

“WE ALWAYS START A PROJECT WITH THE BEST INTENTIONS, A HOME THAT EVERYONE IS HAPPY WITH AND THAT MEETS THE HOMEOWNERS’ NEEDS. BUT AS THIS HOUSE WAS BEING BUILT, EVERYONE BECAME MORE AND MORE INVESTED IN IT. —ARCHITECT TONY DIODATI

How to become a sub-zero hero

COLIN & JUSTIN

Winter is a great time for emotional fortification. If embraced wholeheartedly, the colder months can actually serve as a wonderful opportunity to reset. Here’s our guide to make better use of the impending cold calendar.

COLLATE A FALL/WINTER READING LIST

Block out the colder months by engaging your inner bookworm. Poring, for a second time, over a beloved tome is like reacquainting with an old friend. Compile a reading list and see how many “familiar” you can get through as the mercury’s crash continues. Add a pair of cozy reading socks (Indigo have a selection) and prepare for warm footed bliss.

TEXTURAL HEALING

Swap out diaphanous summer drapery for weather-baffling curtains and blinds and replace summery throws and textiles with touchy-feely toss pillows and cushions. Mix warm greys and rich reds with earthy tones to seasonally adjust or try burnt umber and toffee hues to warm everything up. Don’t go overboard: small changes will help you reset without breaking the bank.

MAKE ‘HOME’ YOUR GO-TO RESTAURANT

Place the emphasis on small gatherings rather than larger, formal dinners. Keep meals easy and encourage guests to share in the experience — potluck dinners are fun, or consider “a table” gastronomy, retro style, with fondue melts using cheeses like Fontina or Comté. Or try a raclette and let the fun begin. The best cheeses for these are semi-hard, alpine variants such as Gruyère and Emmentaler, but others, like smoked Gouda, melt similarly as well.

RELAX IN THE KITCHEN

The slow food movement embraces dishes that take time: scopecrost, ca for a mix of recipes (such as spiced lamb meatballs with pomegranate glaze or leeks with hazelnut butter) that will leave you drooling. Baking, too, across the colder calendar, is rewarding (and, oh, those tasty outcomes) so reach for your mixer and turn out bread, scones and banana loaves that can be shared or gifted. While baking might seem daunting, it’s an easy science: follow instructions to the letter, heeding times and quantities, and you’ll succeed. Brush up on your baking skills with *The Cake Bible*, 35th Anniversary Edition: A Perfect Book for Serious Bakers and Cake Lovers by Rose Levy Beranbaum.



GUTTY IMAGES

Block out the colder months by engaging your inner bookworm, write Colin and Justin. Compose a reading list and see how many “familiar” you can get through as the mercury’s crash continues.

COFFEE TIME

Canadians love their joe, and, like a hug in a cup, there’s no better way to heat up across the colder months. Choose a great coffee maker and quality beans: we love Canada’s Cup, a medium blend option by Balzac — balzacs.com. Invest in cute mugs to optimize sipping moments — our cottage shelves groan under the weight of Susan Robertson’s Bear, Tree and Loon range. Go to shop.srobertsonpottery.com.

IF MUSIC BE THE FOOD OF LOVE

When the weather is inclement, music can be so decompressing. We have two favourite albums: one of them Jerry Burns by Jerry Burns (find it at shop.lastnightforaglasgow.com), and the other 50 Words for Snow by Kate Bush. The former takes us back to the early ‘90s in Scotland, and from the opening chords of Pale Red, our favourite track, we’re those carefree boys, once again, long before our transatlantic journey began. The latter is a heartwarming compilation that plays out against a snowy landscape.

DISCONNECT TO RECONNECT

Turn off your phone, ditch the laptop and dump the tablet. The immediacy of modern life creates pressure to be connected, which leaves less time to garner thoughts and enjoy me time. While we’d be reluctant to suggest our friends abandon their tech when we’re together, they all know how we feel about the matter. When we’re at a restaurant, we prefer living in the moment.

EXPLORE MORE

Avoid limiting escape time to the warmer months — make a point of getting out of the city (in winter) to experience a quiet Canada that’s good for the soul. We’ll happily drive far and wide to enjoy frozen lakes, dog sleighs and snow dusted forests that look like Christmas cards. It’s a wildly uplifting pursuit, one that conspires escapism reward at every turn.

In whichever way you choose to face off against dipping temperatures, one thing’s certain: winter’s eminently gentler sibling will be here again, soon enough. Until then, wrap up warm. Get out and about. And share real time with real friends and family. And start counting the days until Friday, March 20, 2026: spring equinox. Yes indeed, for warmer days lie ahead. Eventually.

For Postmedia News

Watch for Colin and Justin on *Colin and Justin’s Sub-Zero Reno* on Paramount+ TV and *Hotel Hell* on CBC Gem. Find the Colin and Justin Home Colour Challenge on Instagram. Winners and Marshalls.



PHOTOS: SCOTT SNORWORTH

The fireplace was moved from its original location to form a focal point at the end of the living room. Bright, cheerful upholstery adds colour and keeps things from getting too serious.

Project became ‘great collaboration’

ORANGEINK

Continued from HP1

There was another wrinkle to the assignment. In the GTA, ravine-home improvements are strictly controlled by the Toronto Regional Conservation Authority, and with only very slight variations, expanding the house — even adding a deck or patio — was out of the question. The building would have to stay within its original footprint.

In the end, however, the TRCA guidelines were only a minor hindrance. By focusing on a number of important principles, Diodati was able to reinvent the house for twenty-first-century living while maintaining, and celebrating, a sense of the original concept.

First up was to better incorporate the house into its surroundings. The original roof was removed and replaced with a series of roof and ceiling planes with different heights, stepping down in areas of intimacy and connection, such as the kitchen, then rising to a soaring, loft-like vertical addition above the main living area, fully glazed for maximum exposure to light and views.

Because it’s set back from the road, the house only becomes visible as you approach up the driveway. “When we were considering the rooflines and the views, we wanted to continue that sense of the house slowly revealing itself,” he explains.

You arrive at the front to a boardwalk, which invites you to stroll around from the front elevation to the front door, tucked away at the side. The boardwalk cantilevers over the top of the slope as you round the corner, offering a view of the ravine over the railing.

It’s also here that you get the sense of the materials used throughout, another way of blending exterior and interior. Vertical surfaces (painted brick in its original sections, charred cedar in the “new” areas) are mainly black, while horizontal surfaces (ceilings, stair treads) are clad in natural cedar. The effect is to visually organize the planes of the house, but also to play up its woodsy setting, especially in the evenings, the house seems to nestle into the shadows.

There’s a choice of outdoor seating areas. A top-



The living wall is irrigated by a hidden piping system, which circulates through a trickling indoor pond.



The front door opens up on a two-storey-high foyer.

level outdoor gathering spot, with seats arranged around an outdoor wood stove, is covered and can be used in four seasons. And just where the house overlooks the lip of the ravine, two of the walls enclosing the former groovy indoor pool were blown out and a hot tub installed; it’s almost like hot-tubbing in a tree house.

The front door opens up on a two-storey-high foyer that illustrates how the ceiling heights direct the mood: just in the front vestibule, the ceiling is about nine feet or so, but step forward to the centre of the foyer and it soars a good 20 feet or more to the top of the loft. At one side, pocket doors enclose the entrance to the bedroom wing, where the homeowners’ university-age kids, now on their own, stay when they visit; on the other is the entrance to the great room. Tucked past a hallway behind the fireplace at the other end of the house is the primary suite.

But one of the most dramatic installations is straight ahead: a “living wall” that goes up one side of the stairwell, extending from the lower level to the roof, discreetly irrigated by pipes fed by a small indoor pond at the foot of the stairs. The trickling sound of the pond, the fresh scent of greenery, the wash of sunlight from the loft windows high above and, especially, a huge glass curtain wall that takes up the entire rear wall of the stairwell and the full glory of



Sparely designed and super-efficient, the kitchen features a wide window facing the front.

the ravine beyond, is exhilarating and also somehow calming.

The great room, which comprises kitchen, living and dining areas, is just as dramatic, but in a different way. On days when it’s just the couple, or perhaps when the kids are home and hanging out, dinner is casual, at the dining table or stools at the island. (For larger gatherings — the couple are frequent and enthusiastic entertainers — the table seats 12 or more with ease.)

The Bulthaup-designed kitchen is intimate and welcoming, like any family kitchen should be. But just past the outer island, its ceiling opens, like a box seat at the opera, to a wide view of the great room and the ravine beyond. The living area at the far end is deliberately unpretentious, with its cheerfully upholstered lounge seating; the fireplace

here, moved from the original spot, provides a gathering point of a different kind.

For Diodati and the clients, the house became much more than just another beautiful luxury project, or even a master class in functional design.

“We always start a project with the best intentions, a home that everyone is happy with and that meets the homeowners’ needs,” he says. “But as this house was being built, everyone became more and more invested in it; the trades understood and appreciated what we were doing. So it was a great collaboration.”

“But actually, as nice as the photos are, it’s even nicer in person. Until you are walking through it with all your senses engaged, you don’t get the full experience of it. And once you’ve arrived, you don’t ever want to leave.”

Postmedia News