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The mood of the moment: SAVOURING SOME DOWNTIME

It's funny how the Christmas holiday involves such extremes of activity and of idleness: one day I'll be speed-making beds and mince pies ready for an influx of family; the next, flat out on the sofa watching back-to-back *Marple/Poirot* (it's a weird tradition...) with the cat on my belly and a glass of port in my hand. Between Christmas and New Year's Eve, by which time I've wound down to a crawl, my notebook comes out and the list-making starts: what do we want to do to the house and garden this year? When and where shall we go on holiday? I hope this issue will give you a slow hour or two of dreaming and planning, for a magical Christmas and a happy 2020...

Vanessa x

E80M, CAMENGC

(BACKGROU

P.S. Planning a bucket-list holiday this year? For inspirational travel ideas, visit thecaribou.com. It will help you plan a trip combining your passions (food, wine, walking...) with the best your destination has to offer, including places to stay and eat, and unforgettable experiences.

Things we can't live without... JANUARY

Enjoying the lingering festive feeling with a roaring fire, stockings and natural wreaths bringing a touch of greenery. Christmas stocking, £20, Nordic Nest, is similar







1 From little acorns... mighty oaks will grow! Acorn vase, H10cm, £23, Ilex Studio at Another Country **2 Pamper treats for tired feet.** Handmade moccasin slipper mules in Rhubarb, £48, The Small Home **3 Hand-printed dashes of seasonal wit and charm – the perfect little thank yous.** Robin hanky box, 40sq cm, £15, Thornback & Peel **4 Illuminating the table with a cosy festive atmosphere.** Dinner candles in Granny Apple, £18 for 12, Bougies la Francaise at Pentreath & Hall







5 Being well stocked for the party season! Temis parquet drinks cabinet, H120xL140xD32cm, £599, Out & Out **6 Displaying blooms in a bauble-like vase.** Rakelle handmade glass bulb vase in Sycamore Green, H10.2cm, £24, Broste Copenhagen at Lillian Daph **7 Adorable pure wool companions for chilly nights!** Dachshund reversible knitted hot water bottles in Latte and Chestnut, from £45 each, The Fine Cotton Company **8 Casting a warming glow...** Antiqued brass lantern, H22cm, £29, Ella James





13 Sinking frost-numb tootsies into sumptuous luxury. Gotlands rug in Grey, approx 100x60cm, £275, Celtic & Co **14 Calming style ideas to create a relaxing retreat.** *Inspired by Nature* by Hans Blomquist (£19.99, Ryland Peters & Small) **15 Beautiful block prints on illuminating cottons.** Mid bobbin lamp base in Clover Green, H44cm, £170; Green lotus shade, H23xDia35cm, £90, both Hill & May **16 Season in style with a twist of shiny flair!** Brass pepper mill, H13.5cm, £65, Freight HHG



9 Mistletoe motifs to symbolise love and togetherness...
Amor porcelain gravy boat and stand, £52, Sophie Conran
10 Bio-organic linens with a seasonal twist. Kuusi towel in
White Moss, 46x70cm, €15.90, Lapuan Kankurit 11 Catching
a post-cheeseboard forty winks on a lazy lounger... Jemima
rocking chair in Samphire easy velvet, H82xW76xD108cm, £720,
Arlo & Jacob 12 Hand-painted flourishes of festive ceramics.
Holly leaf, L27.5cm, €16.40, Bordallo Pinheiro





66 CREATING MEMORIES WITH FRIENDS AND PLANNING OUR NEW YEAR ADVENTURES 99

It's time to **DRESS THE TREE**

This year, add to your collection of festive decorations with a new bauble to celebrate your time together. Merry Christmas!

> ALL IN THE DETAIL Decorations, from £5.55 each, from a selection at Gisela Graham

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GLOW BRIGHT Glitter LED Christmas **bauble**, H8cm, £11.99 for three, Lights4Fun



7

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 WINTER WALKER Wellie boots bauble, H11cm, f5, John Lewis & Partners 2 GLITTERING NATURE Beaded leaves bauble, H16cm, f28, Harrods
 FESTIVE FIZZ Champagne decoration, H8cm, f9, The Conran Shop 4 MIDAS TOUCH Gold carved baubles, H8cm, f32 for six, Marquis & Dawe 5 LOVE HEART Gold helix heart ornament, H10cm, f15, French Connection Home 6 BY THE LETTER Zardozi monogram decoration, H11cm, f10, Anthropologie 7 UNIQUE CHARM Victorian whale ornament, L16cm, f16, Petersham Nurseries 8 ANTIQUE LOOK Layli lantern baubles, H9cm, f14.95 for set of three, Nkuku 9 CELESTIAL TWINKLE Glitter night sky bauble, approx H7.5cm,

TWINKLE Glitter night sky **bauble**, approx H7.5cm, £4.99, Dobbies **10 WINTER SCENE** Skater Berry Christmas découpage **bauble**, H7.5cm, £8 for set of four, Sainsbury's Home **11 DELICATE DROPLETS** Beaded **bauble**, H8cm, £18.50 for six, Cox & Cox **12 COUNTRY CHARM** Painted glass fox

decoration, H10cm, £12.95, Liberty London



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DESIGN NEWS

Pooky heads to Japan

Dip your toe in the eastern trend with Pooky's new shibori shade, based on the ancient Japanese dying technique. The shades are actually screenprinted to mirror the effect of a dip-dyed look, meaning the same beautiful ombré fade can be produced for each one. Shibori lampshade in Green, £60; Antique brass base, £116, both Pooky.



ZOE GLENCROSS' FIRST WALLPAPER

A previous winner of our My Country Business Award, Zoe is known for her striking linen fabrics.



Now she's launched an exciting capsule collection of beautiful wallpapers, featuring some of her signature designs as well as luxurious metallics, all made in England. Honeycomb wallpaper, £85 a roll, Zoe Glencross.

Archive prints via the V&A

Flowers are flourishing this winter with the latest collaboration between British fabric designer Arley House and our beloved V&A museum. The Floral Abundance collection features

foliage, blossom and bird motifs based on chintz designs from the V&A's archives. Floris cushion, £75, Arley House.





IAN MANKIN'S NEW CHARITY COLLECTION

Ian Mankin has partnered with The Landmark Trust to create a range of sumptuous throws, cushions and draught excluders. The designs take inspiration from the charity's portfolio of buildings and each piece has been designed and woven in Lancashire, supporting British skills. Prices start at £59.50.

Tile style at Bert & May

Although renowned for its reclaimed flooring, Bert & May also produces its own designs, albeit with a lived-in feel. We love the comforting palette of its Flower and Twig range - all velvety brown and soft marshmallow pink. Chocolate flower tile, £156.80sq m, Bert & May.





COME TOGETHER

English tradition meets Swedish chic in Sophia and Andrew Wadsworth's stunning self-build

THE REAL PROPERTY AND

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Living room

This more formal space at the heart of the home really comes into its own at Christmas. Sofas, Laura Ashley. Fireplace, Chesneys. Woodburner, Jotul

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Dining room Sophia has given this high-ceilinged space a Swedish feel with Gustavian furniture. Dining table; chairs, both Oka

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ooking at Sophia and Andrew Wadsworth's beautiful home, it's hard to believe what the plot of land looked like when they first bought it. A car park, an unsightly electricity pylon and buildings for a riding school took up much of the 5.5 acre site - then the couple plonked three old mobile homes into the mix! 'We had sold our house in East Sussex the previous year and had been renting,' says Sophia. 'We knew exactly what we were looking for in a plot and were willing to cast our net wide to find land with a perfect view.' Determination and patience paid off and they secured the property in Kent in 2006.

The plot included a cottage and outbuildings and was sold with planning permission for a house. 'The stable buildings were ugly and there was no garden as such, but the surroundings were stunning,' says Sophia. It took almost a year for the couple to get the planning permission altered so they could build the oakframed house they wanted. And, as they finally took up residence in the mobile homes ready for work to commence, unforeseen delays with the builders saw them shiver through one of the coldest winters in memory. 'We lived in the mobile homes for a year and a half – nothing happened on site for the first eight months,' says Sophia. 'The frame was put up in just four days, but the overall build took 10 months.'

Luckily, the two-storey, barn-style house in brick and Kentish weatherboarding, with an adjoining single storey extension that replaced the old stable block, was worth the wait. 'Oakwrights, the oak-frame building company, helped us make the most of the permissions and finalise a design the planning department would approve. We were all very happy in the end as it's an original design that fits into the landscape beautifully,' says Sophia.

When it came to the interiors, Sophia, who is half-Swedish, applied the thinking behind Scandinavian design to make the most of the available natural light. 'I like a neutral interior; I find it very calming,' she says. 'Here, I think it really showcases the beauty of the mellow oak beams. The wood is a key part of the building and I didn't want to drown it out.' She went for a mix of French and Scandinavian furniture and dressed the windows with shutters.

With the car park and electricity pylon gone, the view is all the more beautiful and the couple have created a mix of formal and relaxed gardens outside. It is a large plot, so they invested in a vast underground rainwater harvester to help with the watering. And there are further changes planned for both house and garden in the near future. 'We are about to convert the three-bay garage into a guest annexe,' says Sophia. 'It will also provide space for a study, shower room and laundry room.'

But no work will be taking place over Christmas this year. This is family time and Sophia creates a cosy mood in the house with candlelight, fresh flowers and the baubles she has collected over the years - some English, some Scandinavian. 'We have a name for it,' she says. 'It is what we affectionately refer to as a "Swenglish Christmas". We like to uphold all the Christmas traditions from both cultures and that's what makes it really special for us.'



AT HOME WITH...

Owners Interior designer and lifestyle blogger Sophia Wadsworth and her husband Andrew, an insurance underwriter. They have three grown-up children, daughter Georgie and sons Teddy and Patch, as well as a miniature Dachshund called Delilah. They built their home in 2007.

House Green oak-framed self-build with four bedrooms, plus an annexe.



Dining room

Family heirlooms, such as the wall hanging stitched by Sophia's Swedish grandmother, make a house a home. Similar **tray table**, John Lewis & Partners

THE OPEN-PLAN LAYOUT REALLY WORKS FOR US. WE LOVE TO COOK AND ENTERTAIN, FILLING THE HOUSE WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS 99



Exterior The oak frame was built in the traditional way and went up in just four days

LIVING THE DREAM

Sophia has created a home that showcases both British and Swedish Christmas style

How do you decorate for the festive season?

'I mix traditional garlands and greenery with my Swedish decorations, some of which are inherited.'

What's your go-to Christmas colour scheme? 'We have two large trees - we decorate one Scandinavian-style in red and white for the kitchen, and the living room one in silver and white.'

Do you dress the table? 'On Christmas Eve I like a traditional Swedish look and on Christmas Day I usually keep things fresh and simple.'







Bathroom A fake wall not only hides unsightly pipework, but provides a handy display shelf, too. For a similar **bath**, try Victoria & Albert. **Tiles**, Tiles Direct

I LIKE A NEUTRAL INTERIOR
 I FIND IT VERY CALMING AND I
 THINK IT REALLY SHOWCASES THE
 BEAUTY OF THE MELLOW
 OAK BEAMS

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ABARARY TRANSFER TRANSFER

Main bedroom Sophia's hidden the radiator behind a simple cover - a small finishing touch that makes a big difference to a country scheme. Fairlight **radiator cover**, Fireplace World, is a match. **Quilt**; **cushions**, both John Lewis & Partners







ON MY DOORSTEP...

Visit... 'Sissinghurst Castle (nationaltrust.org.uk/sissinghurstcastle-garden) is great for garden inspiration and there are always plenty of events on throughout the year.' Shop at... 'Maisie K Boutique (01580 715123) in Cranbrook is great for homeware and gifts. Duck & Dog Interiors (01580 715577) in Cranbrook is a favourite for furniture. And I love the Hartley Farm Shop (hartley.farm), also in Cranbrook.'

Go for a meal at... 'The Three Chimneys (thethreechimneys.co.uk) is a beautiful 15th-century pub in Biddenden that is full of character.'











Be inspired by SOPHIA'S DINING ROOM

Opt for eye-catching sparkle with an antiquefinish dazzler. Brockton iron chandelier, H59xW38cm, £295, One World at Homelia

Sophia's style tip...

ADOPT AN OPEN-HOUSE APPROACH AND CHOOSE AN EXTENDABLE TABLE TO ACCOMMODATE ALL GATHERINGS





There's plenty of space to showcase your tableware in this poised piece, with a chip-resistant painted finish. Windsor White glazed **bookcase**, H220xW110xD45cm, £1,048, Turnbull & Thomas

Upholstered in an oatmeal Belgian linen, with chic brass-stud detail and weathered oak legs, this comfortable perch has been designed with contemporary living in mind. Devonshire dining chair, £225, La Residence Interiors



Fruit platters get an elegant tonal makeover. Vegetable stoneware side plates, Dia20cm, £28.50 for four assorted designs, Biggie Best Soft, crumpled textures for soulwarming suppers... Arles linen table runner in Charcoal stripe, L150xW47cm, £32, The Linen Works



Brighten up your table with a frosted floral display. White magnolia and red berries in mercury **vase**, H24cm, £10.75, Decoflora

CH&I loves... LIMESTONE FLOORING

Antique in Anthracite, £93.50sq m, The Baked Tile Company

Mona honed in Grey, £79.95sq m, Topps Tiles

Abbey honed in Cream, from £54sq m, Indigenous

COUNTRY HOMES & INTERIORS 27



A NEW START

A compact barn became a calm haven for Michelle Nugent when she moved back to Herefordshire

Living room Michelle plays off the rustic beauty of the beams by adorning them in foliage for a sophisticated festive touch. Blue **sofa**, Camperdown Lane. **Love seat**, Baileys

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Dining area Wooden benches can feel uninviting in the winter, but Michelle has made hers cosy with rugs and throws. **Bench**; sheepskin **throws**, both Camperdown Lane

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ecorating her petite barn in the Herefordshire countryside during the run up to Christmas is a case of bringing the outside in for Michelle Nugent. 'We have a communal orchard in the village so I tend to forage the overgrown hedgerows there,' she says. 'I love to fill the house with foliage.'

Michelle moved back to Herefordshire to be close to her family nine years ago and, after renting in Hereford for a while, decided to buy her own place. She spotted a cottage in a local newspaper and was drawn to its location in a nearby village, but the photos made it look so cramped, she nearly didn't go to see it. Fortunately, the viewing won her over. 'It turned out the current owner had downsized and filled the house with furniture that was way too big so, while it looked tiny in the estate agent's photos, the house turned out to be a lot bigger. It had everything I needed and ended up being the first – and only – house I saw.'

With no structural work to be done, Michelle was able to move in straight away and start making her mark by redecorating and immediately replacing the carpet with wooden flooring. 'The house sits between two rivers and, although it has never flooded, the ground can be damp and there was a lot of moisture in the floor,' she says. 'I had been really impatient to get the carpet out and came home from work one day to discover my new floor had swollen and warped.' However, Michelle was quick to see the silver lining. 'I wasn't that keen on the dark wood I had chosen so, having >



AT HOME WITH...

Owner Michelle Nugent is one of the cofounders of interiors business Camperdown Lane (camperdownlane.com). She runs the company with her two sisters.

House A farm outbuilding that was converted into a twobedroom house in the Seventies. Michelle bought it in 2010. LIVING THE DREAM Michelle Nugent has proved that size doesn't restrict style if you have carefully chosen pieces and clever storage solutions

What were the biggest changes you made? 'I replaced the kitchen and

bathroom, but apart from that it was just style updates.'

Did you source any small-sized furniture?

'I did the opposite! I bought a kingsize bed for my small bedroom. But that's the only large item in there.'

Any tips for decorating a compact home? 'Be very conscious about what you buy - there's no room for superfluous clutter.'









to do it again, I picked something paler, which I much prefer.' Next up was replacing the bathroom, and then the kitchen. Michelle commissioned a local carpentry company to make some new cabinets to replace the existing haphazard units. 'It's a long, thin room so I chose not to have any wall units,' she says.

When it came to colour schemes, Michelle stuck to a neutral palette throughout the cottage, layering soft furnishings and using pieces from her own interiors shop, Camperdown Lane. 'I liked the fact that the house didn't need too much doing to it as I'm not one for big projects, but I do like to put my own stamp on things,' she says. Michelle describes her style as fresh and rustic, and she worked in some soothing blues and greys to add a little Nordic tranquillity. 'I used to live by the sea and I think that shaped my preference for these shades,' she says. 'It's important to me that it feels natural. I love colour, but I can't always live with it.'

In a small home, everything has to have its place and Michelle is mindful of what she buys. 'My sisters will buy a thing they like then find a home for it whereas here, everything has to have a purpose. That purpose might be nothing more than just to look nice, but I have to know where it's going. If I need something for a particular corner, I will keep that in mind when I am out and about,' she says. 'I like old things – junk-shop finds, heirlooms and upcycled bits and bobs – so very little is new in that respect.'

Michelle's upcycling doesn't stop with interiors. 'I make cards and wrapping paper for Christmas,' she says. 'I like that personal touch and my friends have come to expect it - I've spoilt them!'

ON MY DOORSTEP...

Visit... 'This is a great area for a good walk and we often do big walks on Boxing Day and New Year's Day. The beautiful Wye Valley Walk (wyevalleywalk.org) passes through my village. I also like to have a little

mooch around nearby Ledbury.' **Shop at...** 'TUSK Collection (tuskcollection.com) in Ledbury - it's

(tuskcollection.com) in Ledbury - it's a nice little independent interiors shop. I also like Noted Fashion (notedfashion. com) in Leominster. We are lucky that there are so many lovely independent shops in the market towns surrounding Hereford. Closer to home, Mike Gell (mikegell.com) is a great independent jeweller. And then there's the Secret Bottle Shop (secretbottleshop.co.uk) for decent wines.'

Go for a meal at...

Independent café Sensory & Rye (sensoryandrye.co.uk) in Hereford is the place for breakfast and brunch and it has a nice, urban vibe with unusual options. I like their approach.'

HEREFORDSHIRE BARN

Main bedroom

So she could have a king-size bed despite the small room size, Michelle chose to store all of her clothes in the hallway cupboards. Similar **bed**, Crown French Furniture

THE HOUSE HAS EVERYTHING I NEED. IT FEELS CALM AND SAFE, LIKE MY LITTLE NEST





Bathroom In keeping with the cottage's cosy feel, Michelle added panelling to the bathroom walls. **Tongue and groove** in Hardwick White estate eggshell, Farrow & Ball


BEDS, SOFAS AND FURNITURE FOR LOAFERS

LOAF.COM LONDON GUILDFORD WILMSLOW SOLIHULL ST ALBANS BRISTOL

Be inspired by MICHELLE'S KITCHEN

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Add a decorative touch to windows and door handles with a constellation of stars. Hanging stars decoration, L7.6cm, £3, B&Q

<u>CH&I</u> MODERN Country CLASSIC

Fill pitchers with seasonal blooms to add a cheerful touch to worktops. Pols Potten Panorama jug in Pink, H18cm, £34, Amara

Michelle's style tip...

IN SMALLER SPACES, KEEP THE WALLS CLEAR FOR AN AIRY LOOK, AND GO FOR OPEN SHELVING AT JUST ONE END TO PROVIDE STORAGE Spruce up shelving with a flourish of foliage - in the winter, faux can do the job. Stoneware **planter** with faux succulent, H16x D14cm, £25, Debenhams



Serve drinks in embossed glassware for a tactile touch. Katie Alice vintage goblet, H15.8xW8.5cm, £10, Kitchen Craft

CH&I loves... stone flooring



Classic travertine **tiles**, from £16.50sq m, Floors of Stone



Sthenno **floor tiles**, £14.95sq m, Walls & Floors



Tudor sandston**e tiles**, £35.88sq m, Stone Superstore

This sturdy kitchen staple, featuring white enamel and a wooden handle, will blend seamlessly with any scheme. Milk pan in Warm White, H8.5xW16cm, £25, Garden Trading Access those tricky-to-reach places with this colourful cutie. Two-step stool, H50xW24xD36cm, £80.84, Gaofeng at Amazon

AN ELEGANT CHRISTMAS

Exterior The coach house was originally built

in the 1850s

Laura and Patrick Butler-Madden's stylishly eclectic country home is the perfect setting to celebrate the season

Living area The minstrels' gallery is a statement feature in this double-height living space. Interior design, Laura Butler-Madden at LBM Design Studio. Crumpet **sofas**, Loaf

DORSET COACH HOUSE



Dining area Laura has used textured wood and greenery to cosy up this high-ceilinged space. Similar **dining table**, Neptune. Hans Wegner wishbone **dining chairs**, The Conran Shop

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his elegant Dorset dwelling wasn't always the epitome of country sophistication that it is today. Originally built as a coach house in the 1850s, the property was later converted into flats during the Seventies and hadn't been updated since. 'I was trawling a property website one day when I spotted this unique building,' says Laura Butler-Madden. 'It was rather in need of love, but we decided to take a look.'

She and her husband Patrick were living in London at the time but that wasn't a barrier - Laura grew up in Dorset and Patrick went to school there, so the couple had often talked about moving back there one day. Plus, if first impressions were true, they knew the building had lots of potential. 'We were both inspired by the huge central area that had once been the stables,' says Laura. 'When we saw it, that was it. All of a sudden, we could see ourselves creating something exceptional here. Making a space open plan isn't as easy to accomplish in a country home as it is in a townhouse, but we knew that having this incredibly large room would make the process far simpler.'

Laura and Patrick had already renovated several properties together and decided to buy the coach house, although it would be by far the largest project they'd tackled. 'This was the first big country house that I had >



AT HOME WITH...

Owners Interior designer and blogger Laura Butler-Madden and her husband Patrick, a photographer, lived here with their 18-month-old daughter Lily and two Maltese terriers, Coco and Lola.

House A converted Victorian coach house, built in the 1850s.



66 MY STYLE IS A MIX OF SIXTIES PALM SPRINGS, SCANDINAVIAN AND CONTEMPORARY COUNTRY 59

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DORSET COACH HOUSE

Main bedroom Be brave with patterned wallpaper in large rooms. Contemporary Restyled Palm **wallpaper**, Cole & Son

designed and it was an unusual building, so it was definitely challenging,' says Laura. 'The fact that it wasn't a classic country home, however, gave us a greater degree of freedom to create the style we wanted.'

The proportions of the rooms were grand, square and symmetrical, so Laura's main aim was to add character to the space. She and Patrick achieved this by opening up stud walls in some of the bedrooms to reveal the beautiful old beams, adding features and visual interest to the upstairs rooms. Laura was careful to avoid an overly utilitarian look in the kitchen and instead went for glamorous marble worktops, as well as retaining the high ceilings and original elaborate cornicing. The couple also wanted a pantry, but decided not to knock out any walls. 'The kitchen was quite large enough already, so we created a pantry in the small back hall instead,' she says.

A long list of building works ensued, as the house needed replumbing and rewiring throughout. The roof was also replaced and new windows and underfloor heating were installed. Laura then began designing the decor. 'I was aiming to create a sense of elegance with the decoration,' she says. 'My style is a mix of Sixties Palm Springs, Scandinavian and contemporary country, with the occasional touch of Art Deco. I wanted a calming palette and mostly used gentle colours.' Laura also worked in lots of natural materials and textures, such as wood and >

ON OUR DOORSTEP

Visit... 'Stourhead house and gardens (nationaltrust.org.uk/ stourhead) is one of my favourite places to walk. We love exploring the landscaped gardens, follies and temples. The Christmas at Stourhead event (29 November - 30 December) makes for a lovely festive day out.'

Shop at ... 'I love Bridport Antiques market (bridportandwest bay.co.uk), especially at Christmas. I am also a huge fan of auctions. Henry Dukes in Dorchester (dukes-auctions.com) is my favourite.'

Go for a meal at...

'The Anchor Inn, Seatown (theanchorinnseatown.co.uk) is our favourite place to unwind after a stroll on the beach at Eype. The head chef, Cameron Farquharson, is incredibly talented in conjuring up dishes using the region's fish, shellfish, game, farm meats and artisanal foods. There's also a Christmas menu.'



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marble, and brought in some quirky, characterful artwork and pieces of furniture to give the scheme real personality.

With the building works complete, the coach house was the perfect venue for Laura and Patrick to host their extended family Christmas celebrations. 'The kitchen and living area is a huge space and it really comes into its own at Christmas,' says Laura. 'There's plenty of room for a large Christmas tree and everyone – parents, aunts, uncles, cousins and friends – to get together for drinks and sit down for Christmas dinner. We usually go for a long walk and eat our meal later on in the afternoon. I like to cook traditional festive fare – turkey with all the trimmings, washed down with plenty of champagne. Patrick's parents live in Spain, so they always bring a leg of ham and Spanish wines with them, which adds a dash of Mediterranean flavour to the party.'

But this Christmas, the Butler-Madden family are celebrating in a new country home. After transforming the house so beautifully, Laura and Patrick were keen to embrace a new decorating challenge and are currently working on their new property in Oxfordshire. 'We loved celebrating Christmas in our Dorset home,' says Laura. 'And hope the new owners will enjoy their first festive season here as much as we did. It really is the perfect house for Christmas.' To take a peek at their new house, follow Laura on Instagram @laurabutlermadden.

LIVING THE DREAM

As an interior designer, Laura has the opportunity to try out her decor ideas on her own home

What does a typical day as an interior designer look like?

'It varies between quiet days at home working on mood boards, to long days out on the road visiting clients and sourcing items.'

How do you decorate your home at Christmas?

'I love to use nature. Last year my white hydrangeas dried a beautiful deep red, with hints of green. I picked them and turned them into a table centrepiece.'

Has living in the countryside influenced your work?

'Yes. I like to bring different styles together in a mix of country and city elegance. I also use more natural materials now.'

Be inspired by LAURA'S LIVING ROOM...

A classic pinstripe softie offers a hint of pattern. Hikari stripe **cushion**, H40xW60cm, £48, Also Home

Radiate a soft and cosy glow with an elegant goose feather design. Eos mini feather table lamp, H62xD35cm, £168, Black by Design



Kick back and settle into this buttonbacked beauty. Grantley **armchair** in Heritage Herringbone, H89xW71x D82cm, £850, Arlo & Jacob

Add an accent of Art Deco. Round vintage gold **side table**, H46xD38cm, £65, The Farthing

Scatter candlelight across your mantelpiece or coffee table to magic up instant ambiance. Ribbed glass tea light holders, H11xD6cm, from £6 each, Hudson Home Let this timeless treasure take centre stage and dazzle! Kalmanovitz nine-light Sputnik **chandelier**, H190xD62cm, £212.99, Canora Grey at Wayfair

CH&I loves... geo wallpaper



Sanderson Garden Plan, £68 a roll, Style Library



Cole & Son Hicks Hexagon, £68 a roll, John Lewis & Partners



Marquise Whitewash, £85 a roll, Romo

laura's style tip...

SOFT DOVE GREY AND

BRASS AND BLUE TONES

FEEL HOMELY IN WINTER

AND BRIGHT IN SUMMER

Kitchen-diner Despite being a new build, the house has an older, country feel thanks to its rustic beams and Shaker cabinetry. Recycled elm dining table and chairs, Oka. Cabinetry, deVol. Oak flooring, White Hall. Aged copper pendant ceiling lights, Baileys. Cake, Bettys

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RAISE THE RAFTERS

Wendy <mark>and St</mark>even Hunter's self-built oak barn is a wonderful place to spend the festive season

(A)

Carl

HEREFORDSHIRE BARN





ith its mellow weatherboarded façade, red tiled roof and greygreen woodwork, Wendy and Steven Hunter's cosy oak-framed home couldn't be a more welcoming spot to spend the festive season, especially as they built the property

themselves with the help of their family. Taking on a self-build is a brave move, but it was always the preferred option for the couple as Steven's father worked in the building trade for more than 40 years. 'My in-laws built their own home when Steven was a child,' says Wendy. 'So the idea of buying land to do a self-build was imprinted in his DNA.'

In fact, Steven's parents had already helped the couple build their previous home – a two-bedroomed lime-rendered cottage – and pitched in with this one, too. 'When I became pregnant with our second daughter, Millie, we decided to build a bigger home as we'd outgrown the cottage. We moved into a rented house while we looked for land,' says Wendy.

Then a plot came up via Border Oak, with planning approval already in place for a weatherboarded barn. 'It was the right location and the right sort of house for us,' says Wendy. 'The plot had somehow slipped through other interested buyers' hands for two years >



AT HOME WITH...

Owners Wendy Hunter, who is a fashion designer, and her husband Steven, a civil servant. They live here with their daughters, Sadie, six, and Millie, four, plus Scout the Welsh Terrier. They moved into the house in 2018.

House A new-build oak-framed barn with four bedrooms, plus a one-bedroom garage annexe.

HEREFORDSHIRE BARN

Dining area

American-born Wendy wanted to recreate the type of open-plan layout she grew up with. **Garland**; **wreath**, both Dibor. **Plates** and **bowls**, all Anthropologie. **Place mats**, Ikea. **Napkins**, Oka

661'VE PAID HOMAGE TO BRITISH CLASSICS WITH A SHAKER KITCHEN AND A HERITAGE COLOUR SCHEME HEREFORDSHIRE BARN

6 I LIKE WHITE WALLS MIXED WITH NATURAL TEXTURES – THAT WAY THE HOME CAN SPEAK FOR ITSELF 99

Living room

A sofa with a removable cover is perfect for life with young children, and makes it easy to switch up the colour scheme. **Sofa**, Ikea. **Chair**; **coffee table**, both Oka. **Pouffe**, Graham and Green. Milan **cushions**, Bronte by Moon. **Biscuits**, Biscuiteers



>

but it was perfect timing for us. It's also a huge amount of work getting planning permission, so the fact that it already had it in place was a big plus.'

Wendy and Steven had also used Border Oak as the supplier for their previous self-build. 'I love the marriage of traditional building methods and modern technology that you get with Border Oak houses - it's the best of both worlds,' says Wendy. They were able to make some small changes to the original plans, such as moving the dining room from its original central location to the end of the kitchen and removing the downstairs doors to create an open-plan feel.

They took on the majority of the build themselves, subcontracting some specialist skills and using the Border Oak team to set up the oak frame and complete the watertight shell. Structural insulated panels, along with underfloor heating downstairs, ensure the house is always warm and toasty.

When it came to the interior, Wendy plumped for a neutral backdrop. 'I'm a bright white girl,' she says. 'I like white walls mixed with natural textures - that way the home can speak for itself. Because we've done back-to-back self-builds, we weren't so hard on ourselves with the interior of this one. I've

LIVING THE DREAM

Wendy and Steven Hunter were passionate about building their own house, and it's enabled them to create a bespoke family home

Why were you keen to do another self-build?

'We wanted to build a larger home in a different style and in a new location.' *Was it a lot of work?* 'Absolutely. It is at least one year of your life that you have to stay focused, keep on task and get the job done.'

Tell us the hardest part 'The physical labour.'

And the most rewarding? 'The time spent with family. We can all look back at the experience together.'

What's your advice for other self-builders?

'Make sure you plan, budget, have a reliable team around you and be prepared to think on your toes.'



paid homage to British classics - we have a Shaker kitchen, heritage colours, blacksmith ironmongery, wool carpets and natural oak flooring. I also paid a lot of attention to the taps - they're the jewellery of your home so I spend more on them.'

The house has proved perfect for bringing up a family. 'It's a great home for the girls,' says Wendy. 'The village school is only a five-minute walk away and we have a nature reserve, lake and two pubs within strolling distance. With the woods behind us and fields of cows as our morning view, it makes us feel that we are raising the children in a pure and simple way.'

Picturesque surroundings and plenty of guest space mean the house works particularly well at Christmas and New Year. 'I like to create little arrangements, such as festive floral displays, and we have evergreen trees all around us so I line the windows with foliage from our garden,' says Wendy. 'Last year, with my American family and my in-laws, we had 12 visitors in total. We decorated at the back with Christmas lights and had open fires in the garden. We put an extra table in the dining space to accommodate everyone for Christmas dinner and then we all went to the local pub afterwards!' **Border Oak, 01568 708752, borderoak.com**



Millie's bedroom

A wrought-iron bed, Christmas lights and pretty bunting contribute to the fairy-tale feel. **Bed**; wicker **storage unit**, both Ikea. **Bunting**, Numero 74. **Garland**, Dibor

ON OUR DOORSTEP

Visit... 'We love going to Queenswood Country Park (queenswoodandbodenhamlake.org) near Leominster. It's famed for its autumn colour but is beautiful all year round. The park has wonderful trails, an overwhelming catalogue of trees and a lovely cafe and shop.'

Shop at ... 'Baileys (baileyshome. com) near Ross-on-Wye - I am quite the regular. The owners have the most glorious and clever eye for sourcing goods from around the world, and they make their own furnishings, too.'
Go for a meal at... 'The Verzon (verzonhouse.com) in Ledbury is my go-to place for birthdays and special occasions. It is a Georgian country house with an inviting roaring fire. The menu is diverse, satisfying and just upscale enough to be extra special without being pretentious.'

RADIO & FLYER.

COUNTRY HOMES & INTERIORS

Gorgeous houses, we want you...



If you'd like your home to be considered for a feature in *Country Homes & Interiors*, send some photos and tell us all about it at countryhomes@ti-media.com

Ne'd love to come on over!

Be inspired by WENDY'S BEDROON...



Give your ceiling some focus with an oversized pendant in neutral linen. Cylinder **shade** in Natural Isabelle, Dia50cm, £73.70, Jim Lawrence

Layer up the cosy factor with this berry merino wool lovely - it will instantly lift any space. Christmas **blanket**, 194x148cm, £132, Tolly McRae



Fact - we spend a third of our lives sleeping, so dream in style on this soft-touch, elegant, button-backed beauty. Skye double bed in Owl Grey, H128xW150x D205cm, £499, Made.com



Get lost in a wordy winter wonderland of poems, prose, and short stories. A Literary Christmas - An Anthology, £12.99, The British Library

Wendy's style tip...

CREATE AN INVITING RETREAT BY LAYERING JP RELAXED BEDLINEN, WARM BLANKETS, AND NUZZLE-INTO SHEEPSKINS



This painted finish cutie is crafted in sustainable wood. Hastings **bedside table** in Grey, H58xW47.5xD43cm, £129, Marks & Spencer

CH&I loves... NEUTRAL CARPETS



Cavendish Wicker Stripe, £40sq m, Brockway Carpets



Bell twist in Cookie Dough, from £39.99sq m, Brintons



Primo Naturals in Bankside Beige, from £20sq m, Cormar Carpets

CH&I MODERN *Country* CLASSIC

Spread festive cheer in every room - it's the little twinkles that make all the difference! LED mini tree with pine cones, H44xW17cm, £14, B&Q



COUNTRY HOMES & INTERIORS 55



•I clear breakfast then start lino-printing at the kitchen table

LINO PRINTER ANNA SMITH

nna Smith has created a linoprinting business from her family home, nestled in the Surrey Hills. Her work captures an iconic mix of graphic, typographical and botanical designs. But at this time of year, it's all about Christmas.

Her style is a definite nod to her family's lifestyle – favourite mottos, visual references to the nature that surrounds them and singular words or emblems that echo moments throughout the year. 'Ideas percolate all the time,' says Anna. 'I tend to begin with pencil scribes, often inspired by a phrase mentioned around the supper table, a sketch of a branch picked up on a walk, or a pine cone pulled out of one of my kids' school trouser pockets.'

Once the house is peaceful and her family has departed for school and work, these ideas are worked up into concepts for Anna's growing collection of cards and prints. 'The process involves slowing down my usual hectic rhythm, starting with the preparation of my work area,' says Anna. Without the luxury of a standalone studio, the family's farmhouse table is where the magic happens. Daily clutter cleared, the vast wooden surface takes on a new creative identity, away from homework and meals. 'It becomes my space,' says Anna. 'Materials are laid out - oil-based linseed inks, wooden-handled lino blades, piles of soft, deckled-edge Italian cotton papers and old tins full of my hand-cut linos.' The table sits at the heart of the house, in the open-plan sitting and dining room. The bungalow, surrounded by oak trees, began life as a chicken shed, before being bought by Anna's husband's grandfather in 1935, who converted it into a home. The Smith family have lived and worked in the village for five generations - they previously owned the local garage and car workshop, and even ran the former village post office and sweet shop from what is now the family's snug, where Anna hangs her prints to dry.

Anna grew up in Brighton and was always attracted to the creative arts, but it wasn't until she enrolled at The Glasgow School of Art that she found her love of lino printing and typography. She went on to graduate with a First in Graphic Design before following a freelance career in London - at the same time that Apple Macs came to the fore. 'In all the agencies I worked, handcrafted was >

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MIL

Anna's bungalow began life as a chicken shed; now it's her family home-cumcreative studio



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COUNTRY HOMES & INTERIORS 57

What I love about my work ...

66 CREATING A CONCEPT, MAKING THE IDEA WORK AS A DESIGN AND THEN GETTING TO SEE IT COME ALIVE ON THE WALL OF SOMEONE'S HOME IS A REAL PLEASURE 59

quickly replaced by the latest technology and I fell out of love with what I was creating,' she says. 'A chance one-off decorating job triggered my decision to move away from the corporate world and I went on to set up a decorating company. After 18 years, I now run my decorating and lino-printing businesses alongside each other.'

Anna started her lino-printing company, Whoa Mama, after her children - Marley, 11, and Reuben, nine - were born. 'I needed a creative outlet which was purely for me, and started developing ideas while on maternity leave,' she says. 'The company name was a throwaway line from my brother-in-law, but



I loved it and it became my brand. I started with no set-up costs - I had the tools already and lots of materials leftover from making our wedding stationery. Everything Whoa Mama is done in-house - that's concept creation, printing, brand identity, selling and promotion.' In the early days, Anna sold to small local independents. Fast forward 11 years and sales are predominantly online via her website or social media, and more recently through Caroline Turner Design, who sells at various fairs, including those run by Caroline Zoob. Bespoke commissions are also growing in popularity.

Each concept begins with a sketch, which is then reversed and transferred onto the lino itself. The soft, pliable surface is carefully cut with a sharp blade, slowly and methodically to ensure accuracy. Next comes the black marble block, where the sticky inks are gently hand-mixed to create the desired depth of colour. 'For me, that's a really important part of the process – it is very sensory, as is the smell of the inks and the feel of the paper,' says Anna. The lino is then inked, a fresh piece of paper laid on top and the edition rollered, with just the right amount of pressure.

Pulling the paper back from the lino block feels like a magic reveal. 'It's the best bit – seeing your creations come to life never gets dull,' she says. 'I like to work in editions of 20-50 for prints and 100 for cards. It creates a cut-off point that makes each design precious. Pine and twig abstracts are new to this year's Christmas collection. Every print is unique and it's those perfectly imperfect marks that make each piece special.' Artwork can take up to two weeks to dry and is then signed, embossed and numbered ready for sale.

'My everyday has become my inspiration,' says Anna. 'I love that our children are observing that if you believe in yourself, you can be successful doing your own thing.' Whoa Mama, whoamama.co.uk, @annawhoamama. Last date for Christmas orders is 17 December.















Anna finds inspiration in the work of Edward Bawden, Alan Kitching and Kathe Kollwitz

ON OUR DOORSTEP...

Visit... 'The Hannah Peschar Sculpture Garden (01306 627269, hannah pescharsculpture.com) in Ockley, Surrey. It's a favourite place for family walks. My husband, Clinton Smith, is an exhibiting sculptor there.'

Shop at... 'Kingfisher Farm Shop (01306 730703, kingfisher farmshop.com) in Abinger Hammer, Surrey, for wonderful local produce.'

Go for a meal at...

'The Scarlett Arms (01306 627243, scarlettarms.co. uk) in Walliswood. A great traditional country pub.' SMALL BUSINESS ADVICE

HOW TO KEEP BUSINESS COSTS TO A MINIMUM

BE INSPIRED BY THIS SAVVY SAVING ADVICE



KEEP WORKSPACE COSTS LOW

Use your home to your advantage. Carve out space and run your own business from your kitchen table. Anna's workspace is not self-contained in a separate studio, so has to work hard for both her printing work and family life. 'My husband, Clinton - a former fireman, turned sculptor had the opportunity to purchase the bungalow from his grandma 25 years ago and jumped at the chance to get on the property ladder,' says Anna. 'It was a huge stretch for him, but since moving in together in 2004, it has become our family home and the place we have both realised our creative potential. If we need something for work or home, we make it - the fireguard, brackets for artwork, replacement Crittall-style doors and windows. It's how the house evolves, nothing is purchased new and everything has a story.' A large metal storage unit at the end of the table (a piece formerly used in Clinton's father's garage) has been repurposed and provides abundant storage for work materials. 'It makes it easy to tidy away at the end of the day,' says Anna. 'Even

our kitchen sink doubles up as a studio clean-up area - the paints and blocks are cleaned using olive oil rather than chemicals, so they're safe. I love not having to factor in studio costs or deal with commuting every day.'

REDUCE SUPPLY COSTS Anna always keeps waste paper to reuse as tags and other smaller items. Each piece of art that goes out to customers is cardboard backed and simply enveloped in tissue. Eco-friendly recycled brown paper and natural string is used to wrap postal orders - each parcel stylishly handaddressed, using Anna's calligraphy skills. Maximum impact, minimum cost.

BARTER Occasionally Anna will barter with other creatives, swapping a piece of her work for a piece of theirs - a few examples of which are displayed on her sitting room walls. 'When decorating clients' homes, I often trade prints for a piece of furniture they are happy to pass on. It benefits us both and encourages sustainability. Nothing in our house was bought new - we are always upcycling,' she says. **SAVE TIME BY SELLING ONLINE** 'The growing trend towards selling online, both via Instagram and my website, has freed up a lot of the time I used to spend visiting prospective shopkeepers. I still enjoy selling to independent stores, but I find that retailers approach me more now, having found me on Instagram or stumbled across my website, which means I can spend more time at home creating,' says Anna.

DO YOUR OWN MARKETING Anna

designs, builds and manages her own website. 'This was important to me as website construction can require a lot of set-up funds and a constant level of investment to upload new work,' she says. 'Advertising budgets are nonexistent. For me, it is very much about word of mouth. Given the limited-edition quality of my work, I find that cards as well as prints are often framed by customers. A lot of work comes from people who have seen my designs hanging in someone else's home. Above all, follow your own path - trust your creativity and others will follow your style, because it is your own.'

The one lesson I've learnt ...

66 PLAY YOUR OWN GAME – TRUST YOURSELF AND YOUR OWN INSTINCTS AND IGNORE ALL OF THE NONSENSE! 99

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66 This Christmas, treat someone you love to regular deliveries of inspiration – idyllic country homes, beautiful interior design ideas and fascinating country people 9

Vanessa x

VANESSA RICHMOND, EDITOR



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Deeply intense and reassuringly soothing, let indigo's inky tones leave their glorious mark on your home...

> Deep blue bedding brings the majesty of midnight skies down to earth. Woven from flax, these natural layers give a relaxed, crinkled look - no ironing required! Navy Blue **bedlinen**, from £16 for a pillowcase, Secret Linen Store



Taking inspiration from wild night skies and inky ocean depths, intensely pigmented indigo blue creates an inviting cocoon – especially when swept across walls, doors, floors and upholstery for dive-into gusto. Include natural motifs in printed, slubby, woven textures and even touches of denim for a relaxed artisan look.

3



1 RUG Look closely and you'll see a tiny motif wading across the depths of this deep blue design. Bombay Persian Gabbeh **rug**, £1,800, Lilla Rugs

French Connection Home

2 NAPKIN Dress your table in handwoven and hand-dyed linens with an inky pattern. Ikat **napkin** in Indigo, £12, Toast

3 LAMP Illuminated by the shade above, this highgloss lamp base reveals its organic, fluid curves. Hebe medium **lamp** base in Deep Blue, €199, Ferm Living

4 TINY TRAY Celestial motifs give everyday items a magical charm. This ceramic cutie is just the thing for safe-keeping jewellery. Mono star **trinket tray**, £12.50, White Stuff

5 SOFA Dreamy seats, a heart-shaped back, roll arms and elegant piping complement velvet upholstery for the ultimate in bewitching seating. Holton two-seater **sofa** in Easy Velvet Indigo, £1,599, Swoon



Layered brushstrokes create a smudgy, smoky atmosphere. Wall in Velvet Evening flat matt emulsion; Soft Grey Suede textured emulsion, both from £23 for 2.5L, Crown

OUR EXPERT SAYS...

66 INDIGO REPRESENTS THE MYSTERY OF DARK WILDERNESS SPACES, INSTILLING A SENSE OF WONDER, TRANQUILITY AND CONNECTION TO NATURE 99

HOLLY PHILLIPS, STYLE CONTENT EDITOR



9

6 CUSHION Inspired by whispering stems at Kew Gardens, this pretty piece has been screen-printed by hand. Grasses silk **cushion**,

£62, Clarissa Hulse

7 MUG With its shining moon illustration on a deep navy background, this is perfect for bedtime brews. Night sky **mug**, £12, Oliver Bonas

8 STORAGE BASKET

Handwoven by a female weaving co-op in Ghana, this versatile helper is made of natural undyed straw and recycled vintage indigo fabric, making it 100 per cent organic. Vintage indigo **basket**, £42, Lola & Mawu

9 THROW

This delicately quilted, plush beauty features a contrasting cotton reverse to lighten the indigo mood. Velvet **throw** in Prussian Blue, from £250, Feather & Black

Meet Tom Raffield **DESIGNER IN WOOD**



Do you have a background in design? I studied 3D Design for Sustainability at Falmouth University and it was there that I started playing with the possibilities of steam bending – an ecologically sound process of manipulating wood, traditionally associated with boat building. After a while, I developed my own techniques, which brought many of my ideas to life. Once you master the skill it's highly addictive; I can't get enough of it!

Talk us through the design process.

I have an amazing team that I work with on a day-to-day basis. I often come up with initial ideas alone, but my team are instrumental in making them a reality. I create sketches, and then hand it over to our CAD designer who draws them on a computer. We create prototypes and fine-tune details, before handing the final design over to our lighting or furniture team to bring to life.

Where are you based? I'm lucky enough to live in an amazing part of Cornwall, surrounded by six acres of ancient woodland. We've recently

3 more designers to watch ...

ANGUS ROSS combines traditional and modern woodwork techniques to

runs steam bending courses from his workshop in the Lake District. 01539

and garden products using sustainable wood. makerandwright.co.uk

create statement pieces. 01887 829857, angusross.co.uk CHARLIE WHINNEY

552986, charliewhinney.com MAKER & WRIGHT produces beautiful furniture

After discovering the art of wooden steam bending at university, Cornwall-based designer Tom Raffield quickly set about bringing the technique into the 21st century

moved our workshop to Falmouth. It's much bigger than our last, with lots of light and space. It's great to have everyone under the same roof.

What's your inspiration? Nature is a big source of inspiration for my work. I'm fascinated by the seasons and how they change the woodland around my home. I observe the patterns and shapes I see and try to frame them in my own way.

Where do you source your

materials? All of our wood comes from sustainable sources in the Pyrenees. We've learnt through trial and error which woods respond well to the steam bending process. Ultimately ash, oak and walnut are the trio of woods around which our current range is based.

What's been your career highlight so far? There have been lots, but our home featuring on *Grand Designs* was a big one. The idea was to create a space that seamlessly blends into its surroundings, blurring the boundaries between nature and inside by utilising timber from our own woodland, rocks from the original excavation site and steam bending talents from our team. That really helped the business and the reception and interest it still generates today is really humbling.

If you could go back in time, what advice would you give yourself? Enjoy every moment - you only get to experience it once!

Tom Raffield, tomraffield.com

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hello Sainsbury's Home

Sainsbury's Home Christmas Noir small tree bowl £5, side plate (mixed sku) £3, printed hi ball (mixed sku) £1.50, printed divider plate £6, printed dinner plate £4, felt cutout grey coaster (4pk) £3, prep bowls (3pk) £10 and lemon juicer £6.

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MAR IN

Scandi tableware from £1.50

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Sainsbury's

Midwiekanie Michaelie Tundra tones of moss, flint and cinder are paired with blonde woods and natural weaves to bring Nordic spirit to your home this New Year

COSY COMFORT

Keep the ingredients for warming winter drinks ready in stylish glass jars - a tempting addition to your kitchen shelves, or a thoughtful gift for visiting friends.

HALLWAY HAVEN

Style up a simple space to welcome guests. A cane chair makes the perfect spot for shrugging off your outdoor clothes and appreciating the comforts of home.


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CREATIVE MOMENT

Make your own mini bunting by using a template and cutting out triangles from wallpaper or fabric remnants. Thread through cotton or twine, then hang.



SEASONAL DECOR

NATURALLY NOCTURNAL

01112

Add comforting layers to a bedroom with wicker or rattan details. Finish with cosy cottons and soft linens, and throws featuring tassels, fringes and trims.

ALL THE DETAILS, PRODUCTS & PRICES



PAGE 70-71

COSY COMFORT

Vintage rustic **bench**, £625; Alia Blush stoneware **salad dish**, £22, both Design Vintage. **Lantern**, £4, TK Maxx. Deeka **storage jar**, £29.95, Nkuku. Cinnamon **mugs**, £6 each, Habitat. **Tea towel**, from selection at Bungalow. Dried **foliage**, from a selection at Atlas Flowers

HALLWAY HAVEN

Bench, as before. French cane **chair**, £395, French Connection Home. **Stool**, £95, Garden Trading. Agna **rug**, £175, Cox and Cox. Open seagrass **basket**, £46, Design Vintage. Obi **lantern**, £39.95, Nkuku. Church **candles**, £6 each, Shearer Candles. Velvet **ribbon**, from a selection



PAGES 72-73

COME TOGETHER

For similar table, try Home Barn. French cane cupboard, £650; Tokyo carver chair, £180, both French Connection Home. Oslo Olive Green dining chair, £195, Graham and Green. Vintage rustic bench, as before. Retro webbing stool, £120; Phantom Grey tea light holders, £6 each, all Design Vintage. Papel paper garland, £34.95, Nkuku. (On bench) Sheepskin rug, £60, Graham and Green. Neem Black dinner plates, £20 each, Bungalow. Silver **votive** (used as tree planters), £18 for four, Raj Tent Club. Mawal cushion cover (used as a table runner), £38, Oka. Paper decorations, from a selection at Broste Copenhagen. Zomi clear **glass**, as before. Grey **wine** glasses, £3.99 each, H&M Home. Pom-pom edge **napkins**, £21 for two, Nordic House. Vintage glass bauble, from a selection at Etsy. Dinera Black 18-piece tableware, £27, Ikea. Brass Bingley candlesticks, £16 each; mini taper Aloe Green **candles**, £9 for 10, all Rowen & Wren. (On cabinet) Tortoiseshell tumbler (used as tea light holder), £40 for four, Oka. Handmade Black vase,



PAGES 74-75

RELAXING SOAK

Vintage wooden **bowl**, £120, vintage elm **stool**, £150, both Design Vintage. White **waffle towels**, from £15 each, Secret Linen Store. Hand-carved wooden **tree**, as before. Bath **brush**, £12; mini vintage Olive Green **bauble** set, £16 for 10, all Nordic House. Blu **wash**, £35 for large; Roseum **wash**, £18 for small, both La-Eva. The linen **face cloth**, £14.64 for set of three, Lake Shore Linen at Etsy, is similar. **Bath mat**, £12, TKMaxx

NATURALLY NOCTURNAL

Delaktig **headboard**, £106, Ikea. White 100% linen king size **duvet cover**, £145;

at VV Rouleaux. (On bench) White vase, £17.99, H&M Home. Zomi clear tumblers (used as tea light holders), £48 for four, Kalinko. Silver **tea light holder**, £18 for four, Raj Tent Club. Alia **dish**, as before. Madam Stoltz double face **cushion cover**, £21, Smallable. Hatsumomo Black vase, £45, Oka. Camel linen cushion, £65, Design Vintage. Tassel basket planter, £14, TK Maxx. German straw tree topper, £15; straw star decorations (on wall), £12.50 for six, all Raj Tent Club. (On chair) Ecru tassel cushion, £48; Storm velvet **cushion**, £50, both Design Vintage. Velvet **cushion** in Petropolis in Emerald, £165m, GP&J Baker. (On stool) Grey **tea cup**, £5, TK Maxx

£65, Dantes Ceramics. Silver glass cloud **baubles**, £6 each, Raj Tent Club

CREATIVE MOMENT

Mini **bunting** made with Sanderson Peony Tree wallpaper in Midnight Blue/ Primrose, £68 a roll; Morris and Co Acanthus wallpaper in Slate Blue/Thyme, £84 a roll; Morris and Co Bramble wallpaper in Indigo, £80 a roll, all Style Library. Garland, as before. (On bench, from left) Botanical **mattress**, £75, Design Vintage. Sheepskin **rug**, as before. Striped tassel cushion cover, £8.99, H&M Home. Storm **cushion**, as before. Large Liberty print floral cushion, £88, Design Vintage. Washed grey velvet cushion, £36, French Connection Home. Washed linen **cushion cover**, £12.99, H&M Home. Hammered mango tray, £20, French Connection Home. Wooden **trees**, £16 each, Forge Creative. Green glass vase, £20, TK Maxx. Dried grasses and seed heads, Atlas Flowers. Present wrapped in wallpaper lining paper, £4 a roll, B&Q. Velvet ribbon, from £1.65m, VV Rouleaux. Paper star **decoration** (right, just seen), £22, Bungalow

matching **pillowcases**, £18 each; Natural linen frilled **pillowcase**, £20; ticking strip **cushion cover**, £15, all Secret Linen Store. Mawal **cushion cover**, as before. Komati Midnight **cushion**, £40.75, Bungalow. Knitted rope Dark Grey **cushion**, £58; Luxury Camel tassel **throw**, £285; bud **vase**, £12, all Design Vintage. Handcarved vintage wooden **bowl**, £48, Yonder. Personalised linen **stocking**, £20, Modo Creative at Notonthehighstreet. com. Vintage glass **bauble**, from a selection at Etsy



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Pictured: Rule Brittania by SYRETT, limited edition print, £495

Prepare to throw the PERFECT PARTY

Want to be the host with the most? Plan your party ahead of time to make entertaining a relaxed affair for you and your guests

Oxford wine glasses, £32 for four; Symons bone china, from £14 for a dinner plate; Black candlesticks, from £20 each; mini trees, £20 for three, pre-lit hanging star, £25; Green and berry garland, £75, all The White Company





PLAN AHEAD

Decide what drinks to serve well in advance to avoid running dry; assume guests will have two drinks during the first hour of the party, and one drink every hour after that. For a buffet, plan eight savoury and two to three sweet canapés per head. Enlist help to take platters of food out - children love to feel involved, so this is a great task for them!

PARTY PICKS

Napkins, £15 for four, Sophie Allport. Ando bowls, £100 for set of three, Kelly Hoppen. *Party-Perfect Bites* by Milli Taylor, £9.99, Ryland Peters & Small. Cheers sign, £20, Artisanti

PARTY-PERFECT BITES





SET THE MOOD

Create an atmospheric evening centrepiece by placing candles of varying sizes inside a pre-lit wreath. With everyone passing plates and bowls around, it's best to avoid naked flames, so go for realistic, battery-powered options. Soften the main lighting if you have dimmers, or switch to low-watt bulbs to achieve a similar effect – don't forget to pop your tree lights on for extra sparkle.

FINISHING TOUCHES

Ginger Ray wooden place card holder, £7 for five, Hobbycraft. Marble Christmas tree board, £18, Garden Trading. Luxury pine cone crackers,£34.95 for five, Annabel James

TABLE TALK

Thoughtful additions make all the difference, whether a personalised place setting or a gift for each guest. Keep conversation flowing with trivia games and layer plates to leave space free on the table for decorations – fresh greenery, cinnamon sticks and pine cones look and smell lovely.

OUR EXPERT SAYS...

TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF AND ORDER YOUR PARTY FOOD. FROM PLATTERS TO THREE-COURSE DINNERS, IT

TARA KING, STYLE CONTENT EDITOR

SCENE SETTING

When you're serving a feast of different dishes, use decorative elements to pull the look together and bring a sense of celebration to the display. Add height with flowers or an arrangement of branches, and a runner or cloth on the table for a grounding colour.

ALL STATIONS GO

山底和

The kitchen is the last place you want people gathering when you're trying to serve canapés, so set up food and drink stations in the party room so guests can help themselves. Repurpose furniture - clear out shelves in a dresser to house drinks and glasses, or throw a cloth over a desk for a dessert table.



TENIN





STAY CHILLED

There's nothing worse than lukewarm drinks, so organise a last-minute ice delivery to fill up makeshift coolers (think bath tubs, flower pots and paddling pools) or consider hiring an extra fridge or two for the evening. Not enough glasses? Consider hiring some, or borrow from friends and family in advance. Don't worry about matching - an eclectic selection looks stylish on display and makes it easier for guests to keep track of their drink.



FINE DETAIL Leather handled champagne bath, £124.95, Annabel James. Mistletoe chandelier, £34, Idyll Home. Nomu decanter with tumblers, £45, Oliver Bonas



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FROM THE MAKERS OF BRITAIN'S **BESTSELLING HOMES MAGAZINE**



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STYLE IDEAS & DECORATING TIPS GORGEOUS REAL HOMES PRACTICAL PROJECT ADVICE

Step inside Angelina lolie's nev

FROM LEFT St Mary's, now restored and loved; inside, a yearly service is still held; Christine provides ongoing TLC

Without a friend, St Mary's would have been knocked down

Volunteer Christine McDonald takes care of a once neglected and forgotten church, ensuring its quiet charm is preserved for generations to come

I first encountered the church when I'd sneak out of my bedroom as a teenager. I lived in a Victorian house near a farm in Maldon, Essex. My bedroom looked out at the Scout hut and, having got to know some of the Scouts, I had a pact with them. I would flash my bedroom light three times and, if they returned the signal, we would tumble out into the summer evening air and make our way through woods to St Mary's, a dilapidated church in nearby Mundon. It was, and still is, a remarkable place - a patchwork of links to the past, Anglo Saxon and medieval in parts, with a Tudor bell tower, and a chancel that was refashioned in the Georgian period. Notices saying 'Unsafe' and 'Do Not Enter' guarded the church, but to inquisitive teenagers, that was an open invitation! Inside was a forgotten realm. This forbidden place was full of wonder and magic. In the summer of 1975, the church was surrounded by scaffolding. Grown-ups - the 'baddies' in our eyes - had arrived. Years later,

I would discover that the villains were a charitable organisation called The Friends of Friendless Churches, who stepped in to prevent demolition. The Friends were set up in 1957 by Welshman Ivor Bulmer-Thomas to rescue former places of worship. My relationship to this unusual building was rekindled in 1992 when my son Christopher was **born.** I had never moved away from the area and even married a local - Andrew, my husband of 39 years. While on maternity leave, I took a stroll to the church with the pram. It was very different from the days of my teenage excursions. The Friends had cleaned it up and mended the 18th-century box pews, but with no jarring mod cons, not even electric lighting. It had been preserved in a gentle way. For a second time, I was spellbound, and came away determined to uncover as much as I could about the building's past. Our spare room is now almost entirely given over to piles of research material about St Mary's. In particular, I have been looking



into fragments of wall paintings, recently confirmed as images of St Edmund being martyred by Vikings. I have enough to write a book, which is my long-term aim. As a volunteer, I play a very active role in looking after the church. I work to raise its profile and submit reports about its condition. I organise tours of the building, clean and sweep up, and help people with genealogical research. I provide all the ongoing TLC required.

The church holds only one service a year, its annual rededication to St Mary, when pews are always packed with visitors. But it is open daily. Comments in the visitors' book make clear how much the place means to people as a space of stillness and reflection. They talk about its special atmosphere and what a hidden gem it is. Playing a part in ensuring this unique building maintains its magic for generations to come feels like something that was meant to be. Find out more at friendsof friendlesschurches.org.uk



Snug & stylish Vanessa. The lighter tones help make a smaller living room feel cosy but not claustrophobic.' WHETHER IT'S A QUIET NOOK TUCKED AWAY FROM BUSY FAMILY LIFE, A

RELAXING ROOM FOR CHILLING WITH FRIENDS, OR A SOPHISTICATED PARTY SPACE, OUR COSY LIVING ROOM IDEAS ARE COMFORTABLY ON POINT...

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Constant Party

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CAUSE TO CELEBRATE

Christmas styling is a chance to celebrate your room's best features. 'For a captivating centrepiece, choose a real wreath to sit above the fireplace. Incorporating authentic foliage into your scheme never fails to create a sense of warmth,' says Meaghan Hunter, stylist at Neptune. 'Trimming the mantel with traditional velvet stockings will provide colour and texture - co-ordinate the stockings with your tree decorations, giftwrap and ribbon for an elegant folkfeel in your living room.'

and the second second second

Eva sofa in Hugo Pale Oat, £2,325; Keswick coffee table in brushed brass, £780; Rupert stool in Isla Swallow, £395; Fleming round mirror, £125; Isla velvet stockings, £30 each, all Neptune





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BABY, IT'S COLD OUTSIDE...

Glass-filled living rooms aren't just for summer! After all, there are few things more satisfying than looking out at a pretty, frost-covered garden while sat inside in the warm. To make the room snug, you'll want it cosy underfoot. David Cormack, marketing director at Cormar Carpet Co, recommends a hardwearing Berber Twist carpet in an 80 per cent wool blend.



Natural Berber Twist **carpet** in Morning Dew, from £30sq m, Cormar Carpet Co

WALL-TO-WALL GREENERY

Winter is the perfect time to go bold and moody on your walls. Make sure the look is timeless by going for dark, yet tranquil, green - in fact, any nature-inspired shade will prove perennially stylish. 'Green is a colour that will always feel comfortable,' says Ruth Mottershead, marketing director at Little Greene. 'A subtle, muted tone such as our Sage Green is both elegant and reassuring. Bring it up to date by following the trend for painting walls and woodwork the same colour.'



Walls in Sage Green absolute matt emulsion, £45 for 2.5L; side tables and coffee table in Stone Dark Cool intelligent eggshell, £64 for 2.5L, all Little Greene

Aubourn two-seater **sofas**, £2,695 each; Vasa lounge **chairs**, £695 each; Birell **coffee table**, £1,495; Blake **footstool**, £395; Rander ceramic **stool**, £150; *Woodland Leaf* framed **prints**, £475 for set of eight; Sedgwick **mirror**, £575; Kinoko **table lamp**, £195; **cushion covers**, from £60 each; Narrow Zegal **vases** in Blue/ White, £12 each; Bukva glass **candleholder**, £25, all Oka

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LOVELY LAMP LIGHT

'As the weather turns colder and the nights become longer, now's the time to focus on lighting in your living room. Veer away from overhead lighting unless it's fitted with a dimmer, otherwise the harsh light spoils the atmosphere in a room,' says Sue Jones, co-founder and creative director of Oka. 'Turn on floor lamps for a subtle glow in the evening - they're a great way to add interest to a living room, transforming dark corners.' Choose light bulbs that produce a warm glow.

TRAY CHIC

Make TV dinners sophisticated with a detachable tray table that can be loaded up and carried to your waiting guests - perfect for party canapés. Go as big as you can to create the perfect focal point, but not so big that the tray is too heavy to carry. 'Look for a tray table that's simple to detach and has handles with decent grip, so it's easily manoeuvrable but super stylish, too,' says Mark Winstanley, chief creative officer at The White Company. Butler's **coffee table**, £375; Earlsfield **sofa**, £1,800; Brunel **side table**, £95; faux-fur floor **cushion**, £225; jute **rug**, £525; ceramic bottle **table lamp**, £195; round Kubu **tray**, £45; super-soft faux-fur **throw**, £150, all The White Company

abilities

ELEVATED ELEGANCE

Celebrate original architraves and architectural features. And, if you don't have any, fake it until you make it! Here, interior designer Emma Collins commissioned replica cornicing, made from a mould of the only undamaged cornice in the house, and had ceiling roses made to match. 'The fireplace was also new but of a classic design. Elevate the glamour with a sparkling, statement chandelier,' says Emma.

Interior design, Emma Collins. Bespoke joinery (in alcoves), from £5,000, Humphrey Munson; in Basalt intelligent eggshell, £64 for 2.5L, Little Greene. Crystal chandelier, £1,940, 1stdibs **Interior design**, Nicky Dobree. Groundpiece **sofa**, from £11,609, Antonio Citterio at Flexform



IT'S ALL ABOUT U

A U-shaped sofa is the ultimate configuration for sociable living rooms. Allowing family and friends to spread out comfortably (prepare to fight for the prized corner seats), this layout is great for maintaining eyecontact during conversations, or hunkering down for cosy movie nights. Since they are substantial pieces of furniture, go for lighter choices on furniture and textiles elsewhere. 'It's also important to think about how people will move through the space,' says interior designer Nicky Dobree. 'Try to keep the area all around the sofa as open and accessible as possible.'

RAISE IT UP

If you would like plenty of seating but are worried your living room will feel overcrowded, consider investing in furniture with legs – sofa included. By leaving as much visible flooring as possible, this popular space-boosting hack will let you max up the seating without turning your living room into a furniture showroom. In this inviting space, even the woodburner (just seen) is raised off the floor, letting the light through and allowing the lovely rustic flooring to shine.

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METAL MUSE

Create a striking focal point in your bedroom with this four-poster design, which combines a contemporary, minimal silhouette with bespoke mouldings for an understated, elegant finish. The perfect pick for sleeping beauties of all ages. Beaumont four poster bed in Black, from £795 for a double, The White Company

VGROWN-UP GLAMOUR

Combining stately lines with sumptuous detailing and deep buttoning on the headboard, this bed comes with an opulent selection of fabric and leg options to choose from - helping you to create the most welcoming boudoir scheme. Perth bed frame, from £854 for a double, Darlings of Chelsea

▲ LAID-BACK WONDER

Taking squish factor beyond the bedding bundle and onto the bedstead itself, this cuddly wonder has a padded cushion headboard and curves galore. No better excuse for those lazy weekend lie-ins! Pillow talker **bed**, from £1,145 for a double, Loaf

MODERN DESIGNS INTERPRET CLASSIC SILHOUETTES IN SIMPLIFIED FORMS, HONOURING TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES IN A MORE PEACEFUL, SOPHISTICATED STYLE **99**

▲ RICH GRAINS

Transform your bedroom into a luxurious retreat with this distinctive, deeply dark king-size bed. Featuring a Hyedua veneer with a robust walnut finish and tapered legs in satin brass, it exudes that sought after hotel chic appeal.

Durham **bed**, £2,095 for a king, Andrew Martin

HIDE AND SLEEP

This bundle of brilliance in a warming, golden sunshine shade combines cloud-like comfort, exceptional hidden storage and a beautifully tailored, luxe finish - it's the stuff of dreams (quite literally!) Embrace Natural Splendour hideaway **divan** set with Lacey floor-standing **headboard** in Tweed Mustard, from £2,399 for a double, Hypnos at Furniture Village

FURNITURE BUYER'S GUIDE

▲ RELAXED RATTAN

Standing proud, this wonderfully textured design is calling out to be dressed in layers of dive-into linens, delectably dense duvets and sumptuous velvet quilts. You won't want to get out of bed each morning! Rafferty rich rattan low footboard **bed**, from £1,095 for a king, The French Bedroom Company

ATTENTION SEEKER ►

Grace your bedroom with this pared-back take on a traditional style icon. Available in natural oak or colour-painted finishes, its sophisticated frame can be adorned with curtains or sheers to create a cosy cocoon, or hung with potted planters for a botanical touch. Wardley painted four-poster bed in Ink, from £1,260 for a double, Neptune





▲ SWEEPING LINES

With subtle splayed wings and a gently curved headboard top line, this angelic piece is effortlessly graceful in its calming blue tone. Lupin ottoman **bed**, from £1,295 for a king, Button & Sprung 66 YOUR BED IS THE ULTIMATE HAVEN TO REST AND REVIVE MIND, BODY AND SOUL, AND SHOULD WELCOME ALL THE SENSES WITH PLUSH AND COSY DIVE-INTO APPEAL

HEAD TURNER ►

Simplified to complement all modern country schemes, from Scandi barn conversion to period maximalist cottage, this smart four-poster is available in a white-painted finish or a dark cherry alternative. It can even be made to custom dimensions for a snug fit in uniquely shaped spaces. Turner painted wood bed frame in White, from £849 for a double, The Original Bed Co



FEATURE HOLLY PHILLIPS

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Eye-catching CURTAINS

FRAME YOUR VIEW WITH ATTENTION-GRABBING DRAPERY. COMBINATIONS OF CURTAINS, VOILES AND BLINDS REINVENT COUNTRY WINDOW CHIC



BESPOKE BEAUTY

For a striking look with an elegant feel, marry different fabric weights and textures in a 2:1 ratio. 'Rich velvet is a key fabric trend, giving that luxurious feeling of warmth and adding great depth of colour, while linen captures a mood of calm and serenity - the perfect combination for a sophisticated country bedroom,' says Simon Temprell, interior design manager at Neptune. 'Choose a colour that highlights similar accents throughout the space to present a coherent scheme.'



Curtains in Malham in Grey, £54.50m, Ian Mankin

OUR EXPERT SAYS... CREATE THE ILLUSION OF HEIGHT IN SMALLER ROOMS BY HANGING YOUR CURTAIN POLE CLOSE TO THE CEILING 99 TARA KING, CONTENT STYLE EDITOR



WARM WELCOME

Stylishly sensible, a door curtain blocks out draughts and conceals entrances for a cosy feel. Hanging options include a portiere rod, which allows the curtain to rise and fall as the door opens and closes, while a simple pole above the door means you can easily swap curtains depending on the time of year – lined linen is ideal for chilly winter months.

IN THE FRAME

'Although not suitable for bedrooms, unlined natural curtains give a lovely relaxed look when used in a living or dining space,' says Harry Cole, founder of Loom & Last. Decorative elements come in the form of the pole and heading. Here, a traditional pinch pleat softens a contemporary scheme.





NATURE'S FINEST

Practical and hard wearing, wool is the perfect choice for curtains in a busy home. 'Today's curtain trends look to subtly enhance a scheme, so let the texture take centre stage by choosing a plain or pared-back pattern,' says Deborah Russell, senior designer at lan Mankin. 'Grey is timeless and works throughout the seasons.'

HANG LOOSE

Curtains don't have to come as a pair to make a statement - a single draped panel can be just as effective. Hung across a window seat, it creates a cosy nook for reading and relaxing. Double dressing with a co-ordinating blind adds a layer of interest, as well as being practical for privacy. Choose a bright floral print to draw the eye to the window and the garden beyond.



3 OF THE BEST METAL FINIALS These decorative fittings offer the perfect finishing touch



1. Bishop's Crook finial in Old Ivory, £24.10, Jim Lawrence 2. Iron Tree finial in hammered antique brass, £363.60 for two, McKinney & Co 3. Artichoke finial in antique brass, £22, John Lewis & Partners

OUR EXPERT SAY CO-FRIEN ECO-FRIEN APPROACH BUY SECON HAND. TH CURTAIN exchange OFFERS C CURTAI ALL SIZE **TARA KING,** CONTENT STYLE EDITOR

Curtains and pelmet in Connaught Silk in Morandi Grey, £60m; edged in Scala Braid in Blue, £65m, both James Hare

FEATURE TARA KING





■ THINK ABOUT FUNCTION Voiles are sheer and translucent and a great way of letting the light in while still offering privacy, but blackout, lined curtains are a better choice for bedrooms. 'I always line curtains,' says Victoria Walker, product manager at Hillarys. 'It makes them look fuller, helps reduce light leakage and provides extra privacy'.

CONSIDER HEADING OPTIONS Eyelets and tab tops offer a contemporary feel, while cottage pleats or tie tops work well for classic country style. Discreet tracks are a good choice for rooms with low ceilings and are useful for dressing a bay window if you want curtains to fit easily inside the recess.

■ CHOOSE THE RIGHT LENGTH Cottage or dormer windows suit curtains to the windowsill, while floorlength is the favourite for tall sash windows and bays. 'If you want to puddle your curtains, go for no more than 15cm extra length to ensure the effect looks intentional,' says Harry Cole founder of Loom & Last.

■ MEASURE UP CAREFULLY Even if you use a madeto-measure service, it's useful to have an idea of your measurements beforehand in order to calculate fabric quantities and estimate costs. Ideally, install your tracks and poles before you measure up, taking into account the space needed for the curtains to be drawn back either side of the window – usually about 15-20cm depending on the thickness of fabric.



PERFECT MATCH

Pairing curtains with decorative voiles stops windows from looking bare when the curtains are open and offers an opportunity to play with pattern. 'If you have large windows, don't stint on fabric - allow for generous proportions and dare to be bold,' says Laura O'Connell, product designer at Thomas Sanderson.



COVER UP

A pelmet is a clever way to frame a window, creating the illusion of height and neatly concealing poles and tracks. 'They can be made in a range of styles from softly gathered to a traditional box shape, but consider size anything too big will overpower small rooms,' says Saffron Hare, creative director at James Hare.
COUNTRY HOMES & INTERIORS

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The 4* all inclusive Sunbeach Hotel is on a lovely long stretch of sandy beach. Facilities include a swimming pool, three bars, Wi-Fi, massage room (payable locally), buffet and à la carte dining (at a supplement), table tennis, darts, daytime and evening entertainment. Your sea view room is air-conditioned with Wi-Fi, a television and mini-fridge. Country Homes & Interiors readers save £362 on this holiday. Use code: **COHSU**



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SORT YOUR 4K RESOLUTION FROM YOUR SUPER-CRISP OLED PICTURE QUALITY WITH OUR SMART TECH GUIDE TO THE LATEST TVS



PICTURE QUALITY

There are a number of technical terms you'll need to get familiar with when buying a new TV. HDR stands for High Dynamic Range, which is a technique that heightens a picture's contrast. OLED (Organic Light-Emitting Diode) is where each pixel within the screen is a small LED light that produces both light and colour. QLED is Samsungspecific and stands for Quantum dot Light-Emitting Diode. Similar to a regular LED TV, QLED uses quantum dots that dramatically improve colour and brightness. Head in-store to speak to an advisor about the benefits of each and to view the picture quality in person.

SMART CONTROL

A smart TV will have built-in internet capability, meaning streaming apps, such as Netflix, are accessible directly though the TV, eliminating the need for add-on devices.

DESIGN FEATURES

LED, OLED and QLED screens have opened the door to thinner, streamlined models. Innovative designs include the 2.5mm-thick LG Wallpaper TV - perfect for a seamless, big-screen experience. Samsung's Frame TV doubles as an artwork of your choice when you're not watching TV.

BEST FOR CINEMATIC VIEWING TX-55GZ950B, £1,599.99, Panasonic

It's not the most stylish 4K OLED TV available, but what it lacks in style it makes up for in exceptional picture and sound quality.

With smooth motion and dark detail, this 55in model boasts a punchy audio performance that's often missing from slim televisions. It also supports Netflix Calibrated Mode, a display function that mimics the settings the directors used when filming, so you can enjoy exactly the picture they wanted you to see.



BEST FOR SOUND QUALITY 8804, from £1,000, Philips

Choose from a 50, 55 or 65in screen, this gorgeous LCD TV has a built-in 50W Bowers & Wilkins speaker system so the sound

quality is exceptional, without the need for a separate soundbar. With 4K resolution, the beautiful design boasts a barely noticeable two-tone bezel and slim metal stand, while the speakers are hidden beneath a soft grey fabric from Danish textile brand, Kvadrat.



BEST FOR SMART FEATURES OLED C9, £3,499, LG

The 65in 4K screen of this model has four times the number of pixels than a 1080p Full HD TV, meaning you get stunning realism,

while HDR ensures light and dark colours look just like they do in the cinema. It also boasts Freeview Play, Dolby Atmos surround sound and Smart TV software so you can stream in perfect resolution. Choose how you'd like to control it, using the ingenious magic wand remote or voice control via Google Assistant or Alexa.





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WITH A PURPLE AGA AS A STARTING POINT, JANE MILAN GOT SAVVY COMBINING COLOUR, STYLE AND DESIGN IN HER SOCIABLE KITCHEN

PROJECT PROFILE

Owner Jane Milan lives here with her dogs, cats and horses.

House A four-bedroom, detached Georgian farmhouse in the Surrey countryside.

Project A previous extension was reconfigured to create a large open-plan space.

Kitchen size 7.3x3.9m

Designer William Rudgard at Martin Moore.

Cabinetry Martin Moore's English and New Classic collections, painted in Farrow & Ball's Dove Tale, Brassica, Ammonite and Pelt.





efore the kitchen was even designed, the colour scheme had been decided. 'We were nowhere near settled on the layout, but I've always loved Agas,' says Jane Milan. 'And when I saw the Aubergine finish, I just fell in love with its warmth - there was no way we wouldn't get it.'

Jane and her late husband Chris bought their Surrey farm 30 years ago and it's where the couple raised their family. 'We bought the farm because it was in a beautiful, peaceful setting with 30 acres of land, but the outbuildings were all derelict,' she says. 'We had renovated a little when the children were small, but it was no longer working for us.'

The site of the new kitchen was previously a complex puzzle of little rooms between the main Georgian farmhouse and an old, oak-framed barn. Creating the new space involved removing many walls, levelling floors and adding plenty of glazing to let the light in. 'The previous kitchen was completely cut off from the rest of the house. My main priority for the renovations was to create more sociable spaces and use more of the house,' says Jane. Tragically, Chris passed away following a hard-fought illness, soon after the initial kitchen plans were finalised. But, with the help of William Rudgard of Martin Moore, Jane continued with the new kitchen to ensure their long-held dream of an open and welcoming space was realised. 'Our children and grandchildren are frequent visitors, and the house has never been busier with overnight guests,' she says.

Early layouts featured two islands, but Jane was worried the kitchen would feel too galley-like, and the islands would become an obstruction rather than an asset. She decided to flip one island 90 degrees to make a peninsula that would help separate the kitchen from the soft seating area. Once the floorplan was settled, the rest of the design flowed smoothly and the final kitchen is everything Jane imagined. 'Chris and I worked hard on the plans and I'm so happy to have seen out our dream. It wasn't easy, but I managed the project on my own and that, in itself, is very rewarding.'





€ IT'S SUCH A NICE, HAPPY SPACE AND REALLY COMES INTO ITS OWN WHEN FAMILY AND FRIENDS GATHER

works as well for one, as it is does for entertaining



The room is an elongated L-shape, with the kitchen leading into a vaulted oak barn that's used as a living area. There is a dining area in the shortest section of the 'L'. Behind the kitchen is a walk-in pantry. Both the dining and living areas have direct access to the garden.



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ISLAND DISPLAY

If storage space is at a premium, drawer units will make the most of an island unit. But if, like Jane, you have plenty of room to stash your kitchenalia elsewhere, open shelving can be used to create a really striking design feature. Here, the front of the island is the main view from the dining table, so Jane has filled the shelves with her favourite stoneware, recipe books and curios to provide a pretty backdrop. Consider adding concealed lighting to bring your displays to life by night.

A. La Brown

THE COMPLETE AGA COOKE

The inside of the shelves are in Farrow & Ball's Pelt - a perfect match with the wall tiles



The drawer-filled peninsular unit provides a neat divide between zones

O PENINSULA DIVIDE

The bar stools are positioned on two sides of the peninsula – on one side to enjoy the views out towards the gardens, and on the other to face inwards for easy conversation with the chef. Allow at least one-metre free at the end of the unit – more if you have high-back stools in place – to prevent a bottleneck into or out of the kitchen area. Jane has allowed a generous 35cm overhang on the worktop to ensure knees don't bang into the unit.

ZEASY-ACCESS PANTRY

The walk-in pantry is shelved from floor to ceiling, providing an easy view of all contents at a glance. Jane uses it to store everything she doesn't use daily, from party platters to bulk cooking supplies. Providing access to the walk-in pantry posed a spatial challenge, as a hinged door opening in or out of the pantry would either have blocked off the fridge freezer in the kitchen, or significantly reduced usable space inside the pantry. The solution was a neat pocket door that slides out of the wall to close off the pantry when required.

THE DETAILS

CABINETRY

English and New Classic **kitchen**, from £35,000, Martin Moore; in Dove Tale (main units), Brassica (island), Pelt (island shelving) and Ammonite (pantry) modern eggshell, all £69 for 2.5L, Farrow & Ball

SURFACES

Worktops in Polished River Valley White granite, from £400sq m including installation; Polished Carrara marble, from £350sq m including installation, both Martin Moore. **Splashback** in Johnson's Prismatics ceramic tiles in Purple, £68.99sq m, The Tile Emporium. **Floor** in Aged Bourgogne Clair limestone, £195sq m, Martin Moore Stone

APPLIANCES

Five-oven **Aga**, from £12,875, Aga Living. Classic side-by-side **fridge freezer** with internal ice and water, £17,700, Sub-Zero. Built-in combination steam **oven**, £1,679, Siemens. **Wine cabinet**, £2,099, Liebherr

SINKS & TAPS

Double **undermount sink**, £902; **prep sink**, £665, all Kohler. Metis **mixer taps**, £414 each, Perrin & Rowe

ACCESSORIES

Blinds in Isla in cerise, £46.18m, Design Forum. St James padded bar **stools**, £220 each, One.World



FOOTSTEPS IN THE SNOW

After decades of being dominated by its driveway, Pam and Kieran Murphy's redesigned garden has made their East Anglian house a joy to come home to...

The original car driveway has been diverted, making space for an elegant formal garden with a pathway leading to the front door

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AT HOME WITH...

Owners Pam and Kieran Murphy and their dogs Cuillin and Dotty.

 House A red brick gentrified farmhouse, built in 1896, in countryside straddling the Cambridgeshire/Suffolk border.
 Features Half an acre of formal gardens, on waterlogged ground, are set in three acres of managed grounds. The formal garden is in contemporary classic style and there's a walled kitchen garden. he English countryside was full of lovely old houses built long before motor vehicles were even dreamed of, which today are obscured by a small fleet of cars. When Pam and Kieran Murphy moved into Moat Farm, on the border between Cambridgeshire and Suffolk, 10 years ago, they too found themselves parking either side of the front door. The 19th-century red-brick building has fine crenelated bays, which give it 'delusions of grandeur', according to Pam, but the frontage was dominated by a poker-straight driveway leading to a wide area of gravel. 'We knew it wasn't ideal,' she says, 'But there was so much work to do on the interior of the house.'

For many years they were busy with their work, children and dogs, but gradually their dissatisfaction grew. There are natural springs all over the site so, as well as the lack of a front garden, the ground was waterlogged in parts, and the kitchen garden area was a jumble of outbuildings lacking any sense of organisation.

'Then a friend introduced me to Hugo Nicolle, who had designed a lot of similar gardens in the area,' says Pam. The solution to her problem was clear to Hugo from his first site visit. 'It was obvious that the house would benefit from being set in a garden, not a car park, and the way to achieve this was to dig up the old drive and create a new route that opened up the space in front of the building. The house was missing a formal element, so we chose to create a suitably semi-grand garden that would complement the architecture but also, looking the other way, draw the eye out into the beautiful surrounding woodlands and countryside.'

Hugo's concept was simple but it required some complicated reorganisation of the space. He devised a gently sweeping replacement drive that leads to the back door via a newly created >







WE LOVE THE WAY THE GARDEN HAS SETTLED THE HOUSE INTO ITS SURROUNDINGS. THIS WAS ALWAYS A MAGICAL PLACE, BUT NOW IT FEELS EVEN MORE OF A SANCTUARY







Intensely scented Daphne is a joy in the winter garden. There are many varieties, from deep pink to white

courtyard parking area. One wall of this courtyard replaces the chicken-wire fence that enclosed the kitchen garden, and the route through it is via a new gateway with brick pillars topped with stone ball finials. 'We were lucky to get the heritage builders FA Valiant,' says Pam. 'They work on the old Cambridge University buildings. Their work is so good, it looks like it's always been here.'

Hugo based his kitchen garden on tradition, with two rows of raised beds and a central square pond which recalls the dipping ponds that used to be a feature of every old kitchen garden before the advent of outdoor taps and hosepipes. There was already a large fruit cage running along the back of the garden. The air of symmetry and tradition is completed with an offset stone path set into grass, flanked by plump domes of clipped box.

Similar stone paths now form a key element of the new front garden. This area is mainly laid to grass, with a primary path running to the front door from a large natural pond at the edge of the woodland. Intersecting this at right angles is another path, which links the new driveway with an informal garden to the south of the house. Where the two paths cross, sits a simple fire basket. The lawn is framed by hedges of yew and two rows of hornbeam cylinders. The effect is one of timeless perfection.

Pam and Kieran could not be happier, especially on a snowy day when their garden looks like a scene from Narnia. There is even a little 'petrified' dog scampering down the path. 'That's a statue of our lovely fox terrier Patch, which a dear friend had made by sculptor Harriet Mead,' says Pam. 'This garden has changed our whole perspective. Now, coming up the drive it brings us real joy.'

CH&I loves... SCULPTURE

When there's little colour in the winter garden, structures can create interest and humour. Here's what to take into consideration...

• Whether shopping for an existing piece, or commissioning a new work, carefully consider where it will be positioned within the garden and how the light will fall on it at different times of year.

• Stone, metal, ceramic and glass are all used in outdoor sculpture. Something that harmonises with the materials you have in your garden works well, but a strong contrast can also be very effective.

• Sculpture is often sited to form a focal point, drawing attention to a special view or a significant feature within the garden. The primary line of sight will generally be outwards from the house but remember to

consider other angles as well.

• Not all sculpture is fixed in place. Pam enjoys moving her scrap metal dog around the garden to suit her mood and make a change.

• A commissioned piece of sculpture makes a very special gift, and most artists enjoy working in this way. But you do need to plan ahead by months, if not years, to have it ready for a specific date.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE GARDEN

ON OUR DOORSTEP...

Visit... Cambridge Junction, Clifton Way, Cambridge CB1 7GX, 01223 511511 (junction.co.uk). 'I go there to listen to music that is far too young for me.'

Go for a meal at... The Oak

Bistro, 6 Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1EG, 01223 323361 (theoakbistro.co.uk). 'The modern British-style food at this beautiful old coaching inn is delicious.'

Shop at... Gibson Saddlers, Queensberry Road, Newmarket CB8 9AX, 01638 662330 (gibsonsaddlers.com). 'I love the smell of well-oiled leather.'

⁶⁶The garden now frames beautiful views out into the countryside, but it also sets the house off in a way that really enhances its stature ⁹⁹

Pleached C*arpinus* betulus (hornbeam) is underplanted with Buxus

Pam's winter favourites

2

 Hellebores come in a range of colours from white to speckled pink and plum.
 French flat-leaf parsley and Swiss chard still flourish in the kitchen garden.
 Winter aconite, *Eranthis hyemalis*, will brighten up even the darkest winter's day.
 Winter crocus, *Crocus tommasinianus*, will gently self-seed, naturalising in grass.
 The flowers of *Sarcococca hookeriana var. digyna* create a potent fragrance.
 Iris foetidissima should be celebrated for its vibrant orange-red winter berries.
 Snowdrops, *Galanthus nivalis*, are an essential part of any winter garden.
 Prunus x subhirtella Autumnalis Rosea

blossoms November through to March.







IN A COUNTRY GARDEN

MAGICAL FLICKER Isla hanging tea light **hurricane**, H23xDia 12.5cm, £25, Nordic House

FESTIVE POPS Christmas tree stake lights, H44cm, £18.95 for five, The Worm that Turned

On a winter's night... STARRY OUTDOOR LIGHTS

Did you know?

CELESTIAL SHINE Outdoor LED star **light trio**, H30-

82cm, £134.99,

Lights4Fun

HARDWEARING BULBS ARE NEEDED FOR OUTDOOR USE. LEDS ARE ENERGY-EFFICIENT, LONG-LASTING AND DON'T CONTAIN MERCURY, MAKING THEM A FANTASTIC CHOICE FOR BOTH INSIDE AND OUT

WARM METALLICS Yongeli wire **lantern** in Antique Brass, H31xDia30cm, £39.95, Nkuku

TWINKLE TWINKLE... Warm white star lights, L280cm, £29.99, Dobbies

SPARKLING

festoon lights,

H98xW17.5x

£37.95, The

D17.5cm,

Farthing

FEATURE HOLLY PHILLIPS

SLEEK CARRIER Wireless **lamp**, H24.5xDia13.5cm, £169.96, Norm Architects at Made

in Design

CLUSTER

Hanging

CHIRPY QUINTET LED robin figures, H10.5x W6.5xD16cm, £40 for five, John Lewis & Partners Garden Trading

PARTY SWAG Squirrel festoon

lights, L750cm, £45,

Live Life Well

HEALTH, HAPPINESS, FASHION, TRAVEL, PETS, PASTIMES AND OTHER THINGS TO MAKE LIFE LOVELY



WHAT TO PICK, SEE & DO

Pick... pine cones to use as firelighters (circleofpinetrees.com).

Learn... how to give winter skin a natural boost on a half-day workshop in Cumbria, 17 January, £55 (thecreateescape.org.uk).

Visit... Tyntesfield, near Bristol, for traditional wassailing celebrations, 25 January, £16.50 for adults (nationaltrust.org.uk).

Enjoy... a day-long winter yoga retreat at Nower Wood nature reserve in Surrey, 25 January, £77 (surreywildlifetrust.org).

£60, Noctu



ONE TO FOLLOW...

Lifestyle blog The Lovely Drawer offers a wonderful mix of DIY tutorials, interiors advice and lifestyle posts by London-based artist and mum, Teri Muncey. Browse her range of artwork, from £20, thelovelydrawer.com

3 reasons to... embrace minimalist living

STRESS RELIEF Do you love it or need it? No? Get rid. Decluttering not only clears your home, but your mind, too. Plus, less stuff means less tidying - a clear win.

SAVINGS If just buying another one is no longer an option, you're more likely to invest in items that stand the test of time, meaning less of a dent in your wallet and in our limited landfill sites. CONTENTMENT By being grateful for what you already have, the desire to own more will gradually disappear. For more inspiration, read decluttering expert Mary Lambert's latest book, *The Joy of Living with Less* (£9.99, Cico Books).



Unique looks

Complete your party look with a hand-embroidered clutch, £129, from SEP Jordan - a social enterprise that employs over 500 talented artists living in women's refugee camps. Traditional Palestinian patterns feature in colours chosen by each individual artist, resulting in pieces that are as meaningful as they are unique.





PRE-LOVED STYLE

In a bid to make slow fashion as convenient as it is eco-friendly, online French retailer Patatam has been selling second-hand clothing since 2013 - and it's now launched in the UK. Every item is checked by hand to ensure quality and prices are capped at £19.99 so you're guaranteed a bargain.



CURL UP

It's the season for hibernating, so ensure you sleep soundly with the new calming Snooze Kit, £70 from Piglet. As well as a soothing lavender pillow spray, it includes a little bottle of British brand Kloris' CBD oil to help you relax and unwind at the end of the day.



TIME TO MEDITATE

Each honey-scented candle in this sweet little set (£16.50, Notonthehighstreet.com) is handmade from 100 per cent beeswax and has a 20-minute clean burn time – just long enough to pause, reflect and clear your mind before you go about your busy day. It comes with a mini brass stand and cotton travel pouch – perfect for mindfulness on the go.

3 of the best... thank you cards

Show loved ones how much you care

LUXE LOOK



Who wouldn't love to see this striking envelope land on their doormat? Especially with a hand-printed greeting card inside. Deco Wreath TY card, £3.50, Katie Leamon

BEE-AUTIFUL

Recently launched Sleepy Bee Studio creates handillustrated cards inspired by its hometown, Cambridge. A trip to the Museum of Zoology sparked this design. Card, £4.25, Sleepy Bee Studio





SHELF LIFE

Green-fingered gift givers will appreciate this cute little card featuring a watercolour design inspired by the illustrator's abundant plant collection. Potted plants card, £3, Katrina Sophia

LOOK TO NATURE

Start the New Year as you mean to go on with *Nature Tonic* (£12.99, Leaping Hare

Press) by Jocelyn de Kwant. This beautifully illustrated workbook is filled with 365 creative prompts to embrace nature's simple pleasures, encouraging a happier, more thoughtful approach to everyday life.



PAW-FECT PARTY PIECE

Dapper dogs (and their owners, too) will love the stylish bow ties from luxury pet brand Maison Le Lou. From velvets and linens to plains and patterns, there are plenty of fabulous options to choose between. We love the Gilly bow tie in Candy Stripe, from £14 for the smallest size.





MY COUNTRY PASSION The flight of the starling

Photographer and filmmaker Sarah Mason lives with her young family in the Yorkshire Dales. Heading out in search of starlings swooping, swirling and diving through the sky is one of her favourite winter experiences

The twitcher in me had always wanted to see a murmuration of starlings. The idea of thousands of beautiful birds swirling through the sky in perfect unison, never colliding - it amazed and intrigued me. A couple of winters ago, my partner, Suzi, and I decided to go in search of the spectacle. We packed



up the car and drove north to Gretna Green in Scotland, one of the best places to witness it in the UK.

Holed up in a little Airbnb, we had the most amazing views over Solway Firth. The first evening was pretty grey and wet, so we didn't hold out much hope. But as we drove into Gretna, I noticed a smudge on the horizon out of the corner of my eye. We followed the black cloud as it moved across the sky, and then suddenly we were right underneath it. As dusk raced in, smaller groups joined and the flock grew.

It was one of the most amazing sights I've ever witnessed. Through

their silent dance, the starlings were creating the most amazing patterns, like tea leaves swirling in the pot. We've since learnt that every starling keeps a beady eye on the other seven around it, which is how they stay in formation. We were lucky enough to see these beautiful shape-shifters on three consecutive evenings, so it was well worth the trip, and the creative inspiration I felt from seeing them has stayed with me.

Now, with winter upon us, I'm itching to see another murmuration. This time our daughter will be with us - I hope she feels the magic, too! sarahmasonphotography.co.uk

3 more starling hotspots to visit ...

ROYAL PIER, ABERYSTWYTH Watch from the pier or walk along the seafront parade. RSPB HAM WALL, GLASTONBURY Home to one of Britain's largest roosts, this scenic site can get busy, so try to avoid weekends. RSPB SALTHOME, STOCKTON-ON-TEES See flocks gather against a backdrop of heavy industry.



THECARIBOU.COM

A new travel site made for people who love to travel *by* people who love to travel. Specialising in luxury, family and adventure travel inspiration.



LEFT Enjoy the elegant architecture of Monkey Island Estate. BELOW Unwind at the floating spa in a beautiful river barge



as duck breast with potato

dumplings, fisherman's pie and

and vintage champagnes by

a fireplace in the Monkey Bar.

The estate's listed buildings and

construction regulations made

adding a spa a perplexing task,

wooden river barge moored on

Monkey Island Estate, Bray,

monkeyislandestate.co.uk

Maidenhead SL6 2EE,

the banks of the hotel offers body

but the solution has turned out to

be one of the loveliest of any hotel

offering. A floating spa in a beautiful

treatments and massages with tonics

made from traditional local recipes.

FLOATING BLISS

herb-crusted chicken with bread

sauce. Take afternoon tea beneath

a Renaissance art-inspired ceiling in

the Monkey Room, or enjoy cocktails

A WEEKEND AWAY AT Monkey Island Estate

VISIT THIS ISLET ON THE THAMES FOR BERKSHIRE'S LATEST COUNTRY HOTEL

onkey Island is hidden on a stretch of the River Thames that runs through the sleepy village of Bray. This Berkshire suburb has developed a dazzling reputation for gourmet cooking, hosting a pair of three-Michelin-starred restaurants. All Bray needed was a beautiful hotel to complete its tempting line-up... Cue Monkey Island Estate, with its sumptuous bedrooms, spa, bar and, yes, another fantastic restaurant.

ISLAND LIFE

There could be few settings more magical for a countryside retreat. A small stretch of pastoral land



sandwiched between gentle streams of the Thames, the islet provides a sense of isolation from the busyness of the Berkshire commuter belt. The hotel has been fashioned from a pair of snow-white pavilions that once served as a fishing retreat for the third Duke of Marlborough. Design was overseen, curiously, by New York studio Champalimaud, who created a series of sleek, calming interiors in a subtle palette of ivory, navy and rust red. When it comes to bedtime, book the Wedgwood suite for its dramatic blue-and-white Jasperware ceilings. **FOODIE CAPITAL**

A glassy dining room off one of the pavilions houses the estate's in-house restaurant. Food is surprisingly unfussy for a hotel this

elegant. Expect to find classics such

While you're there...

MICHELIN MEALS A visit to Bray wouldn't be complete without dinner at one of its iconic restaurants. Try The Waterside Inn for classic French fare or Heston Blumenthal's Fat Duck for a gastronomic experience.

MARLOW

A visit to this charming town - just 20 minutes from Bray - is a must. It's the perfect place to indulge in boutique shopping, long wintry riverside walks and hearty lunches in cosy pubs.

STANLEY SPENCER GALLERY

This compact museum in nearby Cookham is dedicated to much-loved local artist Stanley Spencer. The converted chapel houses his portraits and landscapes of the area.

EXAMPLE S COUNTRY HOMES FULLY ESCORTED TOURS



The Silk Road Selected departures from March to October 2020. 11 days from only £2,299pp.

Price includes: Stay in three of Central Asia's most extraordinary cities: Khiva, Bukhara and Samarkand ***** Guided walks through Khiva, still enclosed by its ancient walls ***** Travel through vast plains and deserts and cross the fabled River Oxus ***** Discover the old summer palace of the last Emir of Bukhara ***** Visit ancient mosques, covered markets and forbidding fortresses ***** Wonder at the exquisite beauty of Samarkand's Registan Square and visit Tamerlane's mausoleum ***** Travel on Uzbekistan's new fast trains from Samarkand to Tashkent ***** Return direct flights from London Heathrow, plus transfers ***** Stay in three- and four-star accommodation, with daily breakfast and nine meals ***** The services of an experienced and insightful tour manager



Discover Corsica

Selected departures from May to October 2020. 8 days from only £899pp.

Price includes: Wander the chic coastal towns of Calvi, L'Île-Rousse and Saint-Florent, known for their Genoese towers and picturesque promenades * Enjoy a train journey through dramatic mountain scenery to the formidable citadel of Corte, and visit the Corsica Museum * Take a scenic boat ride to marvel at the Scandola Nature Reserve's pristine coastline, striking rock formations, crystal waters, and abundant flora and fauna * Visit Bastia and note the strong Italian influences in Corsica's lively second city * Enjoy a tasting of Patrimonio's famous wines * Return flights from a selection of regional airports, plus transfers * Seven nights in three-star superior accommodation, with breakfast * The services of an experienced and insightful tour manager



Ecuador & the Galapagos

Selected departures from May to November 2020. 16 days from only £3,499pp.

Price includes: Guided walk around the astonishing UNESCO World Heritage sites of Quito and Cuenca * Discover the wonderful birdlife of the Mindo Cloud Forest * Enjoy the amazing views of snowcapped Cotopaxi * Travel on the Devil's Nose Train * Experience the wonderful architecture of Cuenca * Explore Ingapirca, the most intriguing Inca ruins in Ecuador * Stay five nights on the Galapagos islands of San Cristobal and Santa Cruz * See the giant tortoises of Santa Cruz in the stunning El Chato highland reserve * Return direct flights from London Heathrow, plus transfers * Stay in three- and four-star accommodation with daily breakfast and eight meals * The services of an experienced and insightful tour manager



Secret Italy: Trieste & Udine

Selected departures from April to October 2020. 6 days from only £759pp.

Price includes: Enjoy a guided tour of Trieste, an elegant Habsburg city * See the remains of Aquileia, an ancient Roman megacity * Discover Udine, a hidden Venetian gem * Visit Miramare, Archduke Maximillian's fairy-tale castle and botanical park * Tour the prestigious Mosaic School of Friuli * Visit a traditional producer to see how San Daniele's prosciutto is cured * Sample the Collio region's fragrant white wines on a visit to a renowned producer * Visit the Lombard Temple of Cividale, a rare example of an 8th-century church * Explore fascinating Gorizia * Return flights from a selection of regional airports, with transfers * Five nights in four-star accommodation, with breakfast * The services of an experienced and insightful tour manager

To book or request a brochure, call 01283 523454 or visit cohriviera.co.uk

Additional entrance costs may apply. Prices are per person, based on two sharing and subject to finite availability. Images used in conjunction with Riviera Travel. Offer operated by and subject to the booking conditions of Riviera Travel Ltd. ABTA V4744, ATOL 3430, a company wholly independent of Country Homes & Interiors, published by TI Media Limited. Prices correct at time of going to print.



COOKS' NOTES



We like it a latte

Retro kitchen appliance brand Smeg has expanded its range to include its first milk frother, so you can become

your own at-home barista. The shapely product is available in Smeg's favourite shades, from pretty pastels to bold black and red - mix and match with your other machines, or add a splash of colour to a neutral kitchen. The frother can be used manually, but the six preset functions mean it's hard to go wrong, whether you're whipping up a cappuccino or perfecting some coffee art. From £149.95, Smeg UK

GO WITH YOUR GUT

Kimchi is a Korean condiment that's renowned for its spicy kick and gut-friendly properties - perfect for the post-Christmas period when your palette and your digestion need a refresh! We're loving The Red One kimchi by Bottlebrush Ferments,



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which has won a 3-star Great Taste award for its combination of Chinese cabbage, spring onions and chilli, all selected for their gut-friendly enzymes and probiotics. The result is a spicy and moreish vegan kimchi, as equally delish with a burger as a salad. From £6.50 for 250g, Bottlebrush Ferments



WELL BREAD

There are few things as comforting as carbs in the winter, so do your homebaking a service and treat yourself to a new bread bin to keep those lovely loaves fresher for longer. Our pick is the Nic from Brabantia, which boasts a sleek bamboo lid that can double as a serving platter. The bin itself has a ribbed base for better ventilation, and the handle means you can easily carry your bakes to a cosy spot for an indoor brunch picnic. £55, Brabantia.

The new Negroni

With sales of non-alcoholic drinks increasing like never before, sober and sophisticated options are in demand. Seedlip, the delicious non-alcoholic aperitif, has launched the NOgroni, a bottled, ready-to-drink mocktail. Based on the classic Negroni, this dry alternative is made by combining three of Seedlip's aperitifs (Seedlip Spice 94, Æcorn Bitter and Æcorn Aromatic) to create a delightful blend with a burst of citrus. Each bottle serves two. Simply pour over ice, add an orange twist garnish and enjoy! £10, seedlipdrinks.com





HEARTWARMING AND HOMEMADE, THESE SWEET AND SPICY BAKES ARE IDEAL FESTIVE GIFTS FOR FRIENDS

> PEAR AND ROSEMARY BUNDT CAKE WITH LEMON ICING >

Cook's note ... NOT A FAN OF JAM? FILL THE CENTRE WITH CHOCOLATE SPREAD OR BUTTERCREAM INSTEAD

JAM SANDWICH STAR BISCUITS >

POMEGRANATE AND BLACK CHERRY JELLIES

Think old-fashioned bonbons with a delicious hint of wobble, rather than dessert-style jellies.

MAKES ABOUT 60 CUBES, DEPENDING ON SIZE

14 sheets of leaf gelatine340g caster sugar, plus320ml fresh pomegranate75g extra to coatjuice, such as Pom560g black cherry jam

1 Line a 20x20cm tin with cling film. It should reach at least 3cm up the sides as well as across the base. Put the gelatine leaves in a bowl of cold water, one by one, and leave to soften for 5-10min. **2** In a pan, mix the pomegranate juice with the sugar. Bring to the boil and stir until the sugar dissolves. Add the jam to the pan. **3** Bring the mixture back up to the boil, stirring well, and cook for about 4min, until syrupy and slightly thickened. Remove the pan from the heat, add the gelatine leaves and whisk until dissolved. Pour through a fine sieve, then transfer to the lined tin. **4** Chill for at least 3hr, until set (though the jelly can be covered and left in the fridge for up to two weeks at this stage). Place the remaining sugar in a shallow bowl. Cut the fruit jelly into 3cm squares

JAM SANDWICH STAR BISCUITS

and toss in sugar to coat just before serving.

While these delicate biscuits need a bit of effort, the beautiful results are worth it. Fill with your favourite jam.

MAKES ABOUT 20 SANDWICHED BISCUITS

| 175g softened unsalted | |
|------------------------------|--|
| butter | |
| 200g golden caster sugar | |
| 2 large eggs | |
| 1tsp vanilla bean paste | |
| 425g plain flour, plus extra | |

for rolling out 1tsp baking powder ¾tsp fine salt 3tbsp each ginger jam and red plum jam

 In a large bowl, beat the butter and sugar together. Mix in the eggs, one at a time, along with the vanilla.
 In another bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder and salt. Mix into the wet ingredients.
 Divide the dough into two and shape each half into a disc. Wrap in cling film and chill for 1hr. Preheat the oven to 180°C/Fan 160°C/Gas 4. Line two large baking sheets with baking paper. Dust a worksurface with flour.

4 Take one disc of dough and cut it in half. Keep the remaining dough in the fridge. Roll the first quarter out to 0.5cm thick. Using a 7.5cm biscuit cutter, stamp out circles, dipping the cutter in flour to stop it sticking to the dough. Put the biscuits on the baking trays, leaving a little space between them. **5** Using a 5cm star-shaped biscuit cutter dipped in flour, stamp out stars in the centre of half the rounds. Repeat the entire process with the remaining dough to make about 40 biscuits, 20 whole and 20 with stars cut out.

6 Bake for 8-10min, until lightly golden. Leave to cool and firm up on the baking sheets for a few minutes, then transfer to wire racks to cool completely.
7 Spoon a jam of your choice over the centre of the whole biscuits, spreading it out evenly. Top with the stamped-out tops and dust with icing sugar to finish.
8 The filled biscuits will keep for three days in an airtight container, or frozen for up to three months.

PEAR AND ROSEMARY BUNDT CAKE WITH LEMON ICING

Add as much lemon juice as you like to this icing to get the consistency and flavour you desire.

SERVES 12

200g salted butter, plus extra for greasing 4 pears, peeled and cubed 2tsp finely chopped rosemary leaves, plus extra sprigs to decorate 375g golden caster sugar 420g plain flour 1tbsp baking powder 1tsp bicarbonate of soda A pinch of fine salt 4 large eggs Finely grated zest of 1 lemon, plus juice to taste 2tsp vanilla extract 240ml natural yogurt 200g icing sugar, sifted 25g salted butter, melted

 Melt 30g butter in a large frying pan and sauté the pears and rosemary over a medium-high heat until the pears turn golden brown, stirring the fruit as little as possible as it cooks. Add 25g golden caster sugar and cook, stirring occasionally, until the pears are browned on all sides and any liquid has evaporated. Tip into a shallow bowl to cool.
 Preheat the oven to 180°C/Fan 160°C/Gas 4. Grease and flour a 25cm bundt tin.

3 Sift the flour, baking powder and bicarbonate of soda and salt into a mixing bowl. Beat the remaining butter and sugar together in a second bowl until light and fluffy. Add the eggs, one at a time, while still beating, followed by the lemon zest and vanilla. Stir half the flour mixture into the butter mixture, then add the yogurt. Mix in the remaining dry ingredients. Fold in the cooked pears. **4** Pour into the tin and cook for 45min until a skewer inserted into the centre of the cake comes out clean. Leave to cool in the tin for 10min, then turn out onto a wire rack to cool completely. **5** To make the glaze, combine the icing sugar and melted butter with enough of the lemon juice to make a thick icing. Spoon onto the cake, letting it drizzle down the sides. Top with rosemary sprigs.

Cook's note ...

ROLL THE JELLIES IN THE EXTRA SUGAR JUST BEFORE SERVING FOR A SNOWY COATING

> POMEGRANATE AND BLACK CHERRY JELLIES

GINGERBREAD WHOOPIE PIES

Think of these slightly misshapen, but incredibly delicious and fresh, ginger-spiked whoopie pies as a far easier alternative to French macarons.

MAKES 16

340g plain flour
1tsp baking powder
2tsp ground ginger
220g dark muscovado
sugar
120g slightly salted
butter, softened
2 large eggs
1tsp vanilla extract
250ml buttermilk

FOR THE FILLING

225g full-fat cream cheese 60g salted butter, softened 120g unrefined icing sugar, plus extra to dust 2 rounds stem ginger, drained and finely chopped

1 Preheat the oven to 180°C/Fan 160°C/Gas 4 and line two baking sheets with baking paper. **2** Sift the flour, baking powder and ground ginger into a bowl. In a second bowl, use an electric whisk to beat the sugar and soft butter together for a few minutes, until stiff and pale. Gradually add the eggs, beating well to combine. Add the vanilla extract to the buttermilk and, alternating with the dry ingredients, add to the creamed butter mixture until all is combined. **3** Spoon 32 rounded teaspoons of the batter on to the prepared baking sheets, leaving space for them to spread while cooking. Bake in the oven for about 15min, or until the puffed tops spring back when lightly pressed. **4** To make the filling, beat all the ingredients together. **5** When the mini pie halves are cooked, leave them on the baking sheets for 5min then place on wire racks to cool. Once cooled, spread a rounded teaspoon of the filling on one flat side and sandwich together with another pie half. Dust lightly with icing sugar.

SPICED DANISH ALMOND WREATH

This sweet, yeasted wreath is a pretty variation of a traditional Danish bake. Make it in a brioche or plain round tin, if you prefer.

SERVES 10

100g blanched almonds, chopped 200ml lukewarm milk 7g fast action dried yeast ½tsp fine salt 550g plain flour 3 large eggs, beaten 60g golden caster sugar 140g unsalted butter,

softened, plus extra for greasing 50g dried apricots 1tsp fennel seeds, crushed FOR THE TOPPING 250g icing sugar, sifted 3-4tbsp lemon juice 30g toasted flaked almonds

Preheat the oven to 190°C/Fan 170°C/Gas 5. Lay the almonds on a baking tray and roast for 6-8min, until golden. Leave to cool then roughly chop.
 Mix the milk with the yeast and set aside for 5min.
 Put the almonds, salt and flour in a large bowl.
 Make a well in the centre and add the milk and eggs. Mix well, then knead for 10min, until smooth.
 Place the sugar and butter on top of the dough and put in a warm place for 20min. Knock the dough back, kneading in the butter and sugar. Once the dough is smooth, shape into a ball, cover with cling film and chill for 24hr to develop the flavour. Or, let the dough rise in a warm place for 11/2hr.

5 Preheat the oven to 180°C/Fan 160°C/Gas 4.
Butter a 25cm-diameter, wreath-shaped tin.
6 Bring the dough up to room temperature for 30min.
Lightly knead the chopped apricots and fennel seeds into the dough. Shape into a ring and place in the tin. Cover with a damp tea towel and leave to rise for 1hr, until the dough reaches the top of the tin.
7 Bake for 40-45min, until golden and risen. Cool in the tin for 15min. Turn out onto a wire rack to cool.
8 Mix the icing sugar and lemon juice together in a bowl with just enough juice to make an icing the consistency of double cream. Spoon over the cake. Top with the toasted flaked almonds.

WINTER BERRY TARTS WITH HAZELNUT PASTRY

The spiced fruit compote enclosed in these delicate, buttery tarts is a less-sweet option than the traditional jam filling.

MAKES 6 INDIVIDUAL TARTS

FOR THE PASTRY 100g blanched hazelnuts 400g white spelt or plain flour, plus extra for rolling 120g golden caster sugar 200g salted butter, diced 4 egg yolks 1-2tbsp iced water, or as needed FOR THE FILLING **1tbsp orange juice 3tbsp cornflour 100g light muscovado sugar 1 small cinnamon stick 2 strips of orange zest 500g mixed berries Icing sugar, to dust**

1 Make the filling by mixing the juice, cornflour and 4tbsp water in a saucepan until smooth. Add the sugar, cinnamon stick, zest and berries. Cook over a medium heat, stirring, for 10min, until thickened. Leave to cool. Remove the cinnamon stick and zest. 2 Preheat the oven to 190°C/Fan 170°C/Gas 5. Roast the nuts on a baking tray for 5min until golden, shake halfway through. Finely grind in a food processor. **3** Stir the flour and sugar through the nuts in the food processor. Add the butter and pulse until it resembles rough breadcrumbs. Add the egg yolks and 1tbsp water and blitz again until it just begins to come together. If it's dry, add a little more iced water and blitz again. Bring together lightly on a floured worksurface to form a smooth pastry. Divide into two pieces, one twice the size of the other. Wrap both pieces in cling film and chill for 30min. 4 Preheat the oven to 200°C/Fan 180°C/Gas 6. Divide the larger piece of pastry into six. Roll each one out to a 13cm disc and press them into six 10cm pie tins. Let the pastry overhang. Spoon in the filling. 5 Divide the smaller piece of pastry into six. Roll each sixth into a 12cm circle. Using small starshaped cutters, stamp stars out of each circle, leaving a 2cm border. Add one to each pie and crimp the edges together to seal. Trim any excess. 6 Bake the tarts for 8min, until beginning to colour. Reduce the oven to 180°C/Fan 160°C/Gas 4 and bake for 15min more, until golden. Leave to cool and dust with icing sugar before serving.

COUNTRY HOMES & INTERIORS PARTNERSHIP

ART WITH INGS BY RUNWAY-GALLERY. COM ARTIST CORRAN BROWNLEE

Canadian-born Corran Brownlee is one of a number of talented artists who are featured on Runway Gallery, an online showcase of contemporary art. Inspired by a career in the film industry, his striking artwork captures haunting snapshots of untold narratives.

I grew up surrounded by

artists. My grandfather was head of Alberta University of the Arts in Calgary, Canada, so I was always encouraged to explore my creative side. My mother would bring home used typewriter paper from work for my brother and I to draw comic strips on. Art was the only class I ever received high marks in! **Creating is a lot like**

meditation. Sometimes I'll start the day with yoga, but otherwise I'll head straight to my studio in Calgary, where I'm now based. Spending a week or so focused on a frozen moment calms me. I feel most creative after midnight; I like





the idea that the dreams of those sleeping around me are broadcast via a subconscious radio station and I'm tuning into them. I prefer to work alone these days. The film industry was all about collaboration, but now I listen to my own voice and produce my vision without compromise. Charcoal is one of the oldest storytelling tools. It's minimal yet impactful - perfect for me. After working digitally for decades, I wanted to get back to basics. I use black so the viewers can project their own colours; it's more personal. I like my pieces to feel like a dream or a memory. I'll leave hints of narrative, but keep most of the scene covered in shadow. This way, the viewer becomes the storyteller and hopefully connects with my work on a deeper level. Inspiration can strike at any time. I view my surroundings through an imaginary

filter as if I were in one of my paintings. It could be architecture in London, power lines in LA or hares bouncing through the snow near my home. As a child, I grew up with paintings on every wall, regardless of size, colour or style. They didn't match, but that's a good thing. If you try too hard to co-ordinate, you lose the individuality in each piece. When grouping artwork, lay them out on the floor first to achieve a balanced layout before hanging them on the wall.

Buy stylish and affordable artwork from Corran Brownlee and other artists at runway-gallery.com



NEXT MONTH

Simone Webb's ethereal flora and fauna artwork is inspired by nature's fleeting beauty.

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GARDENS







MY FAVOURITE VIEW... Castle Howard, Yorkshire

For Emma South, Jo Malone London fragrance & lifestyle expert, Castle Howard brings back wedding memories and a feeling of Twenties glamour

Castle Howard is majestic at any time of year, but it's particularly enchanting during the winter months. As you approach from the great lake and see this historic home bathed in a warm, wintery afternoon light, it's simply breathtaking. The stone of the iconic dome takes on an amazing burnished rose-gold shade silhouetted against pastel skies. The castle is right in the Howardian Hills, between the Yorkshire Wolds and the North Yorkshire Moors - full of undulating pasture, fields and parkland all kept in place by stone walls and hedgerows with red kites soaring above.

I discovered Castle Howard when my partner and I were looking for venues for our 2014 wedding. Both of our families are from Yorkshire, so our parents came up with a list of venues for us to visit, and that's the one we fell in love with. It was mostly the view from the outside that made us choose it, but I also fell in love with the interiors. Because it was winter we couldn't rely on the weather, so I wanted somewhere that was equally as beautiful inside. We didn't want to get married in a church, but the huge dome of the castle still provided that magical and awe-inspiring feel.

The house itself is most famous for its appearance in the dramatisation of Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, and we absolutely ran with the glamour of the Twenties for our big day with full-on evening dresses and black tie. I wore a slinky beaded gown and a Jenny Packham feathered headdress as a distinct nod to the era.

Simply approaching the castle is breathtaking in itself. You can

come up the really long drive, passing a huge monument on the way, or you can also walk up from the lake in the front, which is very picturesque and takes you right back to that wonderful Twenties glamour.

We've since been back to Castle Howard twice at Christmastime. They do a massive tree in the Great Hall, and they have tables decorated perfectly and sumptuously for the occasion. That's the kind of thing that I take inspiration from when working on our campaigns at Jo Malone London. The castle is a super festive venue and is perfect for any decadent event, but it really is especially fantastic at Christmas with that wintery afternoon light.

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