

Good thing Toronto designer Jessica Kelly was up for a challenge: Within a year, she found, purchased and designed her home, finishing just in time for Christmas – and our photo shoot!

HOME FOR Christmas


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Homeowner and designer Jessica Kelly kept her decorations as fuss-free as possible for her first Christmas in her new house – she wanted to focus on being a hostess with the mostess instead.

{ ENTERTAINING STYLE
EFFORTLESS & ELEGANT }



A wall-mounted shelf is a space-saving solution in the dining area of this narrow Toronto rowhouse. Glittering snowflakes hung from the chandelier add a wintry touch that can stay up past January 1st.

DESIGN, Jessica Kelly Design, jessicakellydesign.com; **DINING TABLE**, IKEA; **DINING CHAIRS**, Restoration Hardware; Signature Moments wooden **SHELF**, Jessica Kelly Design; **CHANDELIER**, Living Lighting on King; **FLOWERS**, Quince Flowers.

“Even my intimate dinner parties always end up being kitchen parties.”



Matching chaises designed by Jessica make a welcoming spot for guests to cozy up to the fire with drinks and nibbles in the living room; the barnboard-clad console (made from wood found at Jessica's parents' farm) adds a hint of rusticity. The cowhide rug with hits of shimmer livens up the neutral palette, as do

the bold bursts of fuchsia in the accessories and holiday decorations.

Gray Owl OC-52 **WALL PAINT**, Benjamin Moore; *Let's Order In* **ARTWORK**, Adrienne Jackson; Signature Moments **CHAISES** and barnboard-clad **CONSOLE**, Jessica Kelly Design; fuchsia **TOSS CUSHIONS**, Elte; fuchsia **THROW**, C. Wonder; **RUG**, HomeSense.

RIGHT Jessica (and a team of family members) lovingly stripped down and hand rubbed paint onto this vintage door surround, then had an antiqued mirror installed in the door opening. "But the bigger headache was getting it in the front door!" says Jessica. It now makes a statement near the entrance, where there was once a powder room and a closet.

Signature Moments **MIRROR**,
Jessica Kelly Design.

WITH HER HEART SET ON A FIXER-UPPER,

designer Jessica Kelly began the daunting search for her first home in the spring of 2012. "They were all such overwhelming messes," she says, having seen nothing she could polish into a diamond. So when she finally stumbled upon this 1990s-era rowhouse in Toronto's Riverside neighbourhood that needed only cosmetic improvements, Jessica was intrigued. "It wasn't selling and had actually been taken off the market," she explains. "The layout was really awkward."

But her designer's eye easily saw past those issues. Jessica made the purchase and immediately began working toward her vision: To make her home reflective of her lifestyle as a sophisticated designer and a consummate hostess.

First up was addressing the layout challenge. An oddly placed closet and powder room projected into the main-floor living area, blocking light and sightlines as well as impeding flow. Jessica didn't hesitate to knock them out. "Four bathrooms were more than enough for my 2,000-square-foot house," she says. "I could afford to do away with the powder room, leaving three full bathrooms." And to compensate for the loss of the coat closet, she turned a shallow pantry nook near the back door –



The kitchen now has a peninsula - with stools designed by Jessica - that makes a perfect spot for setting out drinks and hors d'oeuvres for guests. When she's hosting a large group, Jessica converts her round dining table into a rectangular one suitable for up to 10 guests. "I bring up a large piece of plywood from

my basement, place it on the tabletop and cover it with a tablecloth," she says. And in this gorgeous space, it's no wonder she loves to cook for crowds.

Signature Moments **STOOLS**, Jessica Kelly Design; **COUNTERTOPS**, Caesarstone; Oxford White CC-30 **CABINETS**, Benjamin Moore; **COMPUTE** (on counter with flowers), Quince Flowers.



the door she actually uses every day – into a place to hang coats. The newly opened up space was well worth the cost of the extra storage, says Jessica.

She also rejigged the layout in the kitchen to make it more conducive to entertaining, moving one bank of cabinetry away from the wall and creating a peninsula where she envisioned setting out wine and apps for friends. The existing cabinet doors got a facelift via fresh white paint, crown moulding and new hardware, while Caesarstone countertops and a marble backsplash make the sleek white space look gleaming and brand new.

During the renovation, Jessica realized she couldn't replace the floors without remodelling the whole kitchen, so instead she whitewashed the original maple flooring throughout the main level – doing all the work herself – to maintain the light and airy look. "It took a long time to get the colour right," she says. "There were times when I'd still be sanding on my hands and knees at midnight!"

To offset the relative newness of the home, architectural salvage and distressed wood pieces like the mirror surround, dining chairs and living room console were integrated into the decor to bring character to the space. Major furnishings – many designed by Jessica herself – were kept neutral, with bright colour brought in only through easily changed accessories.

For her first Christmas here, Jessica opted to keep the holiday decorations simple. The neutral backdrop worked with her choice of unorthodox fuchsia for festive accents, which really pop against the creamy upholstery and pale grey walls. Instead of a tall tree, she peppered her house with small potted trees, natural greenery and other seasonal embellishments, creating a scheme that's festive without the fuss. This left time for planning plenty of gatherings with friends and family, which usually end up being centred around the kitchen peninsula, just as Jessica predicted.

"Even my intimate dinner parties end up being kitchen parties," she says. "And when I'm cooking and friends are sitting on the stools there, I'm in my happy place." And happy hostesses are the best kind.

FOR SOURCES, SEE OUR WORKBOOK



ABOVE A collection of mercury glass candlestick holders interwoven with twinkle lights adds glitter, while lemon cyprus trees release a citrusy scent into the room.

BELOW Fuchsia gift wrap and grey grosgrain ribbon are an unexpected combo for holiday gifts; fresh boxwood embellished with bright pink ornaments tops the fireplace mantel.

