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WINTER SOUPS

# BC HOME & GARDEN

## Style 35+

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A Vancouver family home gets a holiday makeover for a charitable cause

TEXT CATHERINE ROSCOE BARR PHOTOGRAPHY TRACEY AYTON



uring Rhea and Jed Friesen's first Christmas in their new home, their holiday decorating was given a big boost when they agreed to be part of Homes for the Holidays, a seasonal house tour on the west side of Vancouver with proceeds going to benefit Kids Help Phone.

The tour also inspired the Friesens.

"Traditionally, our family of four has escaped the cold and rainy weather and spent Christmas abroad," says Rhea. "Homes for the Holidays inspired me to spend the extra effort at home. As the kids get older, I want to create Christmas memories with them."

Rhea consulted with friend and interior designer Margot Jagger, who was tasked with transforming the home for the tour.

"We were starting fresh in many ways with their holiday decor," says Jagger. "Rhea and I, along with a team of our friends who volunteered to help, spent a week getting the house just perfect."

According to Rhea, one of the key elements in the transformation was incorporating real greenery.

"For me, it's really the greenery that makes it," says Friesen. "It transforms a home – it's the sight, smell and feel of the outdoors."

Jagger adds that there is no substitute for the real thing.

"My preference is always real greens; there is nothing better than the smell of fir trees, but if you can't do real greenery, cheat with Frasier Fir candles or room spray," says Jagger.





**ALL THAT GLITTERS** Interior designer Margot Jagger helps transform Rhea and Jed Friesen's home for Christmas using silver, white and blue accents. Thomas Hobbs created whimsical centrepieces using fresh fruits and vegetables, including mini artichokes and asparagus spears.

The nine-foot tree in the living room, as well as the rest of the home, was decked with turquoise, silver and white. Precious ornaments belonging to the Friesens were also incorporated.

"Each holiday season, I decorate a number of homes and I always start with a key colour that will guide my decorating decisions," says Jagger, who chose turquoise for the Friesens as "a dramatic contrast to the home's subdued grey and white tones."

"I love to choose bright and less predictable colours like turquoise, purple, chartreuse or orange," says the designer. "I steer clear of any red and green combinations, but on their own they can be fantastic."

And, adds Jagger, "Christmas definitely deserves some glitter, whether gold or silver."

The home was awash in silver, turquoise and white from the silver containers in various shapes and sizes housing white amaryllis and paperwhites to the tiny turquoise baubles hanging from manicured myrtle trees in mercury-glass containers.

Unexpected pops of green and orange were added using fresh produce from Southlands Nursery owner Thomas Hobbs.

Hobbs wanted to do something totally different by creating whimsically unconventional displays out of

**FAMILY TIME** Rhea and her daughter, Emma, have made holiday baking, like these sugar cookies with homemade icing, an annual tradition.



fresh fruits and vegetables.

For the dining room table centrepiece, he fashioned a globe out of mini artichokes and placed groups of asparagus spears in turquoise and silver pots dusted with sugar. On the sideboard, a ball of mandarin oranges was arranged in a sparkly turquoise dish.

"In lieu of traditional Christmas crackers," says Jagger, "each family member's place setting included a small boxed gift tied with a white organza ribbon and a glittery bird perched on each plate."



Meanwhile, the kitchen table was set for a casual Christmas morning breakfast. White baubles were used as place markers with each family member's name written on them.

Massive pine cones sprayed silver and dusted with glitter were used to form a runner on the kitchen table. Burlap placemats and matching tree skirt for the mini noble fir tree next to the table were a rustic juxtaposition to the kitchen's white cabinets and polished-marble countertops.

While the living room tree was the pièce de résistance for Rhea, one of the highlights for her kids was the mini tree in the kitchen decorated with iced



## Sugar Cookies

(From *Bonnie Stern's Essentials of Home Cooking* by Bonnie Stern)

- 125 ml (½ cup) butter
- 177 ml (¾ cup) sugar
- 1 egg
- 4 ml (¾ tsp) vanilla
- 500 ml (2 cups) all-purpose flour
- 2 ml (½ tsp) baking soda
- 2 ml (½ tsp) salt

Preheat oven to 190 C (375 F). Cream butter in a large mixing bowl. Add sugar, beating until light and fluffy. Add egg and vanilla. Mix well.

Combine flour, baking soda and salt in a separate bowl. Add dry ingredients to creamed mixture. Blend well. The dough will be stiff.

Divide dough in half. Roll out to 0.3 cm (⅛ inch) thick on a lightly floured surface. Cut with assorted cookie cutters. Place cookies 5 cm (2 inches) apart on cookie sheets sprayed with non-stick cooking spray.

Bake for 8 to 10 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool on wire racks. Frost and decorate.

## ICING

(From *Pink Princess Cookbook* by Barbara Beery)

- 250 ml (1 cup) butter, at room temperature
- 1,500 ml (6 cups) icing sugar
- 80 ml (⅓ cup) milk
- 10 ml (2 tsp) vanilla

In a large bowl, beat butter until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in 4 cups of icing sugar. Beat in milk and vanilla. Gradually beat in remaining icing sugar. Add food colouring as desired. Tightly wrap leftover icing. You may need to add additional milk to get the right consistency. □

COOKIE STYLIST Laura Sugden

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sugar cookies.

“My daughter, Emma, loves to decorate and entertain,” says Rhea. “She helps me do everything from decorate the trees to holiday baking.”

This year Rhea and Emma are set for mother/daughter time in the kitchen creating their own sugar cookies.

Jagger shares a great trick for transforming your favourite gingerbread and sugar cookie recipes into Christmas tree decorations: “Over bake them and make a pin-hole to tie ribbon through before cooking.” ■

See SOURCES on page 76



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