



Fresh Farm-Style Homes

When the hot cocoa bar gets set up and the holiday carols begin playing on the radio, you know the Christmas season is upon us. Homes become festooned with greenery, twinkling lights appear in windows, and the whole neighborhood takes on a festive atmosphere. If you're looking for some holiday decorating inspiration, this section is for you. An interior decorator and vintage goods reseller drapes her 100-year-old Pennsylvania home in sparkling farmhouse glam. A professional stylist and crafter creates Christmas vignettes that are sure to charm. Touches of black highlight a Texas family's lake house turned full-time abode. And rustic winter joy spreads through the cozy home of this Canadian who calls her look "farmhouse Scandinavian."



Lights FANTASTIC

Remove the original fabric from a lampshade to reveal the metal frame and then clip fabric strips of varying lengths to the bottom edge of the frame to create a French-inspired, rag banner effect.



In the living room, the Olson family Christmas tree is enjoyed from a neutral sofa piled with pillows made from French grain sacks. Behind the sofa, twin salvaged windows from a Virginia flea market hold matching winter wreaths while setting off a pair of plug-in pendant lights.

Parisian Panache

An interior decorator and shop owner with a fondness for French design and vintage goods turns her historic Pennsylvania house into a winsome wonderland.

Photographed by GRIDLEY + GRAVES. Written by MAGGIE GINSBERG.



Every year, Michelle purchases a live Christmas tree and then has it flocked. In the early 1900s, the effect was achieved with cornstarch or flour; today, you can use snow flocking powder. Though a heavily flocked tree will look best with lights featuring white cording, Michelle chose a lighter application that works with green-corded lights.

Charlie, one of three feline family members, looks on inquisitively as Michelle pages through a vintage book in the living room. A layered pair of white faux-fur throws forms a cozy base for a mantel arrangement that glows with warmth, thanks to an array of milk glass pieces fitted with battery-powered candles. Flocked trees and garland enhance the snowy woodland feel of the scene.

By the time Michelle G. Olson spotted this 100-year-old home in a tree-lined Allentown, Pennsylvania, neighborhood, she'd had plenty of practice making spaces her own. As a real estate agent, interior decorator and owner of Marché Maison Vintage Market in historic downtown Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Michelle had been putting her own mark on her surroundings since she was a little girl arguing with her mother about furniture placement.

"She'd say, 'Michelle, someday you're going to have your own house and you can do whatever you want,'" Michelle recalls. And that is certainly the case with the home she purchased in 2019 with her husband, David, after a long, highly selective search.

"I'm a person of faith, and I kept saying to my husband, 'God has a home for us. We just haven't found it yet,'" notes Michelle, who spent 10 years as an accountant before finally giving in to her passion and becoming an interior designer more than 20 years ago. Fortunately, the perfect house came onto the market on



The reproduction box holding these gold ornaments was so charming that Michelle couldn't bear to hide it away—so, it became part of this rustic tray centerpiece. A bottle-brush tree ties the ornament box and weathered tray together perfectly. "Add a little tree to anything and you've made a vignette," Michelle says.

her birthday, and she and David, along with their daughter, Jacqueline, moved in less than a month later.

Despite its lengthy history, the century-old house was move-in ready. That appealed to Michelle, who wanted to focus her energy and resources on the fun aspects of design, such as painting and furniture arranging, rather than replacing a heating system or windows. With this house, Michelle could fully indulge her penchant for French-inspired farmhouse decor, just as she has with her show homes and her retail store, which includes an online shop bolstered by a popular blog and Instagram account.

"I'm a neutral decor girl. I love working in woods and whites, with lots of texture and vintage items," Michelle says. Her love of French design was kindled by her first trip to Paris, a 40th birthday gift from her husband. She later returned to France with a friend, and her "souvenirs" include a beloved French dressmaker's form and Parisian fabrics for her furniture and pillows.

Though she especially loves the French open-air flea markets known as *brocantes*, Michelle finds just as many inspiring items at their stateside counterparts. She particularly enjoys goods that have endured the test of time yet can be given new purpose. "It's just fun to see them reimaged and reused in different ways," she says. "If the piece speaks to me, I don't worry about placement. It'll show up in some display either at home or at the shop."

Visit Michelle's blog at www.marchemaison.com, or follow her on Instagram at www.instagram.com/marchemaison.

Perfect Your *Holiday Centerpieces*

A versatile piece like a tray, platter or box, especially one with handles, not only sets a contained scene that makes centerpiece design easy but also ensures portability for quickly moving items out of the way when necessary. One of the most popular items in Michelle's online store, Marché Maison, is a footed tin platter with a wood handle, which she used in her own home to set up a holiday table display. To create a little French village-inspired scene, Michelle starts with the larger pieces, including a trio of white houses lit from within by string lights and a painted ceramic pickup truck. Next, she layers in items to lend texture and visual interest, including a bottle-brush tree, wood beads, a jeweled snowflake ornament and bits of burlap, as well as a wood number 3 to signify her family. She then adds natural elements, such as pinecones and greenery, and finishes with a dusting of "snow," tucking tufts of batting here and there and filling the bed of the pickup with salt.





The sunny family room is a favorite reading, coffee-sipping and napping hangout for the Olsons and their three cats. The overhead fixture was moved from another spot in the room and centered over a massive square Belgian pallet table. "My style is romantic French, but I love adding pops of modern," Michelle says of the industrial styling of some of her selections. The church pew serves double duty as seating and storage, with three antique crates tucked underneath to hold the family's winter gear.



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To decorate this corner of her family room, Michelle mixed and matched textures and dimensional pieces with found and sentimental items to create what she calls her "vintage collection wall." Found art includes classroom photos from the 1920s (a thrift-store discovery) and three framed pages torn from a French songbook plucked from a Paris flea market. A nearly bare lampshade ensures the area is well lit without obstructing the wall decor.

Corners can defy the novice and experienced designer alike, so Michelle recorded how she decorated this area to share with Instagram viewers—to see it, tap on the “Vintage Wall” highlight @marchemaison.

Old drawers turned on their sides are the perfect spot for small shadow-box displays.



Coffee Station *Advent Calendar*

This clever homemade Advent calendar mimics the look of a café display with its paper sacks suggesting bags of coffee. Here's how to put one together:

1. Gather 25 brown paper lunch sacks for your calendar. Tuck a holiday treat or message into each, or leave them empty simply for the look.
2. Use stickers or stamps to number the bags from 1 to 25.
3. Secure four evenly spaced lengths of twine horizontally across a wall or other backdrop to represent each week of Advent.
4. Clip the bags to the twine with mini clothespins and the occasional sprig of greenery, bit of ribbon or other embellishment.
5. Choose a favorite ornament or Christmas bell and move it from bag to bag to mark the current day.

The Olson coffee station becomes an Advent calendar this season with rows of paper sacks resembling coffee bags. When the season is over, Michelle can use the hall tree turned chalkboard to share inspirational messages. A mini Eiffel Tower crowns the thrifted headboard lamp clipped atop the piece.

Create a cute tree-topper star from folded strips of vintage paper accented by a bow fashioned from antique zippers.



For the village scene on her dining room buffet, Michelle purchased a plain cardboard gingerbread village and then embellished it with white puffy paint to add detailing and texture. A vintage book and wood blocks and spools allow her to vary the height of items in the vignette.



This glowing cabinet in the dining room features a worn finish, beadboard backing and bottom apron detail, which make up for the fact that it's missing the glass panels on the doors and sides. The missing glass allows Michelle to easily add string lights, highlighting the wintry vibe of her collection of milk glass vessels and white ceramic houses.



Twin upcycled shutters flank the dining room windows, adding depth to the scene. Michelle taught herself how to perform basic electrical work in order to make them more versatile. She converted two wall-mounted sconces into plug-in fixtures, hiding the cords along the back length of each shutter. The overhead chandelier was an antiques-store find (enhanced with new French-inspired lace shades), and the antique claw-foot dining table and pub chairs were acquired separately. "I don't do sets," Michelle says. "I like things to feel mismatched and collected over time."



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Tole SWEET

Employ a variety of handled containers to create interesting (and portable) porch displays, from a basket holding a pair of pines to a toolbox filled with greens and a metal carrier packed with an assortment of glass bottles.



On the porch, a rusty bistro set situated beneath a sparkling chandelier provides a spot to gather, while a large cupboard contributes storage and style. A vintage trunk outfitted with metal legs is a handy accent table or a portable bar for serving a signature drink during an outdoor get-together. "It's not just a porch," Michelle says. "I want it to feel like we live out there, too."

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"I'm a neutral decor girl. I love working in woods & whites, with lots of texture and vintage items."

Michelle spotted this adorable mitten cutout garland in the dollar aisle at Target and then put her own spin on it—a practice she highly recommends. In this case, she bunched the mittens in pairs and painted a white scallop detail along each cuff.



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