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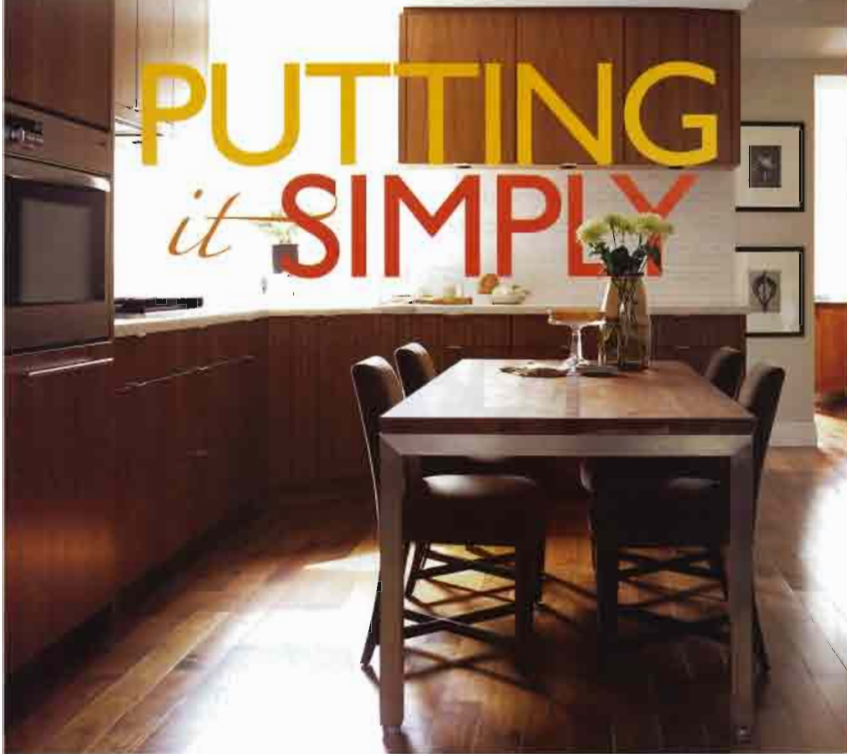


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DOWNSIZING TURNS OUT TO BE A LESSON IN ABUNDANCE FOR THIS TORONTO HOMEOWNER.

Text by Amy Vorner Photographs by James Lee

PUTTING *it* SIMPLY



Rampaging walls and doors on the second level of this Toronto home (a second-floor-level apartment) was converted into a guest suite, created an open, loft-like space. The kitchen's sleek design sees off the traditional staircase, its island, with a walnut top and brushed stainless steel frame, doubles as a dining table with chairs pulled up. Customary island furniture: 18 inches.



Designers Amy Keet and Ryan Marjan of Crema Design, Ottawa; Floor & Blument: club tables; Angelo & Company

Ask people to describe their dream house, and the answer will almost invariably include largeness and luxury. The exceptions, of course, are the people for whom that fantasy has already materialized. Confronting an existential moment of excess, they want nothing more than to scale back and mellow out.

This was the experience of one Toronto homeowner, an investment banker who undertook a high-end renovation of a massive house only to discover that a simpler — although no less stylish — lifestyle had been his dream all along. “I appreciated the beauty, luxury and design of the house, but I always found it was more drawn to a loft-style sensibility,” he says. So after divesting himself of the oversized residence and purchasing a new loft-style condominium that would take two years to be built, he rented the top two floors of a period semi-detached house. When the landlord announced his plans to sell, the homeowner realized he had no desire to leave. “By then, I had fallen in love with the neighbourhood,” he says. At the cusp of an established area and urban downtown, it offers both historical charm and youthful vibrancy, plus convenient proximity to a verdant park where he walks his shih tzu Jack Russell terrier, Jack.

But there was a problem. The period house — cosy yet roomy enough for one — bore the bruises of a



LEFT: In the living room, the fireplace, previously decorated with heavy applied molding for a fake traditional look, was updated with a honed limestone surround and hearth that reinforce the room's contemporary look. Artwork: (top-left shelf) by Paul D.

ABOVE: Walnut cabinetry provides ample storage and allows the open shelves to

remain uncluttered, making way for artful displays.

BELOW: The living room's gray boucle-covered sofa ties the neutral space together. Dark wood furniture adds sophistication, and the contrast tables are practical. Artwork (above table) by Stephen Andrews; wall sconce: Opine, Gray (OC-22); bench: Hogue; sofa: Sisu Custom Furniture



dated 1970s renovation. Small, dark rooms stripped of their original details and an outdated kitchen had sufficed for his temporary stay but did not mesh with the homeowner's now long-term vision. So, to execute an overhaul, he enlisted Ryan Martin and Amy Kent, co-owners of Croma Design, who presented a fresh approach that communicated his muted, modern aesthetic. "The owner actually had a clear idea of what he wanted," says Martin. "He's been through the renovation process twice before and has a very good sense of style."

Everyone agreed that the homeowner would keep the house's separate ground-floor apartment intact (it makes a wonderful private guest suite). In fact, it received its own mini-makeover first, providing a space for the homeowner to stay during the six-month overhaul of his main living space, which began in November 2004 and involved a nearly complete gut-job.

"The owner wanted spaciousness and flow," says Martin. Opening the kitchen to the living room by removing a set of french doors and widening the archway was the easy part, but adding six inches to the kitchen's ceiling height and taking down the room's walls, which housed pipes and air



The homeowner's fondness for clean lines is evident in the principal bathroom, which features a walnut vanity with square undermount sinks and unadorned medicine cabinets. Subway-tile wainscoting, which serves as the backsplash, protects the drywall from moisture and is easy to clean.



ABOVE: The enclosed white-washed service is appointed with a granite and stainless steel table, a smaller version of the kitchen island. A decorative trellis atop the fence provides privacy and keeps the space airy. Dining chairs: O.C.T. Papp & Home

BELOW: The built-in

wraparound lounge, set under a retractable canopy and steel pergola, gives the terrace a sense of permanence. The space's modern aesthetic is offset by antique elements, like a stone column used as a side table, to add classical interest and garden character. Chair: Ikon



conditioning ducts from the previous renovation, posed a challenge. "The ductwork had to be updated — it's now more flat and wide — and hidden behind the new ceiling and walls. We had to clean up the lines and make everything fit properly and look flush," says Martin.

Inspired by the main floor's new openness, Martin suggested a contemporary kitchen, despite the homeowner's initial leanings toward traditional. "He wanted something warm with clean lines. We interpreted that as modern but not stark, with the warmth achieved using wood tones," says Martin. Once the seamless walnut cabinetry, white Carrara marble counters and subway tile backsplash were installed, the homeowner couldn't have been happier, especially with the concealed appliances and ample storage. "I didn't see that coming, but I can't imagine it not being like that. It's absolutely brilliant," he says.

The warm walnut was incorporated throughout the house, contributing to the flow and continuity. "I like its soft, rich color; it has a calming effect," says the owner. New walnut shelving and cabinetry in the living room flank the honed-limestone fireplace; walnut hardwood supplanted pinky beige carpeting covering ad hoc floorboards; CONTINUED ON PAGE 138

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