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AGENT'S *delight*

Toronto realtor Kara Reed has seen a lot of homes during her 21-year career. So what made her choose this 1980s condo for her very own?



Homeowner Kara Reed reserved a special kitchen corner for her cookbook collection. "Whenever I can, I get the chefs to autograph them," she says.



Picture it: You spend your days walking through homes of every possible size, shape and style. Basically, you've seen every type of dwelling there is. Then comes the time to downsize your own home. How do you, a realtor, decide what to buy? "You have to know your non-negotiables," says Kara Reed, a familiar favourite on HGTV's *Sarah's House* series. "For me, that meant having enough room for Brier, my lovable chocolate Lab, and having access to green space." So even though Kara's initial condo search focused on trendy lofts and slick, modern living spaces in the city, she opted out. "I just didn't want to give up seeing trees outside for stylish details inside," she says. That's when Carol Reed, her then sister-in-law and current design guru, stepped in. "She said to me, 'Why don't you quit looking for an interior you love and start looking for an ideal location. After all, you can create a dream interior anywhere.'

A muted palette lends the kitchen a soothing look. The standout marble backsplash acts as a feature wall, visible from the main living area. **DESIGN**, Carol Reed Interior Design, carolreedesign.com; **POINTING** 2003 **WALL PAINT** (throughout), Farrow & Ball; antique ash **FLOORING** (throughout), Bousada Interiors; **APPLIANCES**, Caplan's Appliances; **ADEL CABINETRY**, IKEA.

“Quit looking for an interior you love and start looking for an ideal location. You can create a dream interior anywhere.”

CAROL REED, DESIGNER

Although neutrals are everywhere, greens and golds give the living room a modern, warm feeling. Curves in the form of a 100-year-old table (set in the corner), a wavy cowhide and a contemporary mirror-and-iron side table keep the room from feeling rigid.

Vintage Grete Jalk **COFFEE TABLE**, Zig Zag; Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams **SLIPPER CHAIR**, **COWHIDE**, **SCONCE**, Elte; large mirror-and-iron Jules **SIDE TABLE**, Crate and Barrel; *Rhapsody* **ARTWORK**, Henry Asencio.



TOP The dark breakfast bar provides bold distinction between the kitchen and dining room in the light-filled, open-concept condo. Designer Carol Reed ensured that the ceiling in the kitchen remained lower than the one in the living and dining areas to distinguish one space from the other.

ABOVE, LEFT White dishes are a signature style of Kara's,

and displaying them on the kitchen's open shelving is as practical as it is beautiful.

ABOVE, RIGHT Carol had the IKEA cabinetry customized with gables. The cabinets were also painted the colour of the walls for a built-in look.

RIGHT Kara (left) and Carol have long worked well together. "She completely gets my style," says Kara.

And that's how I ended up with a wonderful three-level condo with a 400-square-foot rooftop deck and a breakfast balcony in Toronto's quaint Summerhill neighbourhood."

Of course, it wasn't quite as simple as that. For one, the building, designed in the 1970s and built in the 1980s, was rife with the hallmarks of its day: smoked Plexiglas, mirrored walls, pink granite, stucco ceilings and splashy brass fixtures everywhere you looked. These dated details had to go – as did a wall or two. "Essentially, it was a total gut job," says Kara. "The only original remaining detail when we finished

was a marble walk-in shower in one bathroom." The duo oversaw the eight-month-long project, including all the requisite renovation mishaps. "I'd gone to a quarry myself to hand-pick the marble for the backsplash," recalls Kara. "But when it came time to install it, we discovered it wouldn't fit in the elevator." In the end, it had to be cut in half. "But hey, we got it up there," she says with a laugh.

Now Kara wakes up in a light-filled, east-facing home. She enjoys breakfasts and lunches on the balcony, and savours wine on the rooftop deck under the romance of the setting sun. "Maybe



it's because I grew up in rural Ontario, but, for me, having views of greenery and hearing the birds, insects and even raccoons are so important," says Kara.

Inside, the look is contemporary, with a sit-down-and-relax style that's immediately compelling. This is thanks to Kara's emphasis on comfortable furniture with simple lines and the way she incorporates special pieces, such as her grandmother's side table, her extensive cookbook collection and her favourite travel photos, into her decor.

To ensure that these personal touches get the gallery-like attention they deserve, Kara says that selecting "the perfect white" for the walls is key. So, how do you choose the perfect white? Kara laughs before she admits, "We painted about 10 samples on the wall, then eliminated them one at a time." Finally, looking for things like

warm and cool undertones versus how the samples changed with the light, they decided on Farrow & Ball's classic Pointing 2003.

Even with white walls, the rooms aren't cold. Golden yellows and mossy greens find easy expression, coming off as organic and unobtrusive as the greenery outside. "The palette inspiration was actually pulled from a piece of art," says Kara.

This organic influence is typical of Kara's decorating style. She eases into it and now lets location be her guide. "I've learned that each home is different and that my taste is always changing. What remains over time is the little things like having Brier nearby, stacking my dishes a certain way or how I make a bed. Whether it's in this condo or elsewhere, I'll always make hospital corners," she says with a smile.

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LEFT "Fresh flowers are an everyday staple for me," says Kara. "They're not just for special occasions."

TOP Mirrors and floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors (that lead to one balcony) make the dining area airy and bright, ensuring that light and reflections are always at play.

CHANDELIER, South Hill Home; wire **BOWL**, Crate and Barrel.

ABOVE, LEFT A barely-there pendant by Moooi makes

a big but subtle statement in the stairwell.

Moooi Random PENDANT LIGHT, YLighting.

ABOVE, RIGHT Even on the balcony, the look is clean and modern. A marble-topped table keeps the space feeling indoorsy. As is the case inside, fresh flowers are always in view. Here, it's peonies that add a little burst of spring colour.

Saarenin-style **DINING TABLE & CHAIRS**, Nuevo.



A high-end Mid-Century Modern Mies van der Rohe chair serves as both art and comfort in the living room. Kara's family photos are framed and leaned here and there for a look that's both casual and graphic.

FLOOR LAMP, Shelter Furniture; photography **PRINTING & FRAMING**, Elevator Digital.

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KARA REED, HOMEOWNER