



# a warm reception

Come out of the cold to a refined farmhouse  
where welcome extends from door to door





ASK THESE HOMEOWNERS what they love about their place and the answer may surprise you. It isn't the gentle stone exterior, the spacious art-filled rooms or even the gourmet kitchen. It isn't the snug locale under towering oaks and maples, or the beloved horses that stand like sentinels in the nearby snowy paddock. It isn't, in fact, anything so tangible that they point to. Instead, the lady of the house sums it up in one word: Comfort. "Yes, it's important that my home be aesthetically pleasing, but I want my guests to feel welcome!"

That clear vision, with the twin ideals of hospitality and graciousness at its heart, guided the owners of this 1890 farmhouse in a total tip-toe renovation. It began a few years ago, when the Calgary-based couple found themselves pulled to the pastoral beauty of the King City, Ontario, area, where the husband's family has roots. They were retiring, their four grown children launched (the youngest two at university), and were in search of a place with easy access to Muskoka (where they cottage in the summer) and Toronto. "We were ready for a new adventure," says the wife, admitting they'd never lived a rural lifestyle before purchasing the 84-acre property.

Their first adventure, though, was conducting the two-year renovation

Important to all was the idea of preserving the past—"it had to feel it had been lived in, that it was a house with history"



The kitchen offers an unpretentious country feel. COPPER FAUCET, GINGER'S BATH; CABINETRY DESIGNED BY PEAKS & RAFTERS, MANUFACTURED BY BARLOW CABINET WORKS; FABRIC, KRAVET. PREVIOUS PAGES: LIME WHITE PAINT, FARROW & BALL; LIGHT, PEAKS & RAFTERS; SINK, GINGER'S BATH.



"The Lagos Blue limestone floor is a natural look for a country setting," says designer Margot Bell. The wife, along with architect William Bennett, found the antique iron doors for the reclaimed

red brick fireplace at Artefacts, a shop in St. Jacobs. The painting was done by Alberta-based artist Donna Rupert. KITCHEN DESIGNED BY PEAKS & RAFTERS; WHITE TILES, WORLD MOSAIC; BAR STOOL, PEAKS & RAFTERS.

One of the favourite features is this vaulted ceiling with lapped panelling, designed by William Bennett. The room's palette of muted shades softens and warms the large space. LINEN FLORAL FIRESIDE CHAIR, CHENILLE SOFA BY HIGHLAND HOUSE,

STRIPED LAWSON CHAIR BY LEE, COFFEE TABLE, RUG, ALL PEAKS & RAFTERS: ANTIQUE ROCKER, WINDOW CHEST, HIGH HOUSE ANTIQUES. STRING NO.8 ON WALLS, LIME WHITE NO.1 ON TRIM, FARROW & BALL.



# get the look ... sophisticated country

DESIGNER MARGOT BELL SHARES HER TOP 10 TIPS FOR CAPTURING THE LOOK.

- {one} Rather than filling your space with many country pieces, use just a few key items like simple ivory pillar candles adorning a mantel or a grouping of antique candlesticks.
- {two} Cows and sunflowers do not a country room make, so when it comes to artwork, choose contemporary pieces or opt for simple folk art.
- {three} Select furnishings that are comfortable but clean lined. Exposed legs or box pleated skirts are a sophisticated choice.
- {four} Choose fabrics that have either a fabulous texture or a neutral shade—save florals for cushions and occasional chairs.
- {five} Opt for original antiques or well-executed reproductions with the right wear and tear—are they worn in the right places?
- {six} Showcase a selection of white metals (chrome, nickel) in »

from Calgary. “It took a team,” says the owner, crediting interior designer Margot Bell, whom they’d worked with before, architect William Bennett and builder Bill Degroot. Important to all was to renovate while giving the greatest respect to preserving the home’s historic core. “It had to feel it had been lived in, that it was a house with history,” says the owner.

Wherever possible the original plank flooring was restored. Cabinetry was custom built and carefully hand-finished on-site by Linda Leibel of Peaks & Rafters for an authentic period look. And many of the home’s original fireplaces were restored. “We love to light two or even three fireplaces when friends come over for dinner,” says the owner, adding that the brick fireplace in the kitchen is one of her favourites.

When it came to the decor, Margot Bell based many decorating decisions on how best to highlight this art-loving couple’s collection. “I like to work with a neutral palette when it comes to art,” she says. “I would never match

**A reproduction armoire is fully outfitted as a bar in the living room, where faded chintz, needlepoint, tartan, stripes and country florals are layered over a neutral cream base.**





either a polished or matte finish.  
 { seven } Install classic light fixtures for a contemporary feel.  
 { eight } Overdone ruffles no longer signify country. Opt for clean, pared-down window coverings.  
 { nine } Choose a palette of soft neutrals to let colour in art and accessories shine.  
 { ten } Select a wood floor that relates to the age of the house or the era you're trying to evoke. Use classic patterned area rugs to create atmosphere and add a sense of warmth and comfort.



furniture to art or choose art to match a specific sofa." But that doesn't mean no colour, just a more subdued palette, as in the living room, where Margot mixed faded cranberries and soft greens on a mostly cream background. "The chairs throughout the space are covered in several different fabrics," says Margot. "That layering gives it its sophisticated country appeal." Another reason for the room's success is that each and every chair was chosen not just for its good looks but also for its comfort.

It seems every detail of architecture and decor conspires to create a sense of ease and welcome. But the one element that alchemizes the scheme is the owners' hospitality. "Last year we had a party and I said to my husband as I looked around, 'Two years ago we knew only two people in King, now look at all the new friends we've made here.'" Proof that no matter how many fires you light or how many chairs you set out, in the end it's the gathering of friends and family that makes a house warm your heart. ❖

**William Bennett paid much attention to the integration of indoor and outdoor living spaces. The new gazebo is a screened porch addition off the dining room.**



**The master bath's custom cabinet is in keeping with the home's period.**  
 VANITY DESIGN, MIRROR, PEAKS & RAFTERS; TUB, FAUCET, GINGER'S BATH; LIGHT BLUE NO.22 ON WALL, LIME WHITE NO.1 ON TRIM, FARROW & BALL.