

INSIDE SECRET

INSIDE A FORMER INDUSTRIAL WAREHOUSE ON THE EDGE OF ROCK BAY IS ONE OF THE CITY'S MOST REMARKABLE INNER SANCTUMS OF ECLECTICISM, WHERE HIGH-END CONTEMPORARY MEETS ARTFUL NOSTALGIA. WELCOME TO VICTORIA'S ULTRA-CREATIVE SIDE.

By Gillie Easdon // Photos by Joshua Lawrence



A 14-foot-long island in a Monolith concrete composite with cupboards in a dark grey bamboo veneer is the centrepiece of this great room. In the background is a unique circular Heat & Glo Solaris fireplace. Its LED lighting and mirrored glass create the illusion of flames moving into infinity, viewable from both sides of the fireplace.



Stephen bought these decorative carved columns of solid rubber wood from Capital Iron years ago. They contrast with the graphic starkness of the stairway, with its white railing and black carpet, designed by Charlotte to suggest "a column of light."

At first glance, the building at 455 Gorge Road East is a nondescript semi-industrial warehouse surrounded by a handful of parking spots and flanked by fast-food outlets and a corner store. There is seemingly nothing unique about it. But then there was nothing remarkable about the rabbit hole until Alice fell down it, and there was nothing unique about that train station until Harry Potter came along.



But with this particular building, there were early hints something interesting was afoot inside.

Had you glanced at the building after new owners purchased it in 2015, you may have spotted Monty, the gargoyle made of



found objects and papier-mâché, on his commanding rooftop perch. And, if your timing was right, you might have seen a shiny vintage Silver Cloud Rolls Royce

emerging from the garage. And you might have wondered about the wrought-iron gates framing a sign that simply said: Studio 455.

In fact, this formerly run-down building on the edge of Victoria's Rock Bay district hides one of Victoria's most striking, inspiring renovations. Not only is it one of the city's hippest places to hold everything from cocktail parties to live-music shows, it's a vintage-car garage, art studio and the home of two people who made a conscious decision to live creatively. While the building is in an area zoned heavy industrial, the new owners were able to also make it work as a home because their living space is officially considered a caretaker suite.

QUEST FOR THE UNUSUAL

This four-storey-plus masterpiece is the creation of artist and architectural designer Charlotte Hale and retired military and commercial pilot Stephen Hale.

The couple admits they spent a good deal of time exploring the city in search of a home that could satisfy Stephen's need for a space for his vintage cars and Charlotte's need for studio space for her design practice as well as for her paintings and sculptures. As if that wasn't enough, Charlotte also wanted to create an event space for vibrant events, from discos to glam cocktail parties and speak-easy nights.

"I wanted to shake things up, bring something new and provide a venue for

creative expression," she says.

They looked at everything from houses to commercial buildings to undeveloped properties, but nothing seemed right until, in 2015, they set foot in the building on Gorge Road East.

"It all made sense," says Charlotte. "It was familiar, like a vision."

But it was not without challenges.

"You would have needed X-ray vision [to see its potential], there was so much to remove from the building," Stephen laughs. In fact, it took 77 Ford Ranger loads to the dump to clear out the building, which, in its most recent incarnation, held an auto-rack sales and installation company. Before that, it was home to a gambling circuit and an illegal satellite dish.

There was a tremendous amount of work to do, including knocking down walls, building floors and removing scoop after scoop of raccoon feces.

"But it was the most exciting space," says Charlotte, and so the couple jumped right in, living on their boat for six months while they worked on the space every single day. Charlotte drew up floor plans and designs and the couple brought in VDA Architecture, the same firm that had designed the building more than two decades before.

The reno was all consuming. The project

Opposite page:

Colour and eclecticism rule in this living space dominated by R.Ward's oil painting *Portofino* and a carved Chinese daybed. Above a vintage grey leather La-Z-Boy sofa is a painting by Canadian artist Susan Valyi. The Mid-Century Modern recliner in the corner is also vintage La-Z-Boy (Charlotte was a designer for the company.)

This page: Charlotte wanted a semi-industrial look for the kitchen, from the janitorial faucet to the stainless-steel appliances and skirtless hood fan. The floor is eco-friendly Marmoleum in four colours, with the stripes echoing the striping of the plexiglass backsplash.



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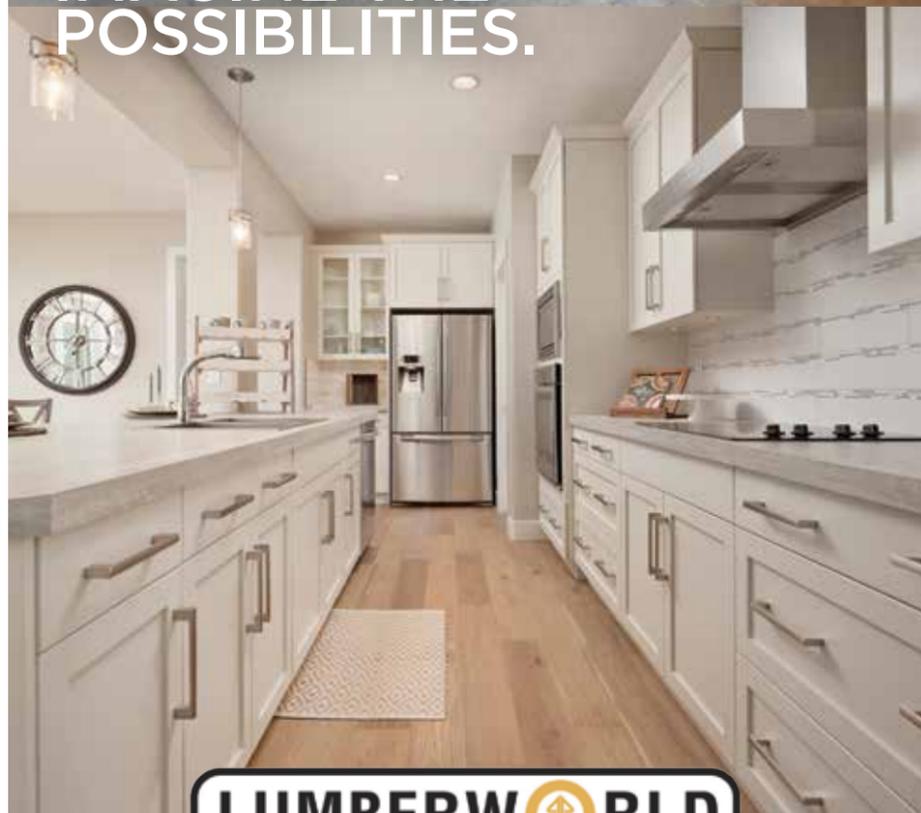
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became their baby. So committed were they to this space that they also held their wedding amidst the drywall, with warning tape everywhere.

“It was like a New York City warehouse, but more dangerous,” Charlotte reflects.

STYLISHLY SURREAL

From the moment you enter the building, you are transported into the superlative. The front entrance is “all about tall and big,” says Charlotte. Stark white and stretching way up, the entry stairwell draws the eyes skyward, past Charlotte’s sculpture of a winged figure, to the light of the main living space. Guests may choose to climb the stairs or take the elevator Charlotte and Stephen installed for friends, for their future aging selves, and, of course, for carrying up groceries.

At 3,000 square feet, the area that makes up most of the couple’s private living space is an entrancing mixture of salvaged nostalgia and high-end contemporary. In the open-space kitchen and dining area, there’s a massive island with a skirtless hood “so we don’t block the view,” over the gas stove and stools for the inevitable kitchen parties. Thick stripes of copper, marigold and black marmoleum flooring (made from linseed and wood chips) unfurl along the floor and the colours carry on up the walls to draw and direct the eye.

Beside the island, and separating the dining area from a living room, is a two-way Heat & Glo Solaris fireplace that gives the impression of depth through its mesmerizing use of LED lighting and mirrors. There are only a few of these in existence Canada-wide.

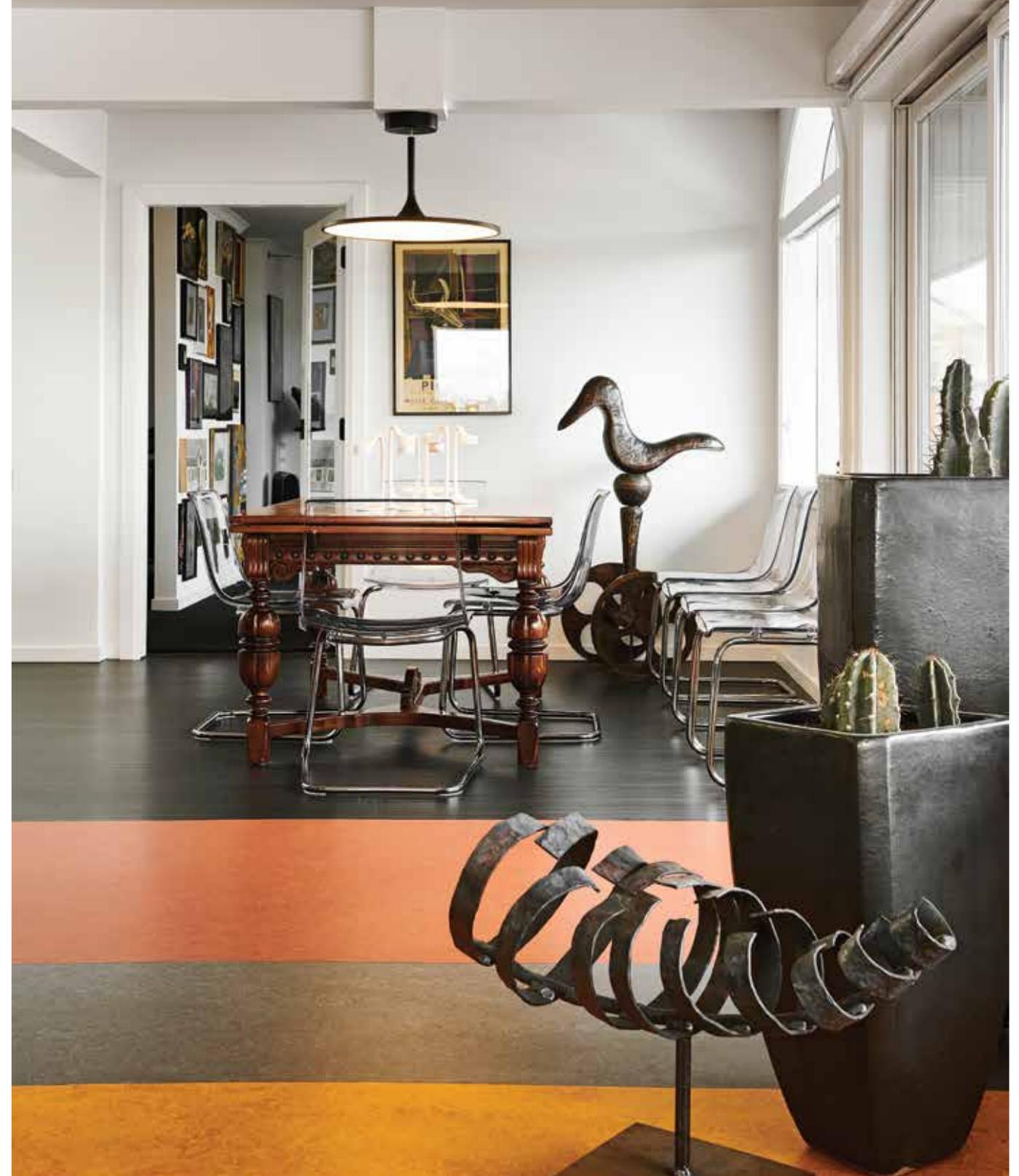
On the other side of the island, a pair of large hand-carved wood Corinthian pillars from Thailand frame a rusted-out boiler that was wrestled off a beach on Thetis Island and repurposed as a table accessorized by a skull and an orchid. Charlotte says this table arrangement is “probably the most accurate depiction” of the meshing of both her and Stephen’s sensibilities.

“Castle Hale” is a treasure trove of paintings, sculptures, posters, books and curios. It’s the eclectic expression of the dynamic couple who created it, and it’s full of things that shouldn’t go together but somehow do: an antique table pairs with Plexiglas chairs, and a circular LED modern art piece.

And everything has been placed exactly where it should be. There is nothing haphazard, and nothing contrary to the couple’s nature.

When Charlotte and Stephen took possession, there was very little light in the space and they had to put in a number of large windows, which revealed an astonishing and rare vista of the Olympics and of Victoria’s industrial district.

A vintage mirror-grained walnut dining table is paired with plexiglass IKEA chairs to add seating without increasing visual clutter. In the foreground is Charlotte’s hand-forged and welded “Horn of Plenty” sculpture. In the corner is a bronze Peter MacElwan sculpture called “Roamin Duck.”



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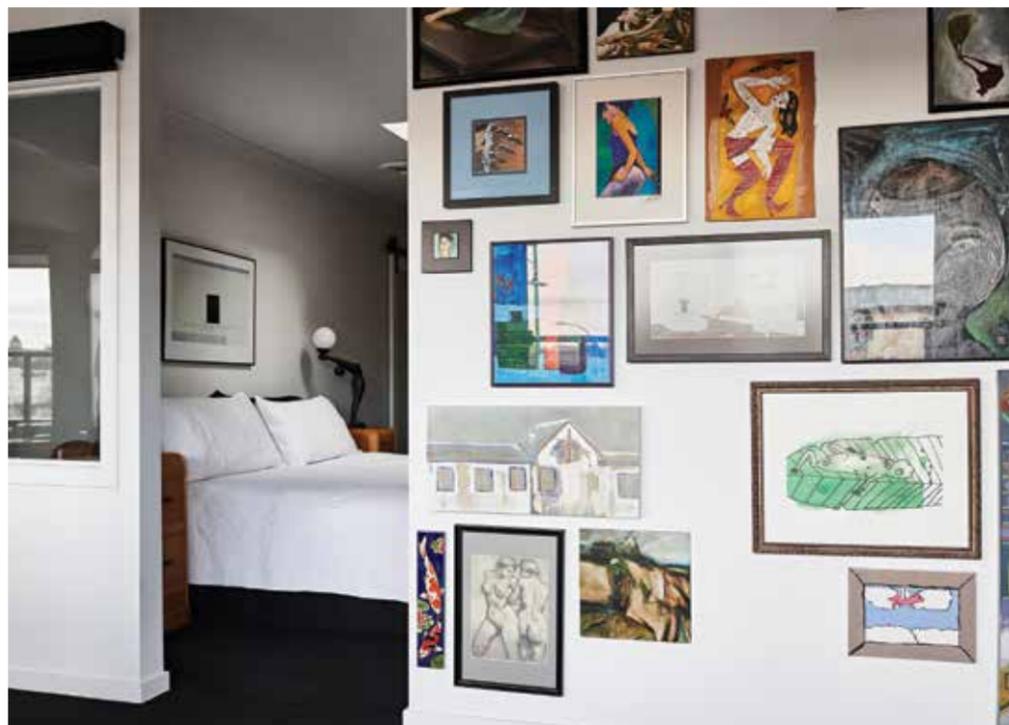
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Above: This Art Deco bathroom, inspired by its chinoiserie screen, features a vintage vanity-turned-washstand with a vessel sink and black fixtures. A free-standing tub with black fixtures is flanked by periwinkle porcelain tiles and a Beardsley Art Deco light fixture (Chicago, circa 1930). Colourful floor tiles from Italy create a faux bath mat.

Below and right: An eclectic art wall leads to the master bedroom with its original Art Deco lamps that were broken into hundreds of pieces during shipping and had to be painstakingly reassembled by Charlotte and Stephen.



THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES

There is so much to talk about in this home, we could fill a book, but suffice to say, there are notable highlights. The home's main bathroom, for instance, embraces the Art Deco era, from the luxurious refurbished buffet-turned-sink to the 1930s-era chandelier from Chicago that sparkles above the elegant free-standing curved black bathtub to the dressing table with its Hollywood-style vanity lights. ("Proper lighting!" Charlotte swoons.)

Inlaid in the floor are exquisite pastoral tiles from Rome. Radiant heating extends into the shower with its two black showerheads that are somehow reminiscent of jet engines. Undercutting the taste and grandeur of the room is the Korean toilet in the water closet. It plays convivial music and offers different water options by way of a remote control for those nether regions.

On the second floor is a cinema whose entrance is guarded by a wood and resin sarcophagus of Ankhnesenamun, the great royal queen of King Tutankhamun, and a Herman Miller Egyptian cat, circa 1956. In this deep red, womblike theatre you'll find old movie posters, like the one from *Tank Girl*, a popcorn maker, a subwoofer and old movie theatre seats along with modern media-room sofas that are cushy and heated. The carpet is seconds from a casino in the U.S. Mannequins populate the cinema, but they are also used as set pieces during event rentals.

"I love them," Charlotte confides. "They are my dolls."

UPSTAIRS-DOWNSTAIRS

Climb up another level from the main three-bedroom living quarters and you'll discover a rooftop patio with a rare view of the Gorge-Douglas area, its vistas extending all the way to the Olympics. A hot tub was a natural progression to enhance an impossibly gorgeous view.

Downstairs from the living space is the big garage that is home to a collection of cars, including a vintage Jaguar, a new Jag, a vintage Norton motorcycle and Charlotte's Karmann Ghia. There's also a chauffeured 1960 Silver Cloud Rolls Royce, which Stephen rents as a stand-alone service or in tandem with event rentals.

And then there's the 2,500-square-foot Studio 455 event space itself on the main floor. While it may look much like an empty garage, it is in fact both Charlotte's art studio and a blank slate that magically transforms for almost any occasion, from art receptions to DJ dance parties to burlesque entertainment nights to a cocktail enclave. The space is accessible, with 120 capacity, a full sound system and modular stages. And in the basement, just down the stairs from the event space, is a funky subterranean lounge, perfect for a breakout space or intimate gathering and workshops.

Charlotte and Stephen confess that it took



evoked drama



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A spectacular rooftop view was what ultimately convinced Charlotte and Stephen and Stephen to purchase their home. Creating the rooftop patio meant putting in 12 new roof trusses.

Opposite page: Repurposed leather seats from a Mercedes contribute to the luxurious comfort of the master bedroom. The Art Deco-esque fireplace surround, wooden carvings, along with black carpet and a feature wall in purples and maroons gives the room a plush sophistication.



some time to adjust to the live/work nature of their home, especially the event business.

"It was a little invasive, and although the space is soundproof to the outside, it was not for us [on the inside]," says Charlotte. "But it is happening, and that is amazing. People are so happy."

HAPPY TOGETHER

Many couples wouldn't subject their relationship to this level of chaos and financial and physical stress, outside of, say, having children. What was it that made this work? Did it work? Was it worth it? When asked the questions, Stephen, thoughtful, precise, conservative, looks straight ahead, like an arrow. Charlotte, radical, artsy, tilts her head up to the skies.

"We are different enough but similar in the right areas to have a shared need to get things through to fruition," she says.

"Don't compromise," Stephen advises, and Charlotte nods. "You can always spot the compromise."

For instance, he says, he had resisted removing the textured ceilings, but "Charlotte was right. It makes a huge difference."

This consciously crafted "no compromise" philosophy also extends to finding just the right piece of furniture or art. When two Art Deco lamps they had ordered from Texas on eBay arrived smashed into hundreds of pieces, Charlotte and Stephen spent months reassembling them, piece by piece.

In search of the perfect TV-watching seats for the sitting area in the couple's bedroom, Stephen came up with the idea of reclining car seats — and not just any seats would do. He procured two Mercedes Benz seats and wired them up to recline and heat up. "No compromises" may be time consuming, but it all pays off in the creature comforts and the tale to be told.

And the big question for this creative couple is: Now what?

With Studio 455 fully functioning as one of the city's most amazing places to live and run a business, Charlotte and Stephen joke that their family is worried about what they will do without a big project.

"That was my art," says Charlotte. "Now I will create other art."

As for Stephen, "I will try to do nothing. Absolutely nothing," he says with a smile.

They keep busy responding to queries from potential customers who want to know about booking the event space or renting the chauffeured Rolls Royce — and responding to emails from the fan base of Monty the gargoyle, who sat up on the roof before suffering an injury in a windstorm, and is now awaiting repair.

And, ultimately, what they have created is a work of art that is home.

"We don't really ever want to leave," says Charlotte. "If we go away, we can't wait to get back." **Y**



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1 large loaf of challah
or dense bread, cut
into 2" cubes

6 eggs

1 cup coconut milk

1 cup milk

¼ cup sweetened
shredded coconut

3 tbsp chocolate
hazelnut spread

Vanilla to taste

Garnish:

2 tbsp sweetened
shredded coconut

3 tbsp chocolate
hazelnut spread

½ cup raspberries

Place bread cubes
in pot. Whisk together
eggs, coconut milk, milk,
coconut, and chocolate
hazelnut spread in a large
bowl until combined.
Pour over bread cubes
and toss to coat. Place on
woodstove in pot and
cook for 6 hours. French
toast will be moist and
will have risen.

To garnish, place chocolate
hazelnut spread in small
pot on woodstove until
melted. Drizzle over
French toast, sprinkle
with coconut and garnish
with raspberries.

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Driving Under an Influence

-Gillie Easdon

Monday around ten a.m. “I’m really sorry, Sis, It’s been crazy. I should’ve called before.” Shawn makes excuses, again, just the way he always has.

“Look, Gloria, you knew he was sick. It was . . .”

I hang up. Car. Car now. I grab my wallet and keys, passing the mirror, my fair, coarse hair exploding: “the electrocuted lion’s mane,” as Dad would say. Dad. I duck into the bathroom, snatch my wooden hairbrush.

It is Wednesday. My father died in Winnipeg, my hometown, on Monday.

Shawn is an asshole. Turn off the lights leave the house. Lock the door.

Turn around, return to house, unlock door, check stove is off, check heat is off in living room and bedroom, lock door, hurry for little grey Honda.

Get in fast. Slam door. Chuck stuff into the back. Turn key in ignition, crank heat, fasten seatbelt, unfasten seatbelt, reach to back seat for brush and launch sneak attack on hair. Mewl and scream with mouth tight shut as brush is at once stuck in mess of matty hair. Hold hair with left hand, hold brush in right hand, thereby forcing release of aforementioned brush. Open window, fling brush from little grey Honda.

Gulp full pint of air. Close window. Turn the radio on loud and drive, left hand on the wheel, right hand over mouth, head shaking left to right, left to right.

The rain pelts a fevered staccato – I notice the rain now. “How’s the nest? Any new animals in there, Glory?” That is what Dad called me. Hot tears join me in this hot car. I can hear my skin drying.

My video cam died four months ago so we could only talk and listen on Skype. It was easier not to bear witness to the rapid decay of his body while whittling away at casual conversation. Dad’s hands went first, early last year. The first time we Skyped – when I still had video – I could not stop staring; they were like dwarf Arbutus trees. I vowed to myself not to look at them next time, but when he came up on the screen Dad was wearing black gloves. Why did I ask? His face tilted to the right, like our old dog Boo used to when you talked serious to him. Dad leaned forward deep into the camera’s eye, into my eyes, into me when I was little and wanted to tell him a secret, “It’s okay, my little Glory,” he whispered, “I want you to remember my real hands.” My face flushed scarlet, I looked down fast and my throat went tight. The word “remember” made me choke and I had to grab a glass of water. We did not talk for a few minutes and then my oven timer went off because the lamb was done

but so were we for that day. The whole family used to joke about Dad's big strong hairy man hands because his idea of "handy" was knowing how to use the phone to call the plumber, electrician, mechanic or carpenter. He always wore gloves after that Skype session. This is one of the many reasons I love my dad.

"So why didn't you go home to see him? Why didn't you go if you love him so damned much?" I yell at myself, in this little grey Honda on my precious Vancouver Island . . . I turn off the radio because Adele is really not cutting it right now. "Why?" I holler, tears fly from my eyes onto the black steering wheel going fast from matte to glossy. I am in town now, just driving, little grey Honda a cozy safe shell and the rain a welcome blind between me and other drivers or passengers who might look. I am hot, too hot. My teeth start to chatter. I turn off the heat and open the window. Sharp cold current flows into car. A child's handfuls of soft rain are cast upon my lap. I close the window. Tears flock but don't fall, my eyes like a bloodhound's saggy pockets, forming twin saltwater pools. Like long gone Boo with a very bad cold.

I clench my teeth, evicting thought. I just want to drive. Down Pandora, along Government, up Johnson to Douglas. Buses demanding passage lumber from the curbs, rejecting frantic, running latecomers cursing

banging at the doors. “You knew he was sick.” Why did Shawn have to say that? I head out towards Dallas Road to cruise along the ocean and take in some fresh air. Of course I knew he was sick. I talked to him on Skype twice a week, usually. Well, not recently, but his voice got so

Ah my throat is dry. I forgot water. Leaving town past the bus terminal, I begin to shake. I am crumbling, my hands trembling, gripping the wheel like a life ring in the middle of the ocean alone. I want to tell you a secret, Dad. I want to see your eyes bending down to meet mine. I sputter and weep as I U-turn back to the city back to walking, running, driving, biking, red light, amber, green and people. I want busy. I want to see legs and hands, and to be in the thick of it. Not so far removed as I feel and am right now from you, Dad. I don’t want distance like why I came here. Not today. Not now. What was I thinking? Shawn you must hate me.

Two brown oak leaves curled up like an infant’s fists are still stuck in the flap-flap-flapping windshield wipers. The rain has stopped. Tears falling too fast. I slam the heel of my right hand against my forehead. “I didn’t go. I couldn’t go. I wouldn’t go. I couldn’t do it, Dad. I am sorry. I am so sorry. Little Glory let you down.” I keep hitting my forehead. Snot comingles with the tears trickling down, soaking into my collar. My lips in a grimace, eyes squinting from tears, can’t really see. Why am I driving?

Why . . .

A bus lunges out in front of me. I gasp, slam on the brakes and collapse in a fit of convulsive tremors. As the bus enters my lane, a black gloved hand emerges from the driver's window, just there. In an instant, there is nothing but that curled black gloved hand, offering a small wave and I feel my body pitching forward against the wheel to get as close as I can to him. There you are. I am here, Dad. I can see you. I feel the hand on my head, softly pressing down, soothing. In that wave my heart dislodges from my throat and I don't feel thirsty any more.

Busy city still buzzing but the hive of me has settled. I turn off the windshield wipers and drag the slime from my face with the sleeve of my shirt. I notice my breathing deep and slow. The hand retracts into the window and the bus drives away. The car behind me honks because I had stopped dead. I drive down to Cormorant and pull over, head resting on the wheel, my hands stroking my hair for a while then drive home to have a bath, retrieve the hairbrush from the neighbor's driveway, deep condition this hair, and look at flights back to Winnipeg.



EXPLORING THE PROSPECTS WITH VIKRAM VIJ

OCTOBER 10, 2017 • INSIGHTS

CHEF NOTED FOR CREATING OPPORTUNITIES MAKES HIS OWN CONNECTIONS TO PROSPECT LAKE

Vikram Vij knows the power of connection to place, as evidenced through his restaurants and the loyal staff that bring them to life. Vij, celebrated chef, author, restaurateur, television personality and supporter of the sustainable food movement, joined *Power To Be* to tour our first-ever site, the 78-acre former Prospect Lake Golf Course.

Power To Be empowers people with challenges and disabilities to get out into nature. Many of our participants have barriers to this access. In the same vein, years ago Vikram and his business partner Meeru Dhalwala hired two all-female kitchens. This is a rare phenomenon in a challenging industry. Vikram and Meeru provided the support and access, and through this staff were empowered and thrived. There is synchronicity here, for *Power to Be* and Vikram's legacy, as we also believe in long-term commitments for enduring positive impact.

For our organization, participants, community partners, donors and really, for anyone who values time in nature and believes, like *Power To Be* does, that everyone belongs in nature, Prospect Lake is a game changer. We will be able to serve our participants in a way previously unimaginable. Our vision for what we can accomplish and who we can help empower stretches further, beyond the horizon.

A highlight for Vikram on his tour of Prospect Lake was the Fire Pavilion, one of the impressive [HeroWork Radical Renovation](#) projects. This is a large round, heady scented cedar structure with a sod roof that opens in the middle for the propane fire pit to send stories and good vibes to the skies. Visionary, Vikram conjured eloquent images of cooking, eating, and connecting in this magnetic space.

The lease of Prospect Lake holds obvious benefits and potential: having a stunning and vast property to run multiple programs, hosting educational events, empowering countless individuals who may have thought and been told that “they couldn’t” in terms of outdoor pursuits. But the underlying beauty and strength that may be less readily apparent is the very real sense of place for all of our people. This did not exist before. To be able to physically return to the same place you went on program last time and the time before. To forge a relationship with a very specific place in nature. It is truly immeasurable, as is our gratitude for having the opportunity to share the space with Vikram. Thank you.

The tour was a precursor to an intimate five-course [fundraising dinner](#) with Vikram and Painted Rock Estate Winery, an excellent way to build up an appetite on a particularly hot day.



THE BIG *Chill*

YAM VISITS AN ICE-CREAM ARTISAN TO DISCOVER THE SECRETS OF MAKING THIS COOL TREAT AT HOME

By Gillie Easdon • Photos by Jeffrey Bosdet

Ice cream is a treat indelibly linked to summer, from the siren call of the ice-cream truck to the old-fashioned scoop shop or beachside custard-cone shack. The ice-cream cone first became a sensation at the 1904 World Stage Fair in St. Louis, Missouri. However, the roots of this irresistible pleasure are many and reach back as far as the fifth century BC in Greece, where Athenian markets served snow mixed with honey and fruit. Other early sightings take us to Persia in fourth century BC, with a chilled dessert of rosewater and vermicelli, served with ice mixed with saffron and fruits. Ice- and saltpeter-chilled milk, rice and syrup appeared in China around the second century BC. From all corners of the globe, people have long been drawn to the tender rhapsody of sweet icy comfort.

It's even more intriguing knowing that there was no refrigeration during those times and that the procurement of a cool treat required more than a bank card and an undeniable hankering.

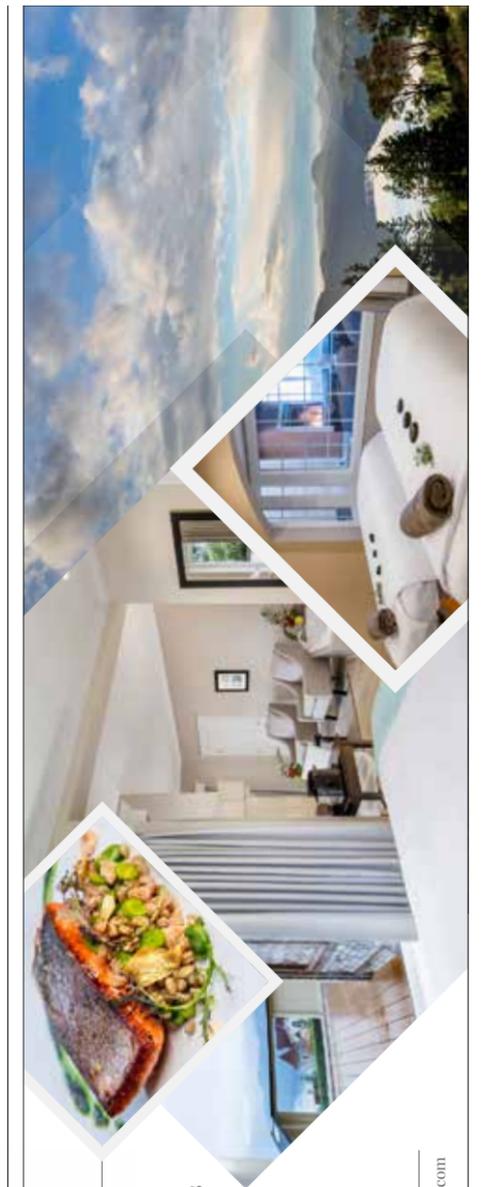
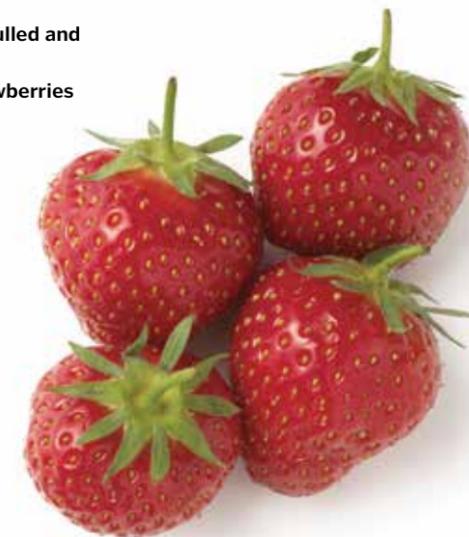
10 Steps TO DIY ICE CREAM MAGIC

To learn how to make my own icy comfort, I visit the home of Autumn Maxwell, the owner, creative pulse and "Ice Cream Lady" of Cold Comfort, famous for its artisan ice cream.

"I'm in the business of making people happy. That is the absolute best part of my job," Autumn says.

Since its early summer and the small local strawberries are perfection, Autumn guides me through the process of making a strawberry ice cream with cracked pepper. We've gathered the following ingredients:

- ▶ 3 1/2 cups fresh strawberries, washed, hulled and sliced in a medium bowl
- ▶ 1/2 cup organic cane sugar to cover strawberries
- ▶ A shot of tequila blanco, gin or vodka (optional)
- ▶ 3 egg yolks
- ▶ 1/4 cup organic homogenized milk
- ▶ 1/2 cup organic heavy whipping cream for saucepan
- ▶ 1/4 cup organic cane sugar for custard
- ▶ Pinch sea salt
- ▶ 1/2 cup organic heavy whipping cream for cold bowl
- ▶ 10 ice cubes
- ▶ Juice from a whole lemon
- ▶ Freshly cracked pepper to taste



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Strawberry Ice Cream with Cracked Pepper

Step 1: Prepare the strawberries. Measure the 3 1/2 cups of fresh strawberries onto a cutting board and sprinkle them with a 1/2 cup of organic cane sugar and a shot of tequila (which is optional). Then macerate them with a fork, setting them aside for later.

Pro Tip from Autumn:

"If you don't have nice squishy, red-fleshed local strawberries, don't bother! It's all about the strawberries. If the strawberries are poor-quality, white-fleshed, hard or underripe, the ice cream will not deliver."

Step 2: Separate 3 egg yolks into a small bowl, discarding the whites.

Autumn holds the Terra Nossa organic yolks in her hand as she separates the eggs for the custard, letting the whites seep into a bowl beneath her glossy fingers. I prefer to crack the egg in half and pass the yolk between the half shells until the white has fallen away. Take your pick.

Autumn then slips the yolks into a bowl with the elegant familiarity of something she has done many, many times. The whites are donated weekly to supplement the scrambled-egg breakfasts at Our Place, one of two charities she's been supporting for years (the other is CFUV, UVic's radio station).

Step 3: Start the custard. Pour 1/4 cup homogenized milk, the first measure (1/2 cup) heavy whipping cream, 1/4 cup sugar and a pinch of salt into a saucepan and heat it on medium-high to dissolve the sugar as well as scald the custard to steaming. Don't let it boil. (Autumn is using dairy from Avalon and salt from Vancouver Island Salt Co.)

Also known as a *crème anglaise*, the French custard sauce provides the base for traditional ice cream.

"Something a grandma on a farm in France would make," Autumn says.

Step 4: Whisk yolks until smooth. Steadily pour about 1/2 cup of the heated custard from the saucepan into the yolks.

Step 5: Once blended, put the egg blend back into the saucepan. With the heat on medium, stir back and forth until it is thick enough to coat the back of the spoon (less than a minute).

Step 6: Pour the custard through a sieve into a new bowl nestled in a well-ice-cubed larger bowl with the second measure of heavy cream, stirring every five minutes until cold.

Step 7: Purée the strawberry mixture. Add about 3/4 cup of the strawberry purée to the custard along with half the lemon juice. At this point, Autumn recommends tasting the custard. Add extra lemon juice or a little extra cream if it's too sweet. (The remaining strawberry purée will be used as garnish later, just before adding the fresh-cracked pepper.)

Step 8: Cool the custard in the fridge. You could proceed to

the next steps in as few as two hours, but Autumn generally leaves the custard in the fridge overnight. It will be set, but as a thick liquid, not firm. The custard needs to be cold to spin properly in an ice-cream maker.

Step 9: Once your custard is cold (about two hours), remove it from the fridge. Pour it into your ice-cream maker or other ice-cream-making equipment, according to the manufacturer's guidelines.

Ice-cream makers are varied and very specific. Autumn uses a KitchenAid mixer with an ice-cream-maker attachment. (See *ice-cream makers* on page 53.)

Step 10: When ready, scoop into bowls or cones. Garnish with the reserved strawberry mash for brightness and add a twist of freshly cracked pepper.

You can also store your ice cream in an airtight container and keep it in the freezer until you're ready to serve. Then savour it!

FLAVOUR EXPRESSIONS

Ice cream is Autumn's creative outlet. "I have always been into flavours, food and scents ... I wanted to be Willy Wonka as a kid," she admits, with a sparkle in her eyes that, for an instant, invokes Gene Wilder as Willy Wonka, one of her childhood crushes. In fact, Cold Comfort's innovative and certainly "Wonka-ian" portfolio of flavours ranges from Vic PD, a coffee ice cream with caramelized donut croutons to 10-Herb Ice Milk, with herbs including mint, oregano and catnip, to olive oil with balsamic-honey ripple.

MIX IT UP

Doing a mix-in with a plain custard base (just skip the strawberries or substitute with another fruity purée) is an easy way to create your own ice-cream flavours. Chill a large metal bowl in the freezer or set it up in an ice-water bath. Transfer the plain ice cream to this bowl when it's fresh out of the machine and gently fold in your desired ingredients. Suggestions include:

- mix in cookie dough — try peanut butter cookies for an original take
- add in twists of homemade *dulce de leche*
- mix in chocolate-covered pretzels
- swirl in a cherry-bourbon sauce

So whether you create your own Wonka-ian mix, make this delicious strawberry with cracked pepper or head to the nearest parlour, do treat yourself with ice cream this summer.



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