

## Picturebook INTERIORS

### Is it an age thing?

This year seems to have flown by. I am sure I say that every year but in particular this year has been different.

For all of us it has been challenging and in the depths of winter I wondered if summer would ever arrive and now (fingers crossed) it's almost here.

I have recently returned from a dream holiday in England and Europe. I promised myself a birthday treat in Italy some years ago and with the help and support of several special people that dream came true and I spent my birthday as planned in Florence. I will be posting on the blog section of my website a little taste of what I saw, what I loved the most and a few funny stories.

Now Christmas is almost upon us. It's a wonderful time of year for those who love interior design. A magical transformation comes over the home. In the living rooms visitors are greeted with a profusion of green foliage, either beautiful fresh pine, trailing ivy intermingled with bright red berries, holly and Christmas lilies. These are draped over doorways along mantelpieces and on dining room tables. The mood is cheerful and there is excitement in the air. In countries like ours where Christmas marks the beginning of summer, local flowering plants have taken on the significance of the evergreens. Here in New Zealand, the red flowering pohutukawa tree has been adopted into that roll. The Maoris have a saying that if the pohutukawa flowers before Christmas, it will be a long hot summer; if it does not then be prepared for a sultry, wet Christmas season. I do hope they flower early this year after our particularly harsh winter.

The modern celebration of Christmas wouldn't be complete without a Christmas tree. Whether it be a rogue pine grown from a seed blown by the wind, a carefully trimmed and manicured tree grown especially for the occasion or an artificial one which gets stored year after year up in the rafters and bought down in a dusty box, the end result is the same. Decorating the tree is the most exciting part of the build up to Christmas.

I have to confess I put up three trees at our home. A specifically colour coordinated tree always sits majestically in our front entry to give visitors a taste of what lies around the corner. An evergreen tree is decorated with beautiful decorations that have been collected for many years. These include extra special decorations made by my children, ones collected from around the world which remind us of holidays in exotic countries, and ones which have been passed down from previous generations. This tree is the one where the presents are placed and Santa's supper is set on Christmas Eve. My third tree is smaller and has a special place in the family room. It holds a collection of miniature decorations and paper bows. I love Christmas with a passion. For me it is a time of celebration, a time of reflection, a time of relaxation and most of all, a time when family and friends gather together.

**Tip of the month:** At Christmas time, remember that for once "less is definitely not more!!"

My plan for the New Year is to run classes on different aspects of interior design. I will be advertising these early in the New Year, so watch this space!!

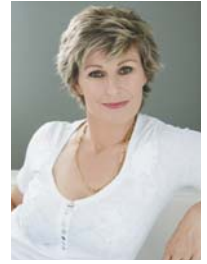
To you all, have a safe and a very Merry Christmas.

*Helen Shaw*

P.S. email me with any queries or comments you have. ■

## Xmas Survival Plan

Ginny McArthur



Keeping well and feeling good between now and February can be a mission for even the most saintly of us health and fitness fanatics!

So how do we survive? We are supposed to join in all the parties and lunches and drinks. Show support to friends, family, work mates, suppliers and customers by eating, drinking and being merry. Then we have to cope with Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Then we expect to still feel and look good on holiday at the beach where we drink wine and eat nibbles every evening. We eat picnics with the kids and takeaways for everyone at the bach and so it goes on and with it comes between 3-5 kg for the average Kiwi, which often doesn't get lost but stays with us until being added to the following year.

### Food

Stay organized and plan ahead. When you can, take a plate of something light and healthy like veggie sticks with Hummus or yoghurt based dip.

Potato chips are 34% fat and that includes the 'healthy options' choose pita crisps at 16% or Bagel chips at 10%. Make dips by blending salmon or beans with lite cottage cheese or the Philadelphia extra lite cream cheese or dilute higher fat dips with plain, low fat yoghurt. If you do a lot of chips and dip over the silly season this could save you a kilo or two!

Use huge platters of strawberries and fresh summer fruits with Greek yoghurt instead of cream.

Make the most of seasonal salad and veggies when you entertain or eat at home. Use the BBQ for chicken, fish and lean meat meals and combine with fresh veggies. Be adventurous and try BBQing asparagus, courgettes, eggplant, mushrooms, onions and garlic with a light spray or no oil.

By all means have a lighter lunch if you are going out for dinner but never arrive hungry.

Stand well away from the nibbles. Exercise portion control - a small taste of something yummy is better than trying to be 'good' but failing and then beating yourself up before demolishing two huge helpings.

### Alcohol

Offset each glass of alcohol with one of water. Drink spritzers- white wine topped up with soda water. Use low calorie mixers with spirits -lemonade, tonic water and coke often contain more calories than the spirit. Remember the calories in ½ bottle of wine are equal to a steak and cheese pie!

### Exercise

Just because you are on holiday doesn't mean you have to sit on your bum all day. Make a pact with yourself to exercise most days of the week. An early morning walk on the beach or in the park is good for the mind, body and soul.

### Emotional wellbeing

Speaking of the soul - take some time out just for you. Breathe deeply, acknowledge the beauty of our country and fellow Kiwis and live each day with vitality and passion.

Our New Year Challenge and a new Post Christmas Bootcamp start beginning of February. ■

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