

the eclectic Holiday HOME

A REFLECTION OF PERSONAL STYLE

BY MARTHA UNIACKE BREEN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY LARRY ARNAL

Find your festive style by expressing and building upon the existing decor style in your home

What's the secret to making your home truly reflect the joy of the season? According to Toronto designer Evelyn Eshun, it's not about buying armloads of seasonal decor items, or making it look just like it does in a magazine (even this one). The best holiday decorating scheme, she says, starts with you.

"To me, holiday decorating really should express a more festive version of your year-round decor, and your family," Eshun observes. "It feels much more natural that way."



BUILD ON WHAT YOU HAVE

Start by just looking around your home and letting your existing style inspire you. If your house is more formal, then a more traditional, nostalgic approach will be lovely. If your design—and personal style—are more relaxed, then let your holiday decor reflect that. "In general, the key is to express yourself rather than try to duplicate what's in a store window. Having a 'collated' look is always much more charming than just buying a bunch of things and putting them out."

Chances are, you have a box (or several boxes) of decor items you've collected over the years. If they have sentimental value (and they're still in good shape!), putting them on display where you can see them will give you pleasure every time you walk in the room.

BACK TO NATURE

There's no need to break the bank on decor each season, Eshun continues. Natural items, such as pine cones or birchbark picked up on a winter walk or spruce boughs cut from backyard shrubs, are beautiful and don't cost a penny.

Another idea is to add a festive touch to things you already own or keep on display year-round. Small touches—filling a glass vase with glass ball ornaments, dressing a table in the front hall with presents, a small tree or even just a red ribbon, putting branches of dried berries and evergreen sprigs in glasses or other containers—will help expand the festive look throughout your home without a lot of fuss.



Evelyn Eshun's *HOLIDAY DECOR TIPS*

- Start by being authentic to who you are, just as you aim for in your decorating the rest of the year. The holidays are about you and your family, not someone else's idea of what looks right.
- Be resourceful: bring out your favourite vases and bowls and fill them with glass balls, nuts, berries, or tie ribbons on them.
- Mother Nature is one of the greatest sources of holiday decorating inspiration: natural cedar and pine garlands, spruce sprigs, birchbark, pine cones. Go for a walk in a nearby park or the woods and fill a basket.
- Eshun loves glass balls, and uses them in many more places than just on the tree. "Put a bunch of them in a glass vase, and it's an instant centrepiece."
- Employ some classic, decorating tricks to pull the look together, such as keeping to a defined colour scheme. Eshun used plenty of white, gold, silver, natural greenery, and touches of red here and there for "pop." "Repetition, such as the rule of threes, is also very effective," she advises. "And it works with everything from flowers to candlesticks."
- Have fun in your holiday decorating! Don't be afraid to add personality and even whimsy. "It's your home, and it's a great opportunity to express yourself."



THE PARTICULARS

In this family's home, Eshun says, she confides she had no detailed plan until she had seen the home and talked to the client. "My first question was, basically, how do you want the house to reflect you and your lifestyle over the holidays? Do you want it to be more festive, more formal, do you entertain a lot, or do you want a more casual, homey, cosy look?"

PERSONALITY PUNCTUATED

The home, beautifully renovated to bring out its traditional character, was decorated in a simple, clean design, with plenty of white. The family loves to entertain, and has frequent

gatherings throughout the season. The homeowner wanted the house to sparkle for the season, but also wanted a natural, not-too-formal holiday scheme.

These starting points inspired Eshun to create a classic but wonderfully personal look, with touches of silver, gold and white, an abundance of natural greenery, and keeping an eye out for original ways to display (or dress up) existing pieces, such as a pretty birchbark-wrapped planter in the hall. The result is a look that's festive and welcoming, but for the family, feels completely "at home." And during the holidays, isn't that the whole idea?◆

SOURCES

TREES AND CHRISTMAS ACCESSORIES: Canvas collection from Canadian Tire, **PILLOWS, BASKETS, CANDLESTICK HOLDERS, PLACE SETTING, GLASSES, CANDLES AND TROWERS:** Crate and Barrel, **REAL GREENERY:** Davenport Garden Centre



Martha Uniacke Breen has been writing about architecture and design for over 30 years. Her work has appeared in National Post, Style at Home, Canadian Interiors, Toronto Home, and many other publications.