

A Scandinavian *Escape*

Intentional materials selection and a tranquil color palette cultivate an air of European simplicity in this space elevated to support entertaining.

BY DANI GRACE
DESIGN BY LISA KOOISTRA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE CHAJECKI

The homeowners love entertaining, so they aimed to provide enough seating for guests to share the space with them while maintaining a cozy ambience. Warmth exudes both literally from the fireplace and figuratively from the cut log artwork, sheepskin-like chairs and layered pillows on the comfy sofas.



Lisa introduced textures and patterns in blankets, pillows, rugs and artwork to soften the bright, clean-lined backdrop.



In Ontario, Canada, sits a Scandinavian-style home that simultaneously serves as a calming, health-conscious sanctuary and a preferred spot for dinner parties and movie nights.

The family enlisted designer Lisa Kooistra with a mission to expand the home's space to 2,700 square feet; it already included a full basement, laundry room, mudroom, office, powder room, pantry, garage, three bathrooms and four bedrooms. Lisa's design team was tasked with packing in functional storage and crafting a timeless design that also reflected the family's desire for a more sustainable and healthier household.

HOLISTIC DESIGN

One of the homeowners "owns a naturopathic clinic," says Lisa. "She wanted a harmless open space with lots of open air, locally made furniture, materials with low volatile organic compound levels and specific insulation that didn't off-gas."

As a general practice, and especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, Lisa and her design team have prioritized purchasing from local vendors and educating clients about the materials used in their interiors. These practices cut down on greenhouse gas emissions and ensure a flourishing environment for the residents.

(above, left) The basement, dug exceptionally deep to ensure high ceilings, boasts a fitness room, and a lounge and movie area for the kids' entertainment. The firework-like overhead light fixture adds to the atmosphere and reflects the unique lighting motif in the rest of the home.

(above, right) Maintaining serenity in the primary bedroom was important to the homeowners. Grandiose windows provide natural light, cozy accent chairs offer a reading nook by the fireplace, indoor plants match the stunning outdoor scenery, and a painting from a local artist adds a touch of color while supporting the local community.



A large galley sink with two faucets allows this family of five to maximize efficiency while preparing meals. The flat panel oak on the lower cabinetry ties into the home's bathroom design, while classic shaker upper cabinets and dark island—which match the interior door frames—feel fun and inviting.



Many home expansions elicit a need for navigating new and old structural components. “The kitchen ceiling line was a challenge,” Lisa says. “We didn’t know where the peak would end up, so we had to design cabinetry around that. We didn’t want to cut the hood range short, and we added a fluting detail so that it stood out a bit more.”



(right) With high ceilings, the kitchen is light and airy; therefore, chunky cabinet hardware would be distracting in the space. “We chose something minimal, clean and not so ‘in-your-face,’” says Lisa. “We then brought in a little black to sprinkle throughout the design—without being too dramatic.”

(opposite) This 14-foot custom oak dining table was locally made and chosen for its impacting presence and how it plays off the dark island and living room built-in shelving. Lisa opted for a canvas pendant to add another layer of warmth, while still holding its own with the massive table.

“We were able to be mindful of all of that and produce a beautiful, open-concept household that could hold up with their three children,” Lisa says.

SCANDINAVIAN ELEMENTS

Scandinavian style favors a minimalist approach while still valuing comfort and a sense of belonging. Lisa started by incorporating a neutral color palette using lighter wood tones. She then added countertops, drapery and furnishings to complement the serenity of the space, fostered by high ceilings and wide windows. Finally, she introduced texture and pattern via blankets, pillows, rugs and artwork to soften the bright, clean-lined backdrop.



FARMHOUSE MEETS SCANDINAVIAN

Scandinavian style is predicated on a minimalist design approach that prioritizes functionality; therefore, the Scandinavian theme shares its core with modern farmhouse design. Here are some top tips for how to blend these two styles.

PALETTE. Use traditional colors, including white, black, blue, gray, and cream, which are ideal for a joint Scandinavian-farmhouse design. Layer in warm wood tones to complement the style and keep it from feeling sterile.

LIGHTING. Incorporate accent lighting, such as lanterns or milk-glass sconces to accentuate the Scandinavian-farmhouse décor.

DETAILS. Add in rustic elements. “We also did a wire-brush finish on the dining table, which is more rustic and can hold up with the children,” Lisa says. “Plus, we get that farmhouse feel from the bent metal on the dining room chairs and the metal bar stools.”



"We were able to ...
produce a beautiful,
open-concept household
that could hold up with
their three children."

Scandinavian style hinges on simple lines; however, corners and textures like rugs aren't outlawed. "The roundness on the bathroom mirror—and in some cases, the wall sconces—are a little softer to ensure the rooms don't end up coming across as too harsh," Lisa says.



(above, right) Minimalism in design suggests comfort, as shown here with unique reading sconces and pillows in a limited color scheme. The absence of a television encourages inhabitants to be present in this space.

(right) With five people residing in this home, the laundry room needed to operate at peak functionality. While one side sports storage built-ins and racks for hanging and steaming shirts, Lisa specially designed wood slat drying racks to accommodate laundry volume and make the most of the space above the washer and dryer.

"We started with comfort-driven pieces like a sofa but then popped in a unique chair or unusual coffee table," says Lisa. "We always want to create calm and warmth with the main color palette and then piece together the furniture and statement pieces, like artwork, to represent the client."

Scandinavian design is especially present in the light oak flooring, natural stone, terrazzo floor bathroom tile and stacked wall tile. But farmhouse style also peeks through in details like iron hardware, canvas chandeliers, rustic wood, milk glass sconces and shearling accent chairs.

"The homeowners were drawn to our style and brand aesthetic," Lisa says. "We were able to create a tranquil space for their kids and entertaining areas for them, and we settled on classic Scandinavian design with an eclectic approach."





"We were able to create a tranquil space for their kids and entertaining areas for them, and we settled on classic Scandinavian design but with an eclectic approach."

HOW TO BLEND WOOD TONES

Mixing wood tones is one method for introducing warmth and contrast into your home. While paneling, cabinetry and flooring can create depth and intrigue, going overboard with colors or textures can produce a disorganized result. Here are Lisa's tips for creating just the right mix of wood tones in the home.

- CHOOSE A PRIMARY FINISH.** Lisa first selects what will serve as the main wood surface, or what will be seen the most throughout the paneling or flooring.
- CHOOSE A SECONDARY FINISH.** For a second wood color, stay in the same hue family, but go just a bit lighter or darker—or you can go full black for a dramatic pairing. "For this house, we started with a light oak, so a gray wash or tone wouldn't have worked," says Lisa. "Then we went from a warm tone to really dark with the black contrast and then a creamy white on other surfaces so as not to compete."
- REPEAT.** Once you've settled on the base colors, look for areas where you can repeat those wood accents without overwhelming each room. "In the kitchen, we aimed to tie the bar area into the other side, as well as the interior door frames and the living room," Lisa says. "We kept that clean, consistent oak look to add the warmth to the white walls, as well."



This powder room's prominent feature is a floating sink that blends well with eclectic sconces and a soft, rectangular mirror with rounded corners. "Throughout the home, we wanted to have that consistency with clean lines and off-the-floor amenities for easy access underneath," Lisa says.



The kids' bathroom features more whimsical choices that complement the rest of the home's design. "We had some fun with the floor tile and black fixtures in this space, putting a little color in the towels and soft lines in the shower's penny round tile," says Lisa.