

# GEORGIAN UPDATE

*Restaurateur and wife  
bring fresh vision to  
Forest Hill home*

BY PJ RICHARDSON  
PHOTOGRAPHY BRANDON BARRÉ  
STYLING LISA STEVENS

*Choice pieces in mid tones and sumptuous fabrics invite calm to the living room. A pair of charming, floral-patterned English roll arm chairs are by LS&Co. The Empire style table, topped in antique grey marble from John Young Galleries; floor covering by Elte.*

*The two-seater, settee-style sofa with oversize cushions by LS&Co. is reflective of the home's stylish aesthetics. One of a pair of vintage-style leather chairs is by Kantelberg & Co. The antique console table was repurposed and functions as an elegant side table. Tres chic cocktail tables have a hand-forged iron base with antique silver leaf and limestone tops; floor covering and hide rug from Elte; Elizabeth Lennie artwork (swimmer); lacquered wood side table by Canadian wood artist Brent Comber*



*The Servery is a high-energy extension of the kitchen. It works as a drop-off zone, a work area and a go-between from kitchen to dining room. Pretty and functional, it boasts a wine fridge, dishwasher and sink plus additional customized cabinetry. Perfect for arranging flowers or putting out the glitz for a party. Fittings and sink from Ginger's; custom curtain from LS&Co.*

**"WE NEED YOU"** are three words every designer loves to hear. When Lisa Stevens got a call from her clients, who uttered these magic words, she was thrilled but surprised. "I had collaborated with Jennifer O'Brien, a real estate sales representative with Harvey Kalles, and David Lee of restaurant Nota Bene fame, on their previous residence, and they loved it; so to learn they had acquired a new home was a revelation," she says.

The owners, looking for more space and a location closer to David's downtown restaurant, found it in a storied classic Georgian home in Forest Hill. "I love the symmetry of Georgian style," Jennifer says. "The home had me at the curb, and then I walked inside. Not only did I fall in love with the feeling of the house but I was struck by the details in workmanship and how beautifully finished and well done everything was."

The 5,500-square-foot residence had been extensively renovated in the past decade. In spite of the original re-do with beautiful materials and elegant treatments, the luxe home retained a formality that contrasted with the owners' fresher vision. A remodeling to modernize the home was in order, Jennifer says. "We wanted to dial up the traditional brick Georgian."

Lisa was cheerfully reunited with the couple and her mandate was simple: to create a

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crisp, more contemporary place that balanced simplicity and luxury. "Their former home was lovely, with an urban cottage esthetic, appropriate to its site and location," the designer says. "The owners have great style and design sense so my job was simply to hone the interior."

The 1930s home was rock solid and the classic elements that gave it integrity—soaring ceilings, meticulous moldings, dramatic windows—remained. The designer was

sympathetic to existing installations as she choreographed the conversion. She reused and repurposed where appropriate. Instead of losing the opulent pink onyx in the ensuite bathroom, Lisa worked the room with re-colouring and re-creaming. "It created a youthful feel," she says. In the kitchen, gorgeous dark green marble, not the owner's first choice, remained. Lisa was convinced that once the cupboards were painted, the ap-

*Efficiency is a key ingredient in the classic white kitchen. Appliance heavyweights from Sub-Zero and Wolf are essentials for the iconic chef and his partner. The stool is by John Tong of 3rd Uncle Design; vintage street lantern from Absolutely North; refectory table from Five O Seven Antiques; fittings and sinks, Ginger's; custom curtain through LS&Co, in a Christopher Farr fabric; artwork, boot, by Dorian Scott.*

pearance would be radically different - and it was. Throughout the entire house mid-brown floors, rift cut with ebony inlay, were stripped and bleached for the desired lighter effect. Walls were painted, gold tones dispatched.

Once the editing was complete, the dressing began. Lisa says "pieces were judiciously chosen, not randomly picked, and the couple's love of an object took priority over its provenance." 



*The bespoke sofa by LS&Co. is a sophisticated multi-tasker. A clever hinge innovation converts the custom piece into a chic lounger. Sofa and cushions by LS&Co.; lacquered wood accent table by Canadian wood artist Brent Comber.*



In the living room, the owners agreed to a trio of groupings instead of one central seating area to give the space a better flow. The custom-built sofa had a unique conversion option achieved by cleverly adding hinges to lower the sofa's arms and voila, a recamier. The designer commissioned artisan Uli Walle to make a harvest table for the dining room. It is solid rift-cut white oak, sandblasted, antiqued and finished with a paste wax. The finished product

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*Impossibly tall windows flood the living room with natural lighting. Oversized lounge chairs with French nail detailing through LS&Co.; Empire table with antique grey marble top, John Young Galleries; floor lamp from Roll & Hill, extendible custom coffee table through LS&Co.; window treatment Laura Linehard fabric; Elte carpet; art work by Elzbieta Krawecka.*

was then playfully mixed with ultra modern chairs. “We love the table and are constantly drawn to the dining room,” says Jennifer. A pretty antique chandelier suspended above the table came with the homeowners. Customized lounge and armchairs in sumptuous fabrics were juxtaposed with vintage leather chairs, antique tables and other unexpected elements. The mix took form beautifully. Ornamentation was consciously pared down but not the

artwork. The couple's appreciation of up-and-coming Canadian artists is unmistakable.

In spite of David's reputation as a celebrated chef, the kitchen is not his exclusive domain. Jennifer, a culinary school grad with experience in professional kitchens, loves to cook and finds that David's schedule means she often flies solo in the kitchen.

“It is eminently functional with an efficient layout and luxurious materials,” she says. “We

made minimal changes in the kitchen, primarily painting and refreshing.” White, in the subway tiles, painted surfaces and cabinetry is the prevailing colour and it gives the kitchen its elegance. Top-of-the-line Wolf and Sub Zero appliances are foundations of a room that is complemented with bespoke cabinetry, meticulous millwork, a furniture-style island and hardwood floors. A vintage street lantern has new status above the refectory table. ☞



“An organic modern home, since the lines are clean but all the decorative elements are tactile and warm.”



(Opposite) A trio of seating areas in the living area provides relaxed options. Here, sofa and oversize cushions by LS&Co.; vintage style leather chair by Kantelberg Antiques; lacquered wood side table by Canadian wood artist Brent Comber; hand-forged iron base table with antique silver leaf and limestone tops; Elte rug; art work, swimmer, by Elizabeth Lennie; (Below) The made-to-order harvest table anchors the spare but stylish dining room. Delicate millwork covers the radiator. Contemporary chairs from Avenue Road; window treatment, custom through LS&Co in Great Plains fabric with face and contrast silk lining; Oushak carpet from Elte; linen wallcovering by Tapetex.

A verdant back garden, visible from the eat-in kitchen, is accessible through French doors that suffuse the room with light. A casual leather-topped stool is unexpected but whimsical, like the artwork that punctuates the white spaces. The servery, a transition area between kitchen and dining room, is a beautifully appointed drop-off area, and more, for flowers, groceries, wine and dishes.

In a true testament to the home's reincar-

nation, the owners found that all the spaces are truly liveable. “We find we really use all the rooms,” says Jennifer. “The open-concept kitchen in our former home was definitely the go-to place. Here, any one of the rooms could be described as the heart of the house.” For this, the owners credit Stevens.

The home's transitional-with-a-twist style is simple and sophisticated. Stevens describes it as “an organic modern home, since the

lines are clean but all the decorative elements are tactile and warm.”

“It recalls a more European influence,” she says. “In a way, the traditional architecture envelope was maintained but the decorative elements are layered on a modern personality. The house is always welcoming and maintains an approachability that is the hallmark of who the owners are.” ♣

