design something that suits them and is specific to their site and lifestyle." *Continued on page 40*



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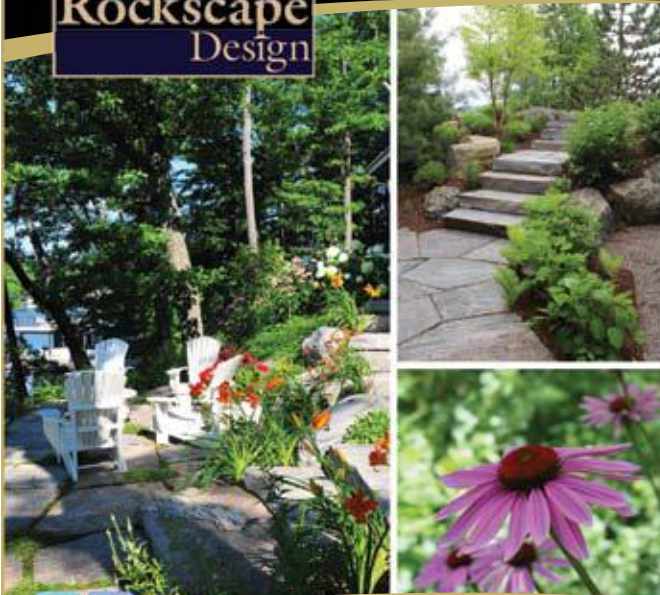
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**John Krynicki**

**Owner, Window Quilt Muskoka**

**BEST ADVICE:** Have a sense of what you want to achieve, not only for the look and esthetics, but also the function, energy efficiency, light control and privacy. "Figure out what's most important," says John. "That will help us tailor the best options for you. We specialize in indoor and outdoor living solutions to enhance your space without taking it over." ❧

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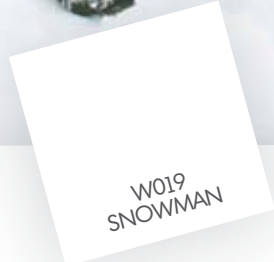
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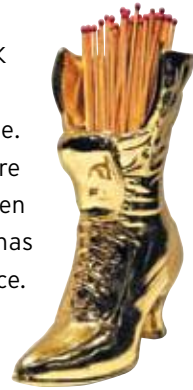
# SIZZLING SHOP

STORY AND PHOTOS BY WALTER FRANCZYK

**THE PLACE:** **The Fireplace King** has a new castle. About two years in the making, the state-of-the-art store boasts more fireplaces than most people have ever seen in one place. Owner Randy Nickason estimates he has more than 45 working fireplaces in the new showplace. "People want to see how they work," he explains. The Huntsville company has been installing fireplaces since 1975. The new store for home heating and cooling products opened in October. With more than double the space of its previous location on Bickley Country Drive, the new 8,000 sq. ft. shop draws customers from all over Muskoka. "It's more of a destination now," Randy says. "It is so unique."

**THE STYLE:** The fiery display showcases the function and appearance of a wide variety of fireplaces, stoves and the most up-to-date heating products. Expert masonry surrounds gas and wood-burning fireplaces in an impressive array of stonework, including river rock, ashlar, granite veneer, brick, marble, cultured stone and much more. Customers can actually see what each fireplace looks like when installed and alight. Complementing the fireplaces and stoves, the shop offers accessories such as firewood racks, bellows, wood baskets, tool sets, steamers, screens and candelabra.

**THE PRODUCTS:** The Fireplace King sells and services a wide range of home heating and cooling products - wood, gas and propane fireplaces,



stoves, furnaces and space heaters, boilers, barbecue grills, geothermal systems and radiant floor heating. In-store displays include an operating geothermal system, boilers and furnaces. For exterior comfort and ambience, the store also carries patio flames, wall torches and heaters.

**WHAT'S HOT:** Just about everything in the store. "Today's trend in fireplaces seems to be a more modern, clean-faced look with large viewing areas and guillotine doors," says Randy. "There is a lot more contemporary design in homes and cottages. It blends well with rustic Muskoka."

**PASSION:** "I enjoy my job regardless of what I do," says Randy. "I spend a lot of my time on job sites dealing with contractors."

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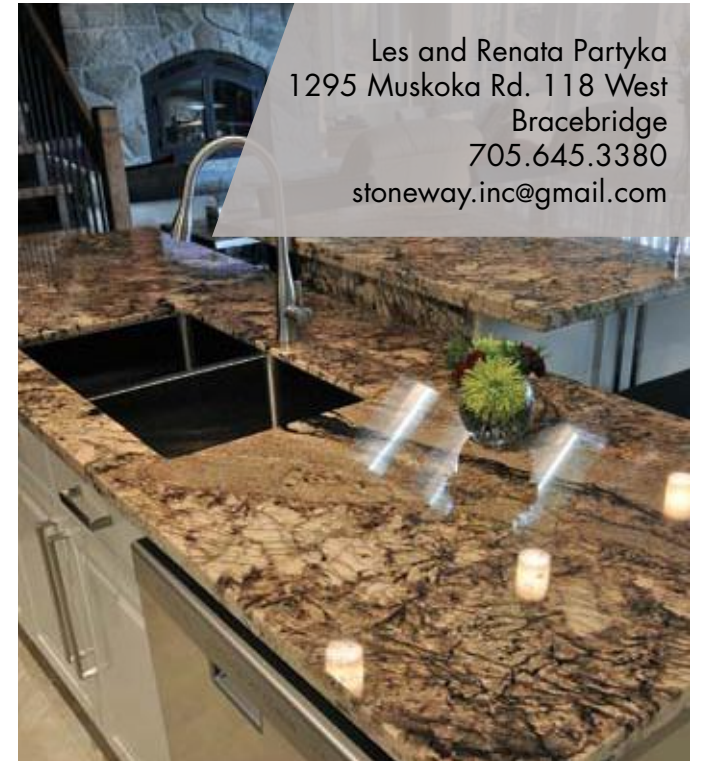
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On cool days, daily life centres around the fireplace in the great room of Anne and Russell Duncan's new log home. **OPPOSITE:** Standing alongside master craftsman Matt Davidson (right), Russell and Anne hold their Havanese dog Cooper.

BY WALTER FRANCYK // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY

# Going country

A few days after Anne and Russell Duncan moved into their new log home, a violent thunderstorm struck. It roared in the night, shaking the ground and the granite ridge where their home sits, high above Robinson Lake.

"We never had experienced a thunderstorm like it," Russell says. "As the lightning hit, it reflected off the lake like a mirror. It was like a flash going off in our bedroom. There was thunder and lightning all around us."

The memory of this fearsome encounter with nature is fresh in their minds. "We laid in bed that night, trying to be brave," Anne recalls. "But I must say I was also thinking, thank God we have a lightning protection system." The couple had done their homework. When planning their new Arts and Crafts-style home, atop a rocky hill overlooking Robinson Lake, Vernon Lake and the Big East River, they considered the elevation – 600 feet higher than nearby Huntsville. With at least one tree on their land already scorched by lightning, they realized the house needed protection from nature's fury. **Simpson Lightning Rods** installed lightning rods on every peak of the house, with braided copper wire connecting the rods to the ground to dissipate electricity when lightning strikes.

This foresight typifies the Duncans' careful approach to building their retirement home. As executives with large multinational companies, they had lived in Mississauga for more than 25 years. As they retired from their challenging careers, they were ready for a fresh start and more space. "We both were born in Montreal and always lived near water. Being near water is important to us," says Russell. When they saw the view of the lakes and realized the privacy they could have on the five-and-a-half-acre property, west of Huntsville, they were thrilled. They thoroughly researched the town's amenities – a new hospital, good doctors and a nurse practitioner clinic. They discovered nice restaurants, beautiful resorts, good golfing and parks with nature trails – all just a couple of hours from Toronto. They were sold. *Continued on page 51*





Alison Davidson built the maple cabinets for the kitchen. For more control over the colour and texture of the countertops, the Russells had them custom-made of cast stone. **OPPOSITE TOP:** HD Threshing Floor Furniture used reclaimed hemlock to make the trestle dining table, hutch, console and side tables. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** New leather couches and arm chairs from their old home furnish the Duncans' great room.

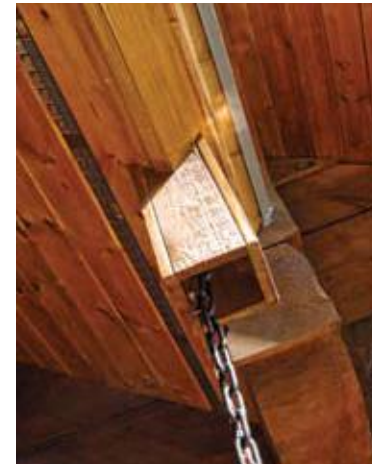


The Duncans found their log home builder **Matt Davidson** on the Internet. "His unique approach is what got us," Russell says. "He's a man of integrity and passion and you can see it in what he does." Everyone they spoke to said **Davidson Log & Timber Artisans Inc.** delivers quality, on time and without compromise. "This is the first home we've ever built," says Anne. "That's why we needed someone we could really trust." The Duncans studied every facet of the building. "We sourced the vendors, we met them, took them to lunch. We wanted to know what kind of people we'd be working with." When they chose a trade or supplier, they consulted Matt, who helped oversee the many trades on the project.

Using massive white pines from Northern Ontario, Matt built them a 2,500 sq. ft. Norwegian dovetail log home. Most living space, including the master bedroom, open concept great room and laundry room, is on the ground floor. "As you get older, it's nice to have everything on one floor," says Anne. "We're fit, but I'd rather use my fitness in ways other than carrying a laundry basket up and down stairs." A second-floor loft holds a guest bedroom, bathroom and a large study. Double french doors in the master bedroom open on a screened Muskoka room, finished in cedar, with a hot tub in the corner overlooking the lakes. The finished basement contains their fitness equipment. *Continued on page 53*



Illuminated by natural light and an elk antler chandelier, the log tower at the main entrance tapers from 15-by-15 feet at the base to 12-by-12 feet at the top. OPPOSITE: The timber-framed eyebrow dormers took careful planning. Norwegian dovetails lock logs at the corners. A chain drains water from the built-in eaves trough and a carved fleur de lis sprouts over the main entrance while the tapered tower stands guard.



At the home's main entrance, a sturdy log tower guards the door like a sentinel. Russell says they wanted a foyer, closed to the weather, an air lock to keep the heat in and the cold out. Matt expanded on that idea, turning it into a tapered tower, 22 feet high.

A house in Colorado with a tapered tower of glass and steel inspired Matt. "I thought it was really cool, but I thought it would be even cooler built out of logs. It was a challenge," he says. "Scribing logs together on an angle is a different mindset."

Built on the north side of the house, the tower fills with light from windows at the top and provides a balance to the roof line. "It gives the house that wow factor when you walk up to it and then again when you enter," Matt says. Illuminated with a chandelier of elk antlers, it houses stairs to the second-floor loft.

At the front of the house, Russell suggested they install eyebrow dormers to break up the straight lines of the cedar-clad roof and admit more daylight to the great room and loft. Matt welcomed the challenge and painstakingly calculated the geometry to make the timber-framed dormers work.

Another feature he tried for the first time is old-style rain gutters with the eaves trough hidden behind heavy cedar fascia board. "We love doing the details that you just don't see any more," Matt says.

Matt's wife Alison built the maple cabinetry in the kitchen and walk-in pantry as well as the bathroom vanities. Evergreen Cast

Stone custom-made the stone kitchen counter tops and island while Gravenhurst Plumbing, Heating & Electric installed radiant heating beneath the reclaimed barn board hemlock floors by Nostalgic Wood Inc. Matt's brother John Davidson built the Rumford granite fireplace in the great room, installed the heated granite floor in both the sunroom and foyer and applied stone veneer to the home's exterior. Edwards Electric installed all wiring, light fixtures and the back-up power generator. Stoneridge Iron Works forged the fireplace tools, screen and wood carrier, enhancing the traditional look of the great room, where the Duncans spend much of their time in the cool months of autumn.

"Our inspiration was to have a wide open space and a warm feeling," Anne says. Soft leather sofas, in a shade of red called Monte Cristo, and armchairs from their Mississauga home encircle a large coffee table by the fire. The armchairs and furniture in the sunroom and all artwork, lamps and light fixtures were provided at the suggestion of Patricia Lorimer, an interior decorator from Mississauga. On the other side of the great room, a seven-foot trestle table, as well as a hutch, console and side tables, made of gleaming reclaimed hemlock, complement the ambience. "It's great for entertaining," Anne says. "The flow is amazing, people can sit where they want. They feel more at home, they're free to roam around because it's open." She reckons they've had more visitors in three months than they'd usually have all year long at their Mississauga home. *Continued on page 56*

A stained-glass window, bought as an anniversary gift, glows in the all-season Muskoka room. Gresham House Furniture MFG Inc. custom-made the furniture. Geothermal heat warms the granite floor.



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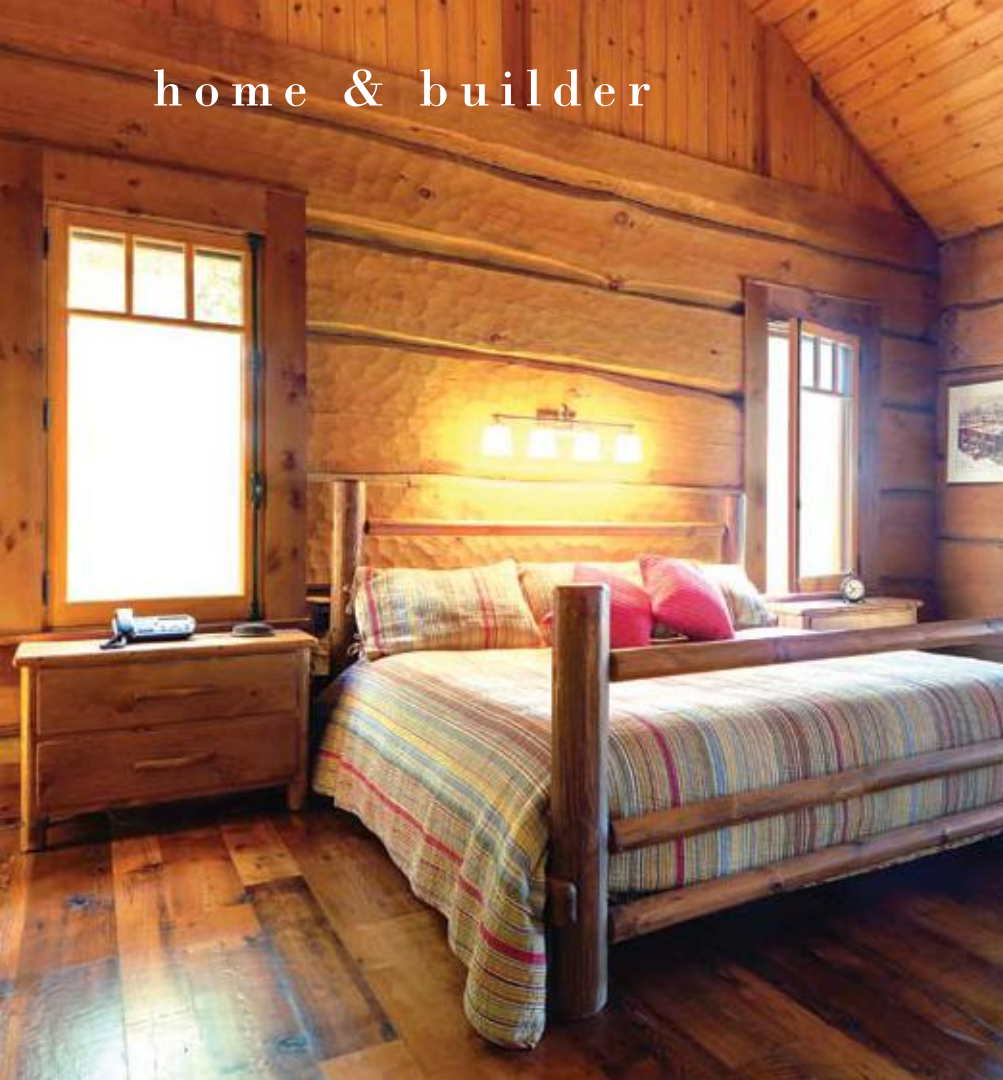
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**LEFT:** The warmth of wood suffuses the ground-floor master bedroom. **BELOW:** Alison Davidson crafted his-and-hers vanities in the en suite. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Celtic crosses, carved into timbers, flank the claw foot slipper tub in the en suite.



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Throughout the home Matt crafted delightful surprises. Above the main door archway, he carved a fleur de lis in honour of Anne's French heritage. A shamrock cut into the wall of the dining room salutes Russell's Irish roots. "He does things that are unexpected," Russell says approvingly.

Working with the Duncans was the best part of the project, Matt says. "They gave us their trust to do things carte blanche and this allowed us to show what can be done architecturally with logs, as well as complete artistic freedom."

Although they've lived in their new home for only a few months, the Duncans enjoy the sense of community they feel here. While the road to their home may seem like the middle of nowhere, they're just minutes from town. "We don't feel isolated at all," Anne says. "It's country life and it's nice. It's quiet and peaceful." Even Cooper, their tiny Havanese dog, helps keep it that way. He's learned not to bark at the deer that silently graze just outside the kitchen window. **OH**

SOURCE GUIDE

Cedar Roof Ontario, Gresham House Furniture MFG., HD Threshing Floor Furniture, Natural Images Gardening & Landscaping Ltd., Peerless Security, Pioneer Handcraft, West Eden Design Studio.

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# decorating

Even when unlit, artfully arranged wood in or near your fireplace will impart a feeling of warmth in your living space.



# COMPLETELY CANADIAN

BY YANIC SIMARD



PHOTO BY BRANDON BARRE

Whether you're from Canada or not, it's hard for anyone not to be inspired by the true North and its beautiful elements, which we are lucky enough to find in our own backyard, the great outdoors.

## Here are my three favourite ways to incorporate our heritage into our homes.

**1. THE USE OF FABRIC:** Add Canadian character and charm to your home with the simple use of textiles.

**Plaid Upholstery:** Whether it be gingham, tartan, or tattersall, this popular pattern consisting of several crossed horizontal and vertical lines (usually in two or more colours) speaks directly to the essence of Canadian settlers. My favourite way to incorporate it in décor is with upholstery. I personally prefer it in smaller doses, such as for sofa pillows or dining room seats, however a club chair completely covered looks amazing as well.

**Cosy Throws:** Curling up on the sofa on a cold winter's day wouldn't be the same without one of these. Here are my three favourite classics:

- **Point Blanket:** It wouldn't be right if I didn't start with this iconic blanket by The Bay – this wool Point blanket dates back to the 18th century and used to be traded. It continues to be a number one seller and is sold exclusively by The Hudson's Bay Company.
- **Faux Fur:** Fox, mink or coyote – these Canadian creature-mimicked furs can be the perfect Canuck-inspired addition to your space for added comfort and even luxuriousness.
- **Matelassé:** Meaning quilted, padded or cushioned, and normally referring to hand-quilted textiles. It is meant to mimic the style of hand-stitched Marseilles, a type of quilt made in Provence, France. Incorporating these fabrics into your décor can be the subtle hint of pattern and texture you're looking for.



Point Blanket by The Hudson's Bay Company

Glamwood: Nero Tile from Stone Tile Inc.

Woodgrain fabric: Cinnabar from Robert Allen

Subway Paintable Wallpaper from Graham & Brown

If you're looking for another option next to the real thing, there are many imposter materials that mimic the natural look and feel of wood.



Taking inspiration from the great outdoors: acorns, feathers, ornithological prints.

PHOTO BY BRANDON BARRE

**2. THE USE OF WOOD:** Nothing warms up a space quite like the use of natural wood.

**Walls:** I particularly like walls sheltered in large, real-wood planks. Douglas fir or cedar – both known for their distinctive grain patterns and tight knots – are each suitable choices when it comes to selecting the type of wood to use.

**Accessories:** Dress up the inside or the surrounding area of your fireplace with logs of wood – even without the use of fire, this actually does create a feeling of warmth too.

**3. THE ADDITION OF ANTIQUES:** If the northern vibe is the look, an old piece of Canadian history is most definitely calling. Usually an item made of wood, such as an old sled, pair of skis or a rocking chair will feel the most rustic and true to the heritage.

### My tips for antique hunting:

- Do your research before heading out – know what you are looking for.
- Bring with you a magnifying glass to check for dates, signatures, imperfections.
- Touch, smell and handle the piece. Get familiar with what you're looking to buy before you buy it. If you have any doubts, don't be afraid to ask questions. **OH**



PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY TV

Create a rustic vibe with historical wooden items; antique skis, or a weathered sled.

Canadian Colour Scheme (Benjamin Moore)

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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 local liquor 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, Beaufort 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 tbsps 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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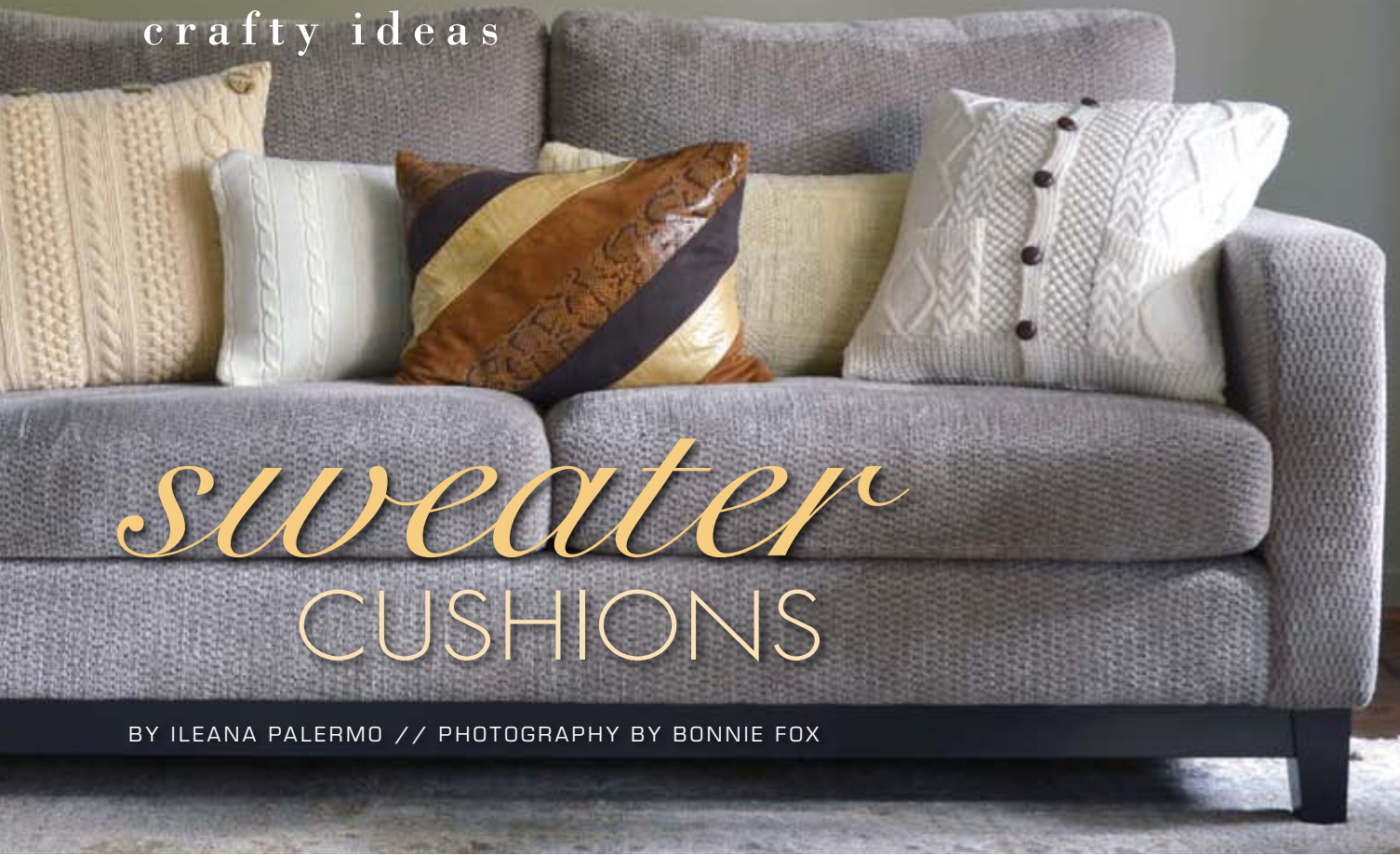
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crafty ideas



# 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**

online

Want to make one? Get instructions: [www.ourhomesmagazine.com/cushions](http://www.ourhomesmagazine.com/cushions)

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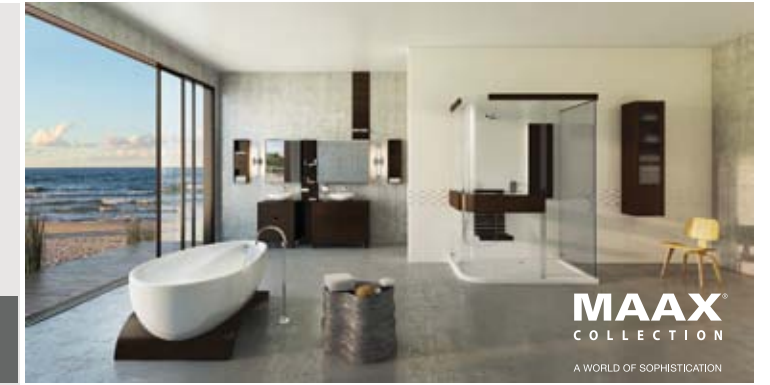
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real estate

## HOME INSPECTION RAISING THE BAR

BY JILL ELLIS

**B**ill Mullen has high hopes! The Ontario-based home inspector is also the director of external relations for a new organization, the National Home Inspector Certification Council (NHICC).

The NHICC is pushing for nation-wide licensing of home inspectors, but at this time Ontario, the Atlantic Provinces and Saskatchewan are just looking at this possibility.

Alberta and British Columbia already license home and property inspectors. B.C. led the way, endorsing inspectors since April 1, 2009, while Alberta came onside September 1, 2011. Neither of these came about without a lot of pushing from interest groups within those provinces, and Mullen doesn't expect it to be much different in Ontario, though he hopes that the timeframe to have licensing passed into law could be shortened because of the groundwork done by those first two provinces.

According to Peter Link, manager of house and property inspection registration for the Applied Science Technologists and Technicians of B.C. (ASTTBC), his organization lobbied for two decades to make this happen.

Helene Barton, Executive Director of the B.C. branch of the Canadian Association of Home and Property & Inspectors, (CAHPI), agrees. "We lobbied the government for eight years to have our industry regulated because prior to that anyone who bought a ladder and had a business card could say they were a home inspector. Many were charlatans."

Though there are training courses and college programs in all provinces, in most provinces there is no onus on someone who calls him/herself a home inspector to take such education. In the two provinces that currently license, the several certifying organizations that exist require some or all of the following to become licensed: specialized education (number of hours varies from organization to organization), a practical (or field) test, written exam, a peer inspection process, and, finally, an application to the



provincial licensing body. In the case of B.C., that's Consumer Protection B.C. For Alberta, it's Service Alberta. The outcome of the application process is not ideal, according to Darcy McGregor, secretary and founding member of CAHPI Alberta. "We thought they (the government) would raise everyone to the highest level, like our members follow, but they said that wouldn't be fair."

While the expectations aren't as high as he'd like, McGregor says, "Licensing at least gives homeowners a bit more assurance that the person they are dealing with has some education and the ability to look after them as a home inspector."

Link echoes this sentiment: "We pushed for one certifying organization and one standard of practice, but there are four in B.C." So buyer beware is still in force, and homeowners must research any home inspector they are thinking of hiring. "The onus is still on the homeowner. (They should ask) where did they get their education; do they have experience in the field to have the ability to recognize problems."

Barton, though, feels that the process has been overall positive. "It got rid of a lot of people who are unqualified. We are still trying to get the consumer to ask about the licence before hiring a home inspector. It gives them peace of mind knowing that they (inspectors) are qualified." Though there is mixed reaction to the outcomes in B.C. and Alberta, there's one point that McGregor, Link and Barton all agree on – home inspectors in those provinces are now required to carry errors and omissions insurance. They must be insured up to \$1 million, so if they miss something during an inspection and this results in a costly repair, the homeowner may have financial recourse.

One piece of the puzzle that is still missing, according to Nigel Trevethan, of Harper Grey LLP and legal counsel for CAHPI B.C., is a "cooling off period, like many other large purchases." He thinks it's regrettable that the "government hasn't mandated that every real estate transaction must involve a home inspection. This is especially important in an overheated housing market, like Vancouver." He feels that this is key to consumer protection.

So, though Mullen's hopes for the future of licensing in Ontario – and throughout the country – are high, experience tells us that the outcome may be less than stellar but better than the status quo. **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.

#### 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

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!



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## real estate

BY TERRY SMITH  
ILLUSTRATION BY SHEILA BRITTON

# YOU CAN'T ALWAYS GET WHAT YOU WANT



We have a lot of needs in our culture. We need a place to live, a car, a job and lots of money to buy all kinds of things, from clothing to food, dinners out, vacations, flat screen TVs, lots of shoes, concert tickets, Tim Hortons or Starbucks twice a day... the list goes on!

When it comes to buying a home, we each have different needs – some may need a certain type of location, others a certain size of home, others a certain number of bedrooms, still others a finished basement for their kids to hang out with friends. Some people have a very long list of needs, others have a shorter list. We have all experienced the frustration of trying to get

“But what if we looked at it differently? What if we shifted our perspective?”

that we NEED this or we need that, but the truth is that for most of us, we are living far beyond our needs and well into our wants. After all, our only real needs are food and shelter (and hopefully love and friendship). Everything else, if we are honest about it, is a want.

When it comes to looking for a home, aside from the roof we hope to put over our heads, everything else on our list is really a want. The important thing about wants is that they are WANTS. This means that they are nice to have, maybe even hugely important to have, but sad as it is

to say, they do not rise to the level of need. You may have heard the news – you can't always get what you want – especially if your list of wants is long!

I recently helped clients new to Canada with their home search. They started with a long list of wants, the top of which was a certain location. Of course, as luck would have it, the other wants on their list were not terribly available at the price they wanted to pay, in the location they wanted. Imagine that! So to test their conviction about the various wants on their list, I took them to a bunch of other locations where the other wants were more available at their price point. What did I find? They were happy that the other wants were being met, but they didn't like the locations. Imagine that.

Now, in this case, we had the benefit of time pressure to focus the mind. They needed to find a home (see, a real NEED – shelter!) within a fairly short time frame. So we spent some time coming to terms with the truth of the search – they would have to make trade-offs between the various wants on their list. If they wanted this set of wants, they would have to forgo certain others. In other words, they were not likely to get everything they wanted, so they would have to focus on getting their most important wants met.

This actually became kind of a fun game as we tested the various wants. During each home visit, as they would voice their reactions, one of us would blurt out the guiding principle of the search – trade-offs! In the end, they came back to the original location and gave up some of the features they liked in the homes in other locations. And having gone through the process, with realism and eyes open, they made their final decision fairly quickly and with confidence that they had made the right trade-offs, satisfying their higher wants and leaving the lesser ones on the table.

Try this little shift in perspective next time you are looking for a home. Ask your agent to keep you honest about the trade-offs you'll need to make. You'll find the search easier, more fun and more fruitful. You can't always get what you want. But if you try sometime, you just might find, you get what you need. **OH**

*Terry Smith is a real estate agent and builder of classic style homes.*

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# HOW TO CHOOSE a mattress

BY ADRIENNE BROWN // ILLUSTRATION BY SHEILA BRITTON

Tossing and turning all night? It may be time to trade in your mattress. After all, if you spend six-to-eight hours on it every night, it's the most important investment piece in your home!

Most people replace their mattresses about every 10 to 12 years, says Dave Friesema, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at Sleep Country Canada, but you should start re-evaluating your sleeping situation after about eight years.

When you're ready to invest in a new bed, Friesema says choosing the right mattress begins before you even enter a store.

## BEFORE YOU GO

Set aside some time to go shopping for your new mattress. It shouldn't take all day, but you don't want to be rushed, either. Allow enough time to talk with a salesperson and try out a number of mattresses for at least a few minutes each.

Friesema also recommends wearing comfortable clothes. It's pretty hard to effectively test mattresses in a skirt and high heels!

## WHEN YOU ARRIVE

Once you arrive at the mattress store, it's okay to take a look around on your own but a salesperson can be really helpful here. Friesema says staff should ask shoppers lots of questions to help them find the right mattress. Do you have any regular aches and pains? Special needs? These are the kinds of things your sales representative will want to know to be able to accommodate you and find something comfortable. Don't be afraid to ask your own questions, too.

## FINDING THE RIGHT COMFORT

Most people know whether they like a soft or firm bed. This is important, especially depending on your sleep style. Do you sleep on your back, side or stomach? What about your partner?

This is where you can start trying some beds for comfort. When you try one out, make sure to lie the same way you normally sleep. There's no point determining if a bed is comfortable when you're on your back if you always sleep on your side.



## NARROWING DOWN THE DETAILS

Once you've established what type and level of cushiness you like, it's important to explore a range of different mattresses with various features.

Do you sleep very hot? Friesema says there are mattresses that mitigate that. Does your partner toss and turn all night? Look for a mattress that curbs movement across the whole bed so you can still sleep soundly.

## COMPLEMENT YOUR MATTRESS

According to Friesema, choosing the right pillow is just as important to a good night's sleep as choosing a great mattress.

Once you've found a bed that feels right to you, find a pillow that matches the bed.

"A mattress is just a mattress, but a mattress and a pillow are a sleep system," says Friesema. "When you're sleeping on your side, the gap between your shoulder and head is bigger than when you sleep on your back, so you need a different pillow." Both pieces need to jive together and work for you, so explore all your options in terms of size, shape, density and material.

## WHAT IF YOU CHOOSE THE WRONG ONE?

Most mattress retailers have exchange policies, but be sure to ask at your preferred store. Often, if you choose a mattress you think is just the right fit, but after a couple of weeks you still find yourself counting sheep and waking up with aches and pains, you can go back and exchange your mattress for something more suitable.

While Friesema says this doesn't happen too often, it does happen. "Then we can ask, 'what was wrong with the bed the first time?'" and choose a mattress that solves that problem," he says. **OH**

online

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Continued on page 81



# WINTER *fresh*

BY HEATHER COOK & MELANIE MACLEOD-VALLINS  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE FOX

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*Continued on page 82*



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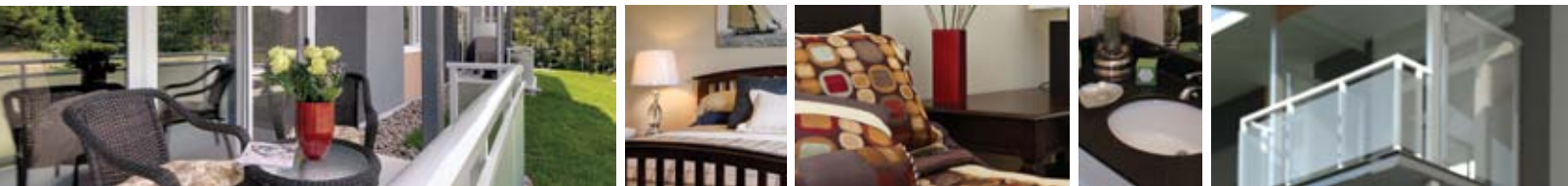


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