

LET IT SNOW

A *Kiwi* and a Texan in *snowy Vermont* enjoy a picture book *traditional Christmas*

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THIS PAGE Alastair Moore and Holly Hickey Moore's Vermont, US dining room set for Christmas; although it's a rental the couple were allowed to do some redecorating, and installed the brass chandelier from Visual Comfort & Co; Holly painted the Windsor dining chairs given to her by Alastair's mother and made the tassels hanging from the blue cushions; the table is set with china from Anthropologie.

OPPOSITE The Dutch colonial house after a fresh fall of snow; Holly made the wreath on the front door with tiny trees and houses, inspired by a similar one by Martha Stewart.





A WHITE CHRISTMAS IS pretty much guaranteed when you're living in Vermont in the north-eastern United States. There have been times that Holly Hickey Moore and her Auckland-born husband Alastair have had to dig out the car from deep snow before they could drive to a nearby farm to pick out their Christmas tree.

"It's magical here when everything is blanketed in snow," says Alastair. "The sound is muffled and you can't see very far but you've got the glow of the street lamps and it feels like you're in your own little world."

Vermont is only a temporary stop for the couple while Alastair completes his residency as a radiologist at the University of Vermont Medical Centre. That means living in a rental property, which for interior designer Holly could easily be a frustrating experience.

Fortunately both she and Alastair were instantly charmed by the rental they found in the city of Winooski – a Dutch colonial dating from the 1930s. "It feels exactly like the sort of house you're supposed to live in in New England," says Holly.

Never remodelled, it still has the original woodwork and stained glass windows. However, the decor was looking tired with yellowing paint, frayed wallpaper and dated kitchen units.

THIS PAGE (from top) Holly had the window blind and the cushions on the dining chairs and benches custom-made with fabric from Robert Allen; the festive trim on the white tablecloth comes from Fringe Market. The couple added the blue shelves in the kitchen to display Holly's china; the *Aotearoa* print from Weston Frizzell was a wedding gift from Alastair's Auckland-based aunt and uncle.

OPPOSITE (from top) Holly likes to combine large, medium and small-scale patterns within a room: "Visually it's a nice mix and can work well even if they're different colours." Alastair Moore and Holly Hickey Moore with son Elliot; the ottomans were a thrift shop find Holly had painted and re-covered with fabric from Fabricut and Link Outdoor trim, and the table lamp came from a flea market. Elliot with the family's dachshund Dexter.



As the couple were planning to live in the house for several years, the landlords were open to them making cosmetic changes and the interior was repainted in Holly's favourite warm, creamy Benjamin Moore 'Cloud White'. They also invested in custom-made blinds and curtains, and switched out some light fittings.

But it was the kitchen that was the scene of the boldest change. Unable to alter the 1990s-style units, Holly opted instead to distract the eye by putting up a vibrantly patterned statement wallpaper, Serallo Mosaic in Aegean from Schumacher.

"It was the best thing we did in the house," says Alastair. "That was a dingy room but the wallpaper totally changed the whole vibe. Now it's fun to be in."

Holly isn't afraid of patterns, colour and texture. She puts that down to her upbringing in Texas where she was influenced by the strong Mexican culture, as well as her own native Indian heritage.

"I like a room to be visually interesting so that almost every time you go back into it you notice something different," she says. "The interior of your home should reflect who you are, what you've experienced and where you've travelled in a way that is unique and authentic, and not just following the next design trend."

She is most definitely not a minimalist. "I think the more you have in a space, the more homey it feels. And if you do it right it still has a sophistication to it – things don't have to look cluttered."

Holly used CAD software to plan how their possessions were going to be positioned to best effect in each room. >





THIS PAGE The peach-coloured house is surrounded by cedars and a crab apple tree.
OPPOSITE (from top) Alastair and Holly wanted a nursery that would also be comfortable for adults to hang out in; the vintage chair came from Barge Canal Market in Vermont and has been reupholstered in Osborne & Little fabric; Elliot's sheep chair is by kamina&C and he has a toy kiwi on the shelf, a gift from his New Zealand family. The cactus lamp on the dresser in the nursery was picked up from a vintage shop in San Antonio, Texas and is one of Holly's most cherished possessions. The front porch is furnished with a coffee table and outdoor sofa from West Elm; when it's not wrapped in Christmas lights Alastair rides the bicycle to work.



Baskets, rugs, fabrics, cushions, one-of-a-kind items picked up at thrift stores and high street finds have all been brought together to create a comforting sense of permanence in this temporary home. "Lots of my friends are residents here like me and they love to come over," says Alastair. "It feels like a place you want to hang out in for hours."

The screened-in porch at the front of the house is where they tend to gather. "I've fallen in love with that porch," says Alastair. "I sit in there and play music with my friends. Sometimes neighbours will see us as they walk by and pop in to join us for a drink."

Holly is a fan of having anything beautiful or decorative out on show. Her best crockery is on open shelving in the kitchen for guests to help themselves. There are more open shelves for



her shoe collection and a display case for her trademark dangly earrings – the bigger, the better.

The family also collect Christmas decorations. Alastair's mother has a tradition of giving him an enamelled cloisonné ornament every year and the couple buy a new item whenever they travel. "It's so much fun unpacking the ornaments every year and having little memories of where we've been," says Holly.

The festive season is even more pleasurable now the couple have a son, Elliot. But next Christmas those ornaments will be unpacked somewhere new, as the family are moving to Dallas, Texas where Alastair is taking up a new job.

Already there are plans for the home they'll create there. "Holly is envisaging me having a man cave themed like an old Irish pub," says Alastair. "She's going to help me design it." ■

Q&A

FIRST THING WE DO CHRISTMAS MORNING: Make mimosas. (Alastair)

THIS CHRISTMAS WE'LL BE EATING: Mexican food. Enchiladas, chips and queso (melted cheese), fajitas and tamales. It's easy, always delicious, and you can serve it family style. (Holly)

FAVOURITE CHRISTMAS TRADITION: My family makes beaded eggs every year using seed beads and a hollow eggshell. We have a small tree that we display them on. (Holly)

REAL TREE OR FAKE: Real tree. The smell brings back nostalgic memories. That's what holidays are all about, right? (Alastair)

FAVOURITE OUTDOOR SPOT: Being on our boat on Lake Champlain. You can see for miles, and every view is beautiful. (Holly)

Alastair Moore and Holly Hickey Moore



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