



## Time *to play* Dress-Up

This is it: the year we finally get to go all out for the holidays again. For Montreal designer Eliza Faulkner, that means a twinkling tree, time with the family and a procession of fun, fabulous outfits. Who's ready for a party?

*by Katherine Lalancette*

*Photography by Marie H Rainville*



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**FUJIFILM** CUSTOM WRAPPING PAPER, FROM \$18, FUJIFILMPRINTLIFE.CA



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**PANDORA** PET COLLAR WITH ENGRAVABLE TAG, \$160, PANDORA.NET



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**IMESILVER** HANDWRITING BRACELET, FROM \$62, ETSY.COM

## Quite a coupe

Cheers to the chicest of celebratory glassware



The season of toasting is upon us! Add some fizz to your festivities with stunning coupes that set the tone for a memorable evening.



Produced at a European glassworks, this hand-cut crystal features diagonal cuts reminiscent of leaves.  
**WILLIAMS SONOMA** COUPES, \$45, WILLIAMS-SONOMA.CA



The delicate bowl, the deep V plunge, the rim as crisp as that first sip of Veuve—it can only be Waterford.  
**WATERFORD** COUPES, \$150 (SET OF TWO), WATERFORD.COM



These sweet Champagne saucers are hand-painted with iridescent details. Choose your favourite, then cheers!  
**LSA INTERNATIONAL** COUPES, \$120 (SET OF 4), THEBAY.COM



Let the rosy glow of a wonderful evening start with a rosy glow on the stem of this stylish glass.  
**KATE SPADE** COUPES \$94 (ON SALE FROM \$125), THEBAY.COM



Hosting a large gathering? These glasses are gorgeous, surprisingly sturdy and look Champagne-grade on a sparkling wine budget  
**IKEA** COUPES, \$20 (SET OF 4), IKEA.COM



## Integrity above all

Intrigued by ethical shopping this season? Let Obakki's Treana Peake guide your gift giving

**T**reana Peake occupies a singular place in the Canadian style space: She has been a conscious shopping pioneer since founding Obakki in 2005. Back then, Obakki was a chic sustainable fashion brand; over the decades, it's evolved several times and now primarily spotlights international artisans who create housewares, furniture, jewellery and a smattering of fashion.

What has remained constant is Peake's decades-long dedication to her artisans—including Italian glassblowers and Chiapas silk weavers, who sustainably raise caterpillars—as well as to the importance of meaningful purchasing.

"The conscious consumer wants to buy items that they feel confident aren't doing any damage," says Peake. "But ideally, it goes deeper than that. We want to show that there are human beings behind each piece."

To that end, Peake and her team are launching an artisan event series that invites customers to meet the people who made their vases, tapestries or chandeliers, thereby creating, as Peake puts it, "invisible lines across the world." The sustainability of that model depends on real commitment, says Peake: "I'm not here to do this for an annual report. I'm in this for the long haul."

## Highlight reel



"I love splurging on luxurious candles, and this is one of my favorites to gift because the scent is incredible, and I burn it in my own home. The vessel is reusable (I love an upcycling moment), and I buy these from one of my favorite local design and decor shops in Vancouver, Provide Home."

**MAD ET LEN** CANDLE, \$205, PROVIDEHOME.COM



"This is my go-to for gifting because everyone loves this set of incense. Featuring three scents inspired by various Japanese woods, it comes beautifully packaged and makes a thoughtful stocking stuffer."

**WABOKU** INCENSE SET, \$68, OBAKKI.COM

"I really like the idea of gifting friends and family living arrangements or wreaths during the holiday season. There is something so magical about the natural, woody aroma that fills your home when you hang a living wreath, and they're always a hit. Here in Vancouver I love to order mine from Nogori Flowers—they're so beautiful!"

**WILD LIVING** WREATH, \$205, NOGORIFLOWERS.COM



"This piece is extremely special to me because of the incredible artisan that handcrafts each piece. Viviana is from Oaxaca and she comes from a family that has been creating candles by hand for generations. I've sat with her in her home and watched her create these pieces and it's truly inspiring. Not only is this candle stylish, it also has a powerful story attached to it."

**OBAKKI** SPECIALTY BEESWAX CANDLE, \$75, OBAKKI.COM



Every year, this gift set from luxury hair brand Oribe gets decked out in holiday packaging courtesy of a different artist. This year, the limited-edition box has a colourful, anime-style nature scene by Japanese digital artist Kohei Kyomori—so stunning, you don't even need to wrap it. Inside are full-sized bottles of Oribe's Gold Lust Repair & Restore shampoo and conditioner and a travel-sized vial of the brand's wonderful hair oil.

**ORIBE** GOLD LUST COLLECTION, \$145 (\$173 VALUE), ORIBE.COM



Two very cool Canadian brands, Vancouver-based Vitruvi—maker of exquisite home scent products—and Toronto's Mejuri—beloved purveyor of fine jewelry—came together to make this exceptionally good-looking diffuser with its sleek lines and a gilded finish. It's conveniently cordless, so you can take it from room to room, and has an ambient LED light for a candle-like glow.

**VITRUVI** MEJURI MOVE ESSENTIAL OIL DIFFUSER, \$182, VITRUVI.COM



In the world of lip colour, it doesn't get more iconic than Charlotte Tilbury's Pillow Talk, a pinky beige formulated to be universally flattering. Subtle, sexy, sophisticated, it's simply one of the best lipstick shades ever created. This limited-edition set serves up the hue in a creamy matte lipstick, a lip liner, a luscious gloss and a semi-sheer balm. It's valued at \$75 but retails for \$56.

**CHARLOTTE TILBURY** PILLOW TALK BEAUTIFYING LIP SET, \$56, SEPHORA.CA



I keep this duo by my bathroom sink and every time a guest washes their hands, they can't stop gushing about how amazing it smells. I use it several times a day and I still get a rush of excitement over the lovely hints of sweet orange and cedar wood in the wash and the vanilla and orange peel scent of the hand cream. It's worth \$82 but exceptionally retails for \$49 this holiday season.

**GROWN ALCHEMIST** HAND CARE SET, \$49, GROWNALCHEMIST.COM

TEXT: MELISSA PEITEK (CUSTOM GIFTS); PHOTOGRAPHY: LSA INTERNATIONAL (COUPES FEATURE); BRITNEY GILL (PEAKE PORTRAIT)

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**The Happy Homebody:** Whether they just bought their first place or they've been the go-to DIY expert in your life for years, they're the person whose home looks like it should be a Pinterest board. Happiest at home—lighting candles, plumping cushions, re-arranging their gallery wall—the only thing they like more than feathering their nest is opening their beautiful home to the people they love.



THE KETTLE:

This adorable vintage-vibes kettle will look perfect perched on their gleaming counter—in a fun colour that perfectly coordinates with their decor, of course.

SMEG RETRO-STYLE KETTLE, \$250, [THEBAY.COM](#)

"I'd gift this to my newlywed friends to replace their old kettle. Look at that aesthetic." — Nicki B.



THE BLANKET:

This iconic heritage design will pop on their sofa—and they'll love that all proceeds now go to supporting Indigenous Peoples.

HBC STRIPES POINT BLANKET, FROM \$325, [THEBAY.COM](#)

"The Hudson's Bay print is so iconic. This would look great and cozy in any room." — Zahra M.

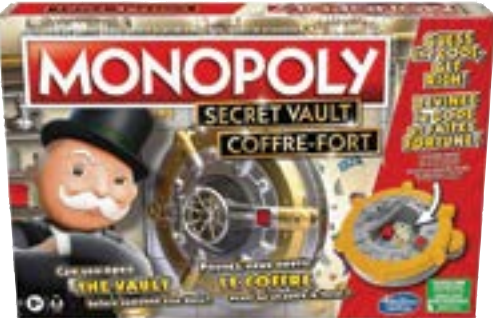


THE COFFEE MAKER:

Nothing warms up a winter morning like a cozy cup of coffee, especially when it tastes like a barista made it but you actually brewed it at home. Enter this ultra-easy coffee and espresso maker!

NESPRESSO VERTUO NEXT MACHINE, \$210, [THEBAY.COM](#)

"I love the sleek style. It would look great on a kitchen counter. Style meets function!" — Laura D.



THE BOARDGAME:

They'll love hosting game night with this fun twist on a classic—and you'll love feasting on their signature charcuterie board while you play.

HASBRO MONOPOLY SECRET VAULT, \$39, [THEBAY.COM](#)

"I'd give this to the friend that loves to host. It would be so fun to play with a group of friends." — Nicki B.

# THE HOT LIST

From the home decor-obsessed to the self-care enthusiast, Hudson's Bay has something for everyone

The only thing more festive than a spot of holiday shopping? Doing it with your besties, a glass of something bubbly in hand.

That's certainly what a group of our loyal readers got to experience on November 1, when The Kit hosted a sip and shop event at the Hudson's Bay flagship Queen Street store. Guests got an exclusive chance to preview this season's hottest gifts, getting the chance to see, touch and fully experience the very best of this iconic Canadian retailer's holiday offering.



**The Style-Obsessed Trend-setter:** They're wearing the It-bag months before it's on every Instagram influencer because they are just so effortlessly cool. They love to take a style risk—and yet never put a sartorial foot wrong—and hasn't met a microtrend they didn't love.



3. THE BOOTS: Just because it's snowing and minus 50 outside, this doesn't mean they aren't treating the sidewalk like it's their runway. The iconic Moon Boots deliver style while keeping those toes cozy too.

MOON BOOT ICON, \$240, [THEBAY.COM](#)

"I'd gift these to my friend who lives in Montreal. It gets so cold there, and these are the warmest boots." — Courtney G.

4. THE SHOES: The literal definition of "dancing shoes"—although in the case of your coolest friend, these are probably what they'll be wearing to the dentist on a Tuesday.

BILLINI "ELOPE" PUMPS, \$118, [THEBAY.COM](#)

"These are perfect for a fashion forward friend who wants that designer look for less." — Rochelle M.



1. THE BAG: The only thing more fashion forward than they are? This ultra-cool bag by one of the hottest designers of the moment.

JACQUEMUS BAG, \$770, [THEBAY.COM](#)

"Who wouldn't want a Jacquemus? It would be a statement accessory—but also a good place to hide lipstick and snacks." — Nicki B

2. THE SLOUCHY TOP: This cotton-blend top is a mixture of comfort—that funnel neck looks so snugly—and style, especially in a bold colour.

FREE PEOPLE "OTTOMAN" TUNIC, \$232, [THEBAY.COM](#)

"It's so cute and practical, especially in Canadian winter." — Renee B.

We're not just telling you this to induce FOMO, promise! You see, your fellow readers (joined by a select group of Toronto micro influencers) left some valuable feedback on these pieces, and their careful reviews have been turned into a "best of the best" curated gift guide, just for you.

And by "just for you," we mean it! We've taken their picks and distilled them down into guides for every kind of giftee. Let's go shopping!

**The Classic Dresser:** Voted "most likely to own something that's been in their wardrobe for over a decade," they nailed their signature style years ago. A lover of the classics—ballet flats, a really good blazer, an impeccably tailored white shirt, a string of pearls—they are also probably a capsule wardrobe evangelist, legendary for their tightly edited, relentlessly curated rotation of "buy now, wear forever" pieces.



1. THE PERFUME: This feminine floral scent is as enduringly sophisticated as the fashion house who made it.

PRADA PARADOXE EAU DE PARFUM, \$139, [THEBAY.COM](#)

"This would be great for my sister-in-law. It has a sweet scent, which I love, and the packaging is gorgeous." — Courtney G.

2. THE WATCH Pardon the pun, but you don't really get much more timeless than this classic watch.

TISSOT WATCH, \$975, [THEBAY.COM](#)

"A timepiece means so much. The menswear inspired vibe is also so on trend." — Rachel D.



3. THE SWEATER Cashmere is forever, especially when it's as luxuriously soft as this Hudson North crewneck.

HUDSON NORTH CREWNECK, \$150, [THEBAY.COM](#)

"This is a good quality piece that will last a lifetime. It's a great investment." — Fabiana C.

4. THE BEAUTY COLLECTION They'll love this limited-edition selection of sublime lipsticks from Dior, which is a forever classic in our eyes.

DIOR COFFRET, \$299, [THEBAY.COM](#)

"Who wouldn't want to receive Dior makeup as a gift? Their lipsticks are amazing." — Caitlin D.

**The Self-Care Enthusiast:** The friend most likely to look you in the eyes and say, "But how are you, really?" they know how important it is to prioritize their own wellbeing. (After all, you can't pour from an empty vessel.) They love self-care in all its forms, whether it's a Sunday night pamper session, a nourishing meal, a deep therapy session or a walk over their lunch break.



THE DEVICE

The ultimate in facial lifting technology, this clever system will deliver results—and relaxation—in just 5 minutes a day, 5 days a week.

NUFACE LIMITED EDITION TRINITY MICROCURRENT REGIME, \$555, [THEBAY.COM](#)

"I've heard amazing things about this product. It would be great for the skin-care enthusiast who wants to stay forever young." — Rachel D.



THE TOOL

Like having your own personal masseuse on call 24/7, this clever tool gets into all of those knots and stiff muscles.

THERAGUN PORTABLE MASSAGE DEVICE, \$250, [THEBAY.COM](#)

"This is so good for sore hips and sitting all day." — Rani S.



THE BEAUTY CALENDAR

A treat yourself moment for every day of the holiday countdown, they'll love this selection of little luxuries.

THE BAY BEAUTY CALENDAR, LIMITED QUANTITIES AVAILABLE IN STORE ONLY, HUDSON'S BAY

"This has a fabulous assortment of products." — Christina B.



THE CANDLE

This cult-fave candle brand is a go-to when you're taking a mindful moment or just setting those chilled ambient vibes.

BOY SMELLS CANDLE, \$50, [THEBAY.COM](#)

"I'd give this to the person who loves luxury. Who doesn't want a chic candle?" — Jessica V.





ELIZA FAULKNER DRESS, \$695, ELIZAFALKNER.COM

Eliza Faulkner's world is a cheerful, cozy, at times chaotic swirl of swatches, small children and a significant other slash business partner. The Canadian fashion star wouldn't have it any other way

by Katherine Lalancette

Photography by Marie H Rainville

# Modern Family

Should we have a tickle war?" It's Sunday morning in Montreal. Eliza Faulkner and Arin Gintowt recline atop a floral comforter with their two children, Zaven, 4, and Tallulah, 2, posing for a *Kit* photo shoot. Faulkner dons a sheer pussy-bow top and a denim circle skirt from her eponymous label. The *Mary Poppins* soundtrack rollicks in the background. Tallulah's favourite is "A British Bank." Zaven is partial to "Step in Time."

Perched on the second floor of a triplex, the quintessential Mile End apartment bursts with bright paintings, family snapshots and vintage gems unearthed at the St-Michel flea market. The curtains in the principal bedroom and Zaven's room are childhood relics that once hung in Faulkner's mother's sewing room. "My mom made all my clothes for me as a kid—she was a really avid seamstress," she explains. "My earliest memories are of that sewing room, watching her make things."

Faulkner grew up on Vancouver Island, a rugged patch in the Pacific renowned for its untamed beaches, old-growth forests and snow-capped mountains. But from an early age, the imaginative child displayed far more interest in clothes than she did in the great outdoors. At 12, she was crafting her own pieces, watching Tim Blanks on *Fashion File* and daydreaming about a career as a designer.

She applied to Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson) after high school, but wasn't accepted, so she took a year off. Then, on a whim, she submitted her candidacy to the fashion program at Central Saint Martins in London, England, alma mater to the likes of Alexander McQueen, Stella McCartney, John Galiano and Phoebe Philo. "It was something I'd always read about," she says. "I got in, and it kind of went from there."

She moved to London at 19, honing her craft and nabbing internships at high-profile labels like Erdem, Roland Mouret and Zandra Rhodes. "It was an amazing formative time in my life because I was so young and coming from Vancouver Island, where it's very sheltered and small, and being in this big creative city. Just living there, meeting people, going to galleries and museums—it was really special."

Five years later, her student visa was about to run out. She needed to be sponsored by an employer to remain in the U.K., but securing work in the aftermath of the 2008 recession proved increasingly challenging. "So I came back to the island, regrettably. I didn't want to, but I didn't know what to do. I was kind of lost."

Her mother owned a shoe store, so she started working there while figuring out her next move. In the evenings, she'd lay out pattern paper on an old ping-pong table and draw up dresses. "I was living in this little cottage that had a fireplace, so I would just sit by the fire and make things," she remembers. "It was before Netflix and Instagram, so there were no distractions. You weren't comparing yourself to everyone—it was great."

One night, she attended a costume party at a friend's house, dressed as Baba Yaga, "basically an old hag," where a cute guy in skinny jeans and snazzy sneakers caught her eye. "I knew immediately he wasn't from around here and had to know more about him," she says. Gintowt, whose father lived on the island, had recently relocated to B.C. from Montreal. He recalls being struck by Faulkner as soon as he walked in, making a beeline toward her and spending the evening chatting about their shared love of art and Tumblr (it was 2013).

Though the attraction was palpable, Faulkner had a boyfriend, so they became friends. Gintowt even did some graphic design work for her budding label. It was only a few years later, when he'd moved back to Montreal and Faulkner had ended her relationship that the friendship turned romantic. They started chatting on Facebook and before long Faulkner was booking a flight to Montreal. "She flew across Canada just for a first kiss," jokes Gintowt.

STYLING: MANUELA BARTOLOMEO; HAIR & MAKEUP: ELENA FACENZA (FOLO)



"My son will wear whatever I put him in, which is fun because everyone's like, 'He's so stylish,' and I'm like, 'That's because I can make him look cute!'" says Faulkner. "But my daughter is quite opinionated. She'll get very attached to an item, so she always looks kind of like a disaster because she's worn the same top for three days!"



He persuaded her to move to Montreal, despite her fearing the city's notoriously harsh winters. "I kind of thought I would convince him to come back to B.C. after a year, but then I realized it was a good place to be. I found a studio really quickly and met friends there. The creative community was super welcoming."

Two years later, Faulkner gave birth to Zaven. Gintowt took parental leave, so she could keep working on her designs. Around the same time, he joined the company, taking on the financial side of things. "He was like, 'Hey, if you really want to make money, you need to make 50 of these dresses, not make them to order.' He really turned it into a business and gave me the confidence to grow it into what it is."

What it is is one of Canada's most buzz-making brands, having appeared in *Harper's Bazaar*, *Marie Claire*, *Nylon* and *The Cut*. In 2019, Sophie Grégoire Trudeau celebrated husband Justin's P.M. win in a marigold Eliza Faulkner creation, complete with puff sleeves and an A-line skirt—two of the designer's hallmarks.

"My style has always been really frilly and foofy, while incorporating a lot of natural fibres," says Faulkner. "When I got started, sustainable fashion was very beige and grey—it wasn't interesting or exciting. I wanted to show a more beautiful, aesthetic way of making sustainable clothing." She utilizes a lot of deadstock fabric and keeps her supply chain as short as possible to minimize her carbon footprint. And though big frothy dresses are indeed her signature, there is an ease to her pieces that makes them decidedly unfussy. These are clothes you can move around in, dance in, even take your kids to the park in.

"I love practical things," she explains. "I've always been into streetwear, like jeans and hoodies, because I was raised in an athletic town. I hated sports, but I grew up around them and had to participate to some degree. So there's this kind of sporty undertone to what I do." Picture rugby shirts with jaunty Peter Pan collars and denim jackets with ruffled pockets.

During the pandemic, Faulkner presented her own take on the period's uniform, selling flared leggings and bow-adorned sweatshirts. She and Gintowt, like most business-owners, braced for impact, dreading

what a global crisis might do to their bottom line. They also welcomed their daughter in 2020, further adding to the tumult of the time. But to their surprise, COVID actually saw their web sales spiking, as more and more people engaged in online shopping.

"It was great but hard at the same time, with a newborn and a pandemic and the business growing, but Arin really took it on," says Faulkner. "I look back and I'm like, 'I don't know how we did that,' but I guess when you're in it, you just power through."

Power through they did, and now, on what marks the 10th anniversary of Eliza Faulkner the brand, the family can finally catch their breath a bit and toast their accomplishments. To mark the occasion, Faulkner is releasing a collection of festive frocks—billowing taffeta and ribbons galore—right in time for the holiday season.

"I call them my stream of consciousness dresses because I kind of make them as I go," she says. "I always give myself time during the design process to just play, because there's a lot of, 'We have to make tops and bottoms and whatnot,' so there's always a few pieces where I'm like, 'I'm just doing whatever I want.'"

Like many people, she looks forward to dressing up this year after two consecutive Christmases spent in lockdown. "I think I'll pull out the stops and go for it," she says. The kids can't wait to put the tree up and have already begun musing about what Santa might slip under it: something Star Wars or Lego for Zaven and likely the same for Tallulah. "She always wants what her brother has," says Faulkner.

As for her own wish list, that remains to be determined. "I always wanted this," she says. "But there's something about 10 years that makes you think, 'I got to this point, now what's next? Where do I want it to go?'" Whatever the answer, odds are it'll be bold and whimsical and dripping in cool, like all things Eliza Faulkner.

When I got started, sustainable fashion was very beige and grey—it wasn't interesting or exciting. I wanted to show a more beautiful, aesthetic way of making sustainable clothing.

## Eliza's gift picks



"Sam from Heirloom Hats makes the most beautiful hats, and I'm a huge fan. Her Les Madeleines berets are like works of art you could wear—but also hang on your wall, too!"

HEIRLOOM HATS LES MADELEINES BERET, \$420, HEIRLOOMHATS.COM



"Gender-neutral kids clothing tends to be a sea of beige, but everything in this line is cheerful and bold. I'd like to get these culottes for my son, which my daughter can wear after him."

PROMISE ME EVERYTHING CULOTTES, \$57, PROMISE-ME-EVERYTHING.COM



"The Wendy series is a genius satire of the art world. If you know anyone studying art or working in that field, it's a must-have. I've been given it a few times and read it when I need a chuckle."

WENDY BY WALTER SCOTT, \$25, DRAWNANDQUARTERLY.COM



"Now that the pandemic is hopefully over, we're trying to invite people over more and entertain. It's so nice to have other families and kids over to play. It's good for us, and it's good for the kids."



TOP: ON ZAVEN, PROMISE ME EVERYTHING SWEATSHIRT, \$53, SIMONS.CA; ZARA PANTS, \$30, ZARA.CA; ON TALLULAH, BILLIE LE KID PJ PANTS, \$70, BILLIELEKID.COM; ON ELIZA, ELIZA FAULKNER TOP, \$350, TURTLENECK, \$150, ELIZAFALKNER.COM; MAGUIRE SHOES, \$195, MAGUIRESHOES.COM; ON ARIN, CA VA DE SOI SWEATER, \$220, GAVADESOI.COM; KOTN PANTS, \$128, KOTN.COM

MIDDLE: ON ELIZA, ELIZA FAULKNER TOP, \$195, \$195; SKIRT, \$220, ELIZAFALKNER.COM; ON ARIN, UNIQLO SWEATER, \$50, UNIQLO.COM; KOTN PANTS, \$128, KOTN.COM

ELIZA FAULKNER SHIRT, \$320, DRESS, \$195, ELIZAFALKNER.COM; MAGUIRE SHOES, \$195, MAGUIRESHOES.COM





VERONICA BEARD BLAZER, \$780, VERONICABEARD.COM

**STYLING TIPS**  
When putting together a look using classic pieces like a blazer, turtleneck and denim, add a statement boot to infuse the outfit with colour, pattern or texture.

The season's blazer of the moment is double-breasted for men and women. Look to brands like Banana Republic, Everlane and Reformation to get the look.

Protect your makeup and your cream cashmere by placing a silk scarf over your head as you slip on your turtleneck.



HUDSON NORTH TURTLENECK, \$150, THEBAY.COM



CLUB MONACO JEANS, \$160, CLUBMONACO.CA



JEFFREY CAMPBELL BOOTS, \$326, REVOLVE.COM



VALENTINO ROSSO VALENTINO LIPSTICK IN AMETHYST ADVENTURER, \$52, VALENTINO-BEAUTY.CA



TORY BURCH EARRINGS, \$98, TORYBURCH.COM



ETRO

expert advice



**VELVET VIBES**

"Look as luxurious as you feel in deep, soft velvet this season," says Julianne Costigan, *The Kit*'s stylist-at-large. "Dress it up or down, for work or an event." To take the look to the next level, Costigan suggests adding more luxe details, like a cashmere top and two-tone pointed booties. However you style it, Costigan says, "Definitely add this gorgeous fabric to your wardrobe."



MARC JACOBS BAG, \$595, MARCJACOBS.COM



SIMONS GLOVES, \$120, SIMONS.CA

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES (RUNWAY)

# Soft splendour

This season, wrap yourself in sumptuous, gleaming velvet, the most holiday-worthy fabric of all



## Just casual

This entertaining season, the most aspirational dinner party is the one that doesn't try hard at all. Liz Guber explains

For me, the best moments of a dinner party happen minutes before the first guests arrive. In this quiet time, I can bask in what I've created: a crudité platter, still untouched, atop a gleaming white kitchen island. Brigitte Bardot cooing from a speaker, a fresh candle flickering nearby. If I've opted for a tablecloth, it's unironed linen, topped with a cheap and cheerful grocery-store bouquet.

Welcome to my aspirational casual dinner party, where the glassware doesn't match, the food is a mix of homemade and store-bought and the vibe is more ripped jeans than designer dresses.

Thanks to demographic shifts, shrinking homes (formal dining room, we hardly knew you) and the general casual-ification of everything from our closets to our decor, the meticulously planned, three-course dinner party hosted by the likes of Betty Draper is a bygone fantasy.

Still, entertaining hasn't lost its lustre. Anyone who sets out to throw a dinner party wants to get closer to their friends, invite their favourite people into their space and conjure an atmosphere for memory-making. So that, when it's over, we can throw a kitchen towel over our shoulder like a wizened bartender at the end of their shift, and say, "That was a good night."

But a classic dinner party is a lot of work. "It's a three-day affair—the cleaning, shopping, the food pairing," says Mika Bareket, the owner of the charming cookbook shop Good Egg, in Kensington Market. "It feels very performative. So I wonder, why do I do this to myself?"

There's plenty of inspiration to be found if you want to host a fantastic dinner party without sacrificing three days of your life and still have your friends think you're the next Molly Baz. Over on TikTok, Brooklynite foodie Fresh Erica has coined the term "micro-dinner party," which is really just a fancied-up term for having a friend or two over for a meal. Her ethos is all about elevating the mundane and her spreads are unfussy yet special: champagne and snacks; tinned fish platters; takeout pizza bookended by homemade salad and dessert.

The thrown-together, effortless vibe of the new dinner party is an offshoot of how we cook now: one-pot meals, one-tray sheet-pan bakes, even the viral butter board trend, where soft butter is spread over a wooden cutting board, topped with garnishes like chili flakes, fresh herbs or edible flowers and served with a sliced baguette. It's about tossing things in, saving time (and dishes) and making the most of what you've got. It's also reflected in the renewed demand for vintage, eclectic homeware: At Good Egg, Bareket added a thrift section of second-hand bits and bobs for the kitchen, which frequently sells out.

The high priestess of the elevated-casual soirée is Alison Roman, whose bestselling 2019 cookbook, *Nothing Fancy*, capitalized on our collective desire to break free from rigid entertaining notions. "She's certainly not the first, but her voice is so familiar, and it's a lot like many people's inner voices; she verbalizes a lot of our anxieties," says Bareket. "She's saying things that people have maybe been afraid to say out loud." Roman is like our outspoken, forgiving friend, telling us it's okay that we pushed two small tables together or own only chipped serving platters.

Bareket also name-checks Jamie Oliver's very first cooking show, *The Naked Chef*, as casual-aspirational inspo. "He was living in a tiny attic apartment, and he would miraculously invite all these people; his cooking space was the size of a cutting board," she says. "Yet he would create these cozy meals, and they would all look like they were having so much fun."

More sources of inspiration include *For the Table* by food writer Anna Stockwell, a recently released book that is billed as "a toast to the art of the dinner party" and puts focus on single, epic platters that encourage guests to help themselves. *A Table for Friends: The Art of Cooking for Two or Twenty* by cooking author Skye McAlpine is full of strategies for successful hosting, from how to juggle oven and cooktop space, what to prep ahead and how to set a gorgeous tablescape.

Yes—strategies, a concept that seems like an uninvited guest to the casual dinner party. But the successful fete that looks and feels thrown together still requires some planning. Fresh Erica creates meticulous excel spreadsheets for bigger parties like Friendsgiving. Bareket says she's a "copious note-taker," and shares that her friends who throw dinner parties professionally actually sketch little pictures of the food they plan on serving, down to the garnishes.

And that attention to detail extends beyond the food to the experience. "My top strategy is having something to say," says Bareket. "Maybe it's pathological, but I try to think about engaging topics for conversation before a sit-down over a meal: nifty and obscure anecdotes, interesting movies and books, recent recipe successes or failures." Because at the end of the night, it's the conversations and genuine connections that will be remembered long after the paté has been devoured.

In this way, nailing the perfect unfussy dinner party is its own kind of flex. It's like having so-called "effortless style"—the meticulous thought and care is cleverly hidden beneath a casual air.

The best dinner party I probably ever held was for just one other person, in the depths of a frigid pandemic winter. I served fresh pasta (purchased) with a collapsed tomato sauce (homemade). We finished the evening by eating pricey pistachio gelato straight out of the tub. Whether dressed up or down, a successful dinner party is the one that feels the most true to you.



**THE PLAYBOOK** Food writer Anna Stockwell provides the ultimate guide to the casual-aspirational dinner party with her new book, *For the Table* (Abrams). Each menu is based around two generously sized platters designed to be passed around the table, so guests can help themselves to such delicacies as "very wintery" braised beef and polenta.

# BEAUTY GIFTS TO CHERISH

Pro-approved picks guaranteed to make them smile

## THE ONE TEENS WILL LOVE:

"My tip for shopping for young beauty enthusiasts is to consider gifting them core products to help them establish their beauty routine," says Qadrian. "This brush set is a perfect option because it has all of the tools to help them master a flawless complexion, whether they're looking for a non-makeup makeup look or full-on glam."

QUO BEAUTY BACK TO BASICS BRUSH SET, \$45, SHOPPERSDRUGMART.CA



## THE SKIN SAVIOUR:

"Facial sprays are at the top of my beauty wishlist this year," she says. "They keep skin supple and hydrated, especially during the winter months." Mario Badescu's mini mist set is perfect for what she calls "on-the-go skin maintenance."

MARIO BADESCU MINI FACIAL MIST COLLECTION, \$15, SHOPPERSDRUGMART.CA

## THE SECRET SANTA WINNER:



"When looking for the perfect secret Santa gift, you can't go wrong with something fun, colourful and only \$20," says Qadrian, who loves this festive set of 8 ultra-giftable glosses, exclusively available at Shoppers Drug Mart.

QUO BEAUTY DELUXE LIP GLOSS SET, \$20, SHOPPERSDRUGMART.CA

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"A few of the hottest gifts this holiday season embrace luxury and elegance, making fragrance a perfect gifting option," says Qadrian. It doesn't get much more luxe than this gift set, containing two versions of Prada's iconic Candy fragrance, a sophisticated, grown-up take on a gourmand scent.

PRADA CANDY DUO, \$30, SHOPPERSDRUGMART.CA



FARISHTA QADRIAN



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BENEFIT JOLLY BROW BUNCH BROW KIT, \$48, SHOPPERSDRUGMART.CA



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If you're ready to party this year—and who isn't?—Qadrian is with you all the way. "My go-to beauty look for the festive season is all about glitz and glamour," she says. As for how she's achieving that? "I love the Revolution Forever Flawless Palette in Affinity with its 17 buttery matte shimmers and marbled pressed glitter."

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## THE BEST SET:

"Gift sets make perfect presents because they have that element of discovery," says Qadrian. One of her favourite sets is the Florence by Mills Mellow Out Gift Set, which is packed with goodies to create the ultimate at-home-spa experience.

FLORENCE BY MILLS MELLOW OUT GIFT SET, \$32, SHOPPERSDRUGMART.CA

## The new dinner party essentials

Earthy textures, artful shapes and hits of colour feel festive and cozy but never formal



Proper cloth napkins are an elegant touch for any tablescape. Mismatched linen ones with vibrant squiggled edging from eclectic tableware brand Misette keep things feeling fun and unserious.

MISETTE NAPKINS, \$218 (SET OF 4), MISETTE.TABLE.COM



With its neutral palette and organic shape, this speckled serving bowl (great for salads, sliced baguettes or just as a big bowl of chips) will easily mix in with the plates and platters you've already got, so there's no need to get a full set.

LADELLE BOWL, \$35, SIMONS.CA



Not into kitschy holiday decor? A few trendy, sculptural candles of varying heights scattered along your table runner will do. Watching them change shape and dramatically collapse as they melt is part of the fun.

WEST ELM CANDLE, \$38, WESTELM.CA



Scatter these petite handmade ceramic trays and bowls in mouthwatering ice-cream hues across your dining table as lovely vessels for fresh herbs, chili flakes or crushed nuts to complement and enhance your main.

EGG BACK HOME MINI TRAYS, \$18, BOWLS, \$14, GOODEGG.CA



Sure, you can serve ice cream in this honey yet impressive raised stone-ware bowl, which is its intended purpose, but you can also get creative. Think: spiced popcorn, fancy pickles or piled-high dips.

LIVOM ICE CREAM BOWL, \$18, LIVOM.CA



# N°5



N°5  
**CHANEL**  
PARIS  
PARFUM



# DECADENT DELIGHTS

Ring in the celebrations with a sparkling assortment of special gifts from Yorkville Village, Toronto's luxury shopping destination. Find the perfect picks in fashion, home and beauty, for all your loved ones and make this holiday season the best one yet.



### PARTY PEOPLE

Host an unforgettable soirée with elegant homeware and decor that'll leave guests more than impressed.

MARBLE PLACEMAT, \$249.99, FIREPLACE MATCHES, \$109.95, **W&P CRAFT** COCKTAIL SYRUP, \$39.95, **VISKI MERIDIAN** COUPE GLASSES, \$89.95, **TRUDON** CANDLE NOEL GABRIEL, \$209.95, [TEATROVERDE.COM](http://TEATROVERDE.COM)



### GLAM LIST

Stand out this season in a vibrant pop of colour and sleek accessories that can pull any outfit together in a cinch.

**LA BARBIER** BLACK SNAKE BELT, \$140, **MAISON BOINET** HAVANA BELT, \$140, **VAVIN** JACKET, \$550, [JUDITHANDCHARLES.COM](http://JUDITHANDCHARLES.COM)



### GLITTER AND GLITZ

Make a grand entrance and turn heads with a perfect pair of shimmering accessories that'll keep the party going all night long.

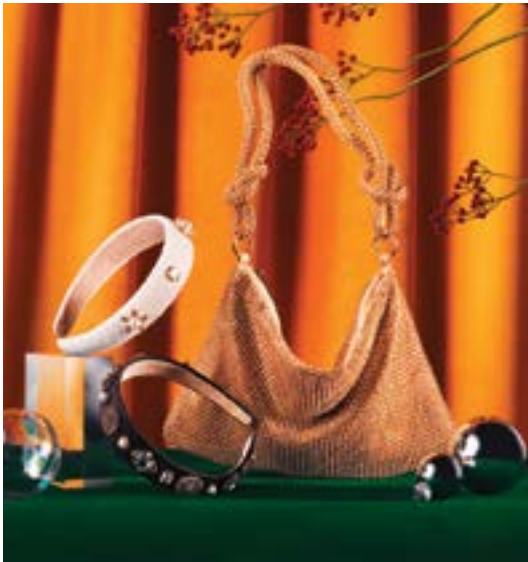
**CULT GAIA** NIKA TOP HANDLE, \$695, **MIU MIU** CRYSTAL HEEL, \$1,790, [TNTFASHION.CA](http://TNTFASHION.CA)



### WARM UP

Keep the chill out with cold weather must-haves that are as comfortable as they are cute.

**KERRI ROSENTHAL** LOVE CASHMERE BEANIE, \$268, **MOMENT BY MOMENT** BLANKET SCARF, \$60, [ANDREWSCO.COM](http://ANDREWSCO.COM)



### STYLE STAR

Turn up the wow factor with bejewelled accessories that twinkle under every light for all eyes on you.

TWEED HEADBAND, \$85, LELY HEADBAND, \$240, BAG, \$105, [LUXEHAIRACCESSORIES.MOBI](http://LUXEHAIRACCESSORIES.MOBI)



### JOYFUL JUMPERS

Bring the cheer with charming and versatile holiday staples that can be dressed up or down—your call.

**MASKA MODE** IMPERIAL SWEATER WHITE, \$195, VICOLO SWEATER PINK, \$325, SPACIA MODA SHOES, \$398, [MASKAMODE.COM](http://MASKAMODE.COM)



### COZY CLASSICS

Make holiday dressing effortless with curated chic wardrobe essentials that'll last well into the new year.

**COP COPINE** ASCREED BUTTON DOWN, \$363, BOLZED SWEATER VEST, \$363, [COPCOPINECANADA.COM](http://COPCOPINECANADA.COM)



### ART ATTACK

Prepare to be charmed by this quirky contemporary sculpture that's guaranteed to become the pièce de résistance in any room.

**BRENDAN MURPHY** ASTRONAUT BOONJI SPACEMAN, USD \$21,500, [DEBELLEFEUILLE.COM](http://DEBELLEFEUILLE.COM)



### SMART AND SAVVY

Pamper the man in your life with stylish and sophisticated closet pieces that he'll reach for again and again.

**STILE LATINO** HAND TAILORED SPORTS JACKET, \$5,850, **JACOB COHEN** SLIM-FIT BARD PANTS WITH POCKET SQUARE, \$675, **STILE LATINO** TURTLENECK, \$145, **STILE LATINO** SCARF, \$1,395, [VIACAVOUR.CA](http://VIACAVOUR.CA)



### READY, SET, GLOW

Set the right mood with extraordinary fragrances that'll instantly turn the atmosphere into a captivating olfactory experience.

**CDI MAISON** BEIGE GEOMETRIC CANDLE, \$34 EACH, **CDI MAISON** SET OF 2 ASSORTED, \$74.99, [BOISETCUIR.COM](http://BOISETCUIR.COM)



### ADORN YOU

Level up your accessories game for the glitziest season of all with antique-style silver jewellery and sparkling gems that steal the show.

**SARAH PACINI** NECKLACE, \$130 EACH, EARRINGS, \$99, [CA.SARAHPACINI.COM](http://CA.SARAHPACINI.COM)



### STEP UP

Snow, slush and ice are no match for boots that match a refined silhouette with winter-resistant design.

**LA CANADIENNE HOMME** LEWIS BRUN SUEDE, \$475, **SOREL** MAC HILL MID LT IN TAN, \$200, [JEANPAULFORTIN.COM](http://JEANPAULFORTIN.COM)





VERONICA BEARD BLAZER, \$780, VERONICABEARD.COM

**STYLING TIPS**  
When putting together a look using classic pieces like a blazer, turtleneck and denim, add a statement boot to infuse the outfit with colour, pattern or texture.

The season's blazer of the moment is double-breasted for men and women. Look to brands like Banana Republic, Everlane and Reformation to get the look.

Protect your makeup and your cream cashmere by placing a silk scarf over your head as you slip on your turtleneck.



HUDSON NORTH TURTLENECK, \$150, THEBAY.COM



CLUB MONACO JEANS, \$160, CLUBMONACO.CA



JEFFREY CAMPBELL BOOTS, \$326, REVOLVE.COM



VALENTINO ROSSO VALENTINO LIPSTICK IN AMETHYST ADVENTURER, \$52, VALENTINO-BEAUTY.CA



MARC JACOBS BAG, \$595, MARCJACOBS.COM



SIMONS GLOVES, \$120, SIMONS.CA

# Soft splendour

This season, wrap yourself in sumptuous, gleaming velvet, the most holiday-worthy fabric of all



TORY BURCH EARRINGS, \$98, TORYBURCH.COM

expert advice



## VELVET VIBES

"Look as luxurious as you feel in deep, soft velvet this season," says Julianne Costigan, *The Kit's* stylist-at-large. "Dress it up or down, for work or an event." To take the look to the next level, Costigan suggests adding more luxe details, like a cashmere top and two-tone pointed booties. However you style it, Costigan says, "Definitely add this gorgeous fabric to your wardrobe."

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES (RUNWAY)

# BEAUTY GIFTS TO CHERISH

Pro-approved picks guaranteed to make them smile

Got a beauty lover on your holiday list this year? You're spoiled for choice, especially if you're doing your present-picking at Pharmaprix. (The only thing sweeter than knocking off your whole list while also picking up an ingredient for dinner and a prescription? Paying for some—or all—of it with those PC Optimum points.)

If you're not sure where to start, or you're just looking for some expert guidance, fear not: here, Farishta Qadrian, one of the brand's 12 handpicked Shoppers Beauty Pros, shares the insider intel on the beauty gifts you should be adding to your basket. And if they're actually gifts for yourself? We won't tell.



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QUO BEAUTY BACK TO BASICS BRUSH SET, \$45, PHARMAPRIX.CA



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## Time *to play* Dress-Up

This is it: the year we finally get to go all out for the holidays again. For Montreal designer Eliza Faulkner, that means a twinkling tree, time with the family and a procession of fun, fabulous outfits. Who's ready for a party?

*by Katherine Lalancette*

*Photography by Marie H Rainville*





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