

Instead of a front hall, a striking panelled dining room leads on to the rest of the house, *enfilade* style. **Chandelier**, Bijan Royal; antique **dining chairs**, *Of Things Past*.



'TIS THE SEASON

A HISTORICAL NOVA SCOTIA HOME IS A STORYBOOK SETTING FOR DECKING THE HALLS.

Design by PHILIP MITCHELL | *Text by* ARREN WILLIAMS | *Photography by* JANET KIMBER



A roaring fire keeps the chill at bay on Philip Mitchell (left) and Mark Narsansky's covered portico, just off the living room.

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VEN WITH OFFICES IN NEW YORK AND TORONTO, clients all over the continent and a book for Rizzoli on the way, Philip Mitchell prefers to spend most of his time ensconced in the quaintly named White Cottage. He shares this rambling home in the village of Chester, N.S., with his husband, advertising executive Mark Narsansky, and their two butter-wouldn't-melt Ganaraskans, Jacob and Wylo. I caught up with the renowned designer while he was setting the table for dinner guests (one of his favourite things to do) and we chatted about design, restoring old homes and how to get ready for the holidays.



A maximalist Christmas tree has pride of place next to the living room fireplace; Philip and Mark proudly display locally made ornaments on its branches. **Armchairs**, George Smith; **jute rug** by Stark, Elite.



LEFT: Mark's snow globe collection creates a whimsical holiday moment on a vintage table in the living room.



Q&A

ARREN WILLIAMS: *Tell me all about this gorgeous house! Did you renovate?*

PHILIP MITCHELL: This place is super traditional, mainly because it was built in 1795 and we wanted to honour the history of the home. The house has Cape Cod touches, even Georgian aspects, but there was a lot we wanted to change. It was definitely a fun project. The kitchen was originally in the basement, so the house was basically disassembled during the renovation, then catalogued and assessed to see what could be reused. Everything was stored in nine storage units, including all the old wall and ceiling joists that were sent to a millwork company, milled down and turned into decorative panelling. Even though the reno took almost three times as long and cost three times as much, we're so happy in the end!

TOP RIGHT: For the festive season, the side lights flanking the front door are accented with classic evergreen garlands, and berries are added to the boxwood planters. **Lantern, sconces, Cape Cod Lanterns; planters, RH.**

BOTTOM RIGHT: For even more Christmas cheer, Philip dresses all the gates on their property with an evergreen wreath and red ribbon.

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***“BOTH OF US ARE COOKS,
SO WE MADE SURE THE KITCHEN
WAS THE HEART OF THE HOME”***



TOP LEFT: “We have three bars in the house, and everything is always stocked,” says Philip. “We love classic martinis, but we have anything from champagne to Chablis on hand to keep our guests happy.” **Curtain fabric,** Primavera Interior Furnishings.

BOTTOM RIGHT: The kitchen includes plenty of space for baking and entertaining. **Ceiling fixtures,** Cape Cod Lanterns; **custom pot rack,** Ann Morris Lighting; **open rack hutch (right),** 1stdibs; **trim and painted cabinet colour,** Dune White (CC-70), Benjamin Moore.

OPPOSITE: Upper cabinets were sacrificed to make room for the sink and banquette, with the latter designed to offer spectacular views across the water. **Custom pendant (right),** Urban Electric Co.; **table,** Sharon O’Dowd Custom Furniture; **custom banquette,** CCI Custom Furnishings.

RIGHT: Mark’s love of baking knows no bounds. In fact, he’s working on a cookbook (his specialties include chocolate butter tarts and shortbread).





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HOLIDAY STYLE STEAL

1. *Happy Hutch*

Give open storage a holiday spin by adding red baubles to your collection of dishes. Here, emerald green antique Majolica ware, mid-century finds and ceramics from Portugal and Spain are bejewelled with ornaments for a dash of Christmas style.

2. *Festive Tablesetting*

Dress your table with mix-and-match china, vintage cranberry glassware and simple roses in bud vases to up the seasonal vibe.

3. *Special Collectibles*

The holidays are a perfect time to display cherished items like a collection of new and antique rolling pins or a set of well-loved copper cookware.

The antique games table comfortably hosts smaller get-togethers (or Scrabble and backgammon tournaments) during the holidays. **Pendant**, Urban Electric Co.; **rug**, Elte.



AW: *The kitchen was really in the basement?*

PM: Yes! The only thing that was upstairs was a servery that connected to the kitchen below, which obviously didn't suit us. We wanted a large family-style kitchen; both of us are cooks and Mark is an incredible baker, so we made sure the kitchen was the heart of the home. We also wanted to take advantage of the view. The prime spot is a big banquette built into the bay window that overlooks the ocean.

AW: *I love that the living room is so layered; how did you create the look?*

PM: I'm a huge textile person. I love anything touched by hand, like embroidery and block-printing, and, of course, I love antique textiles, too. I don't buy things because something goes with them, I buy things because I love them. If I respond to a certain textile, I just have to have it. Most of the pieces in this house, especially anything upholstered,



While much of the house is light and bright, Philip chose a richer, darker palette in the powder room. An old chest was repurposed as a vanity. **Blind and curtain fabric, Lee Jofa.**



were already in a certain fabric, and we just made it work. The one sofa we made has the Aerin Lauder zigzag fabric from Lee Jofa, but that was the only new piece; the rest we just had. We have two dogs, and things do wear. Visitors often remark on the mix of patterns and how the house feels so comfortable.

AW: *Getting ready for the holidays takes some planning. What are your tricks?*

PM: The collections start to come out at the beginning of December, like the nutcrackers and snow globes, and the Victorian feather tree goes up in Mark's painting studio. We're totally "real" people: we love real Christmas trees, and fresh garlands and magnolia leaves. But because of that, they only last so long. We bring in the trees a week before Christmas, give them time for the branches to fall, then we'll start to decorate.

AW: *And what's your idea of the perfect host gift?*

PM: I always say to people, just bring something baked that you've made yourself, or even bought. And rather than buying something elaborate and expensive, if someone shows up with a beautiful piece of Roquefort, it's such a nice token! **H&H**

The bedroom is a medley of pale neutral tones to keep the focus on the antique pine mantel, a favourite piece that Philip had built into the space.

Ceiling fixture, RomEla Antique Lighting; **armchairs**, Lee Jofa.

OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT: While things are quieter during the winter, come summertime, the wharf is where dinner guests moor their boats.
OPPOSITE, BOTTOM LEFT: Even Mark's painting studio is decorated for the holidays. "Our guests often like to wander the house," says Philip.

Curtain fabric, Primavera Interior Furnishings.

