



The spires at Brighton Pavillion, built by the Price of Wales (George IV) in 1783. Brighton, England. June 2012.

## february inspiration... your home is your castle

Unless we are snowbirds who are lucky to migrate during these winter months to more warm and sunny places, most of us find ourselves spending more time indoors. Our homes should be our own private castles where we can be comfortable living our every day lives. Sometimes we don't take the time to step back, assess our lifestyles, and consider how we allocate our spaces.

What is the point of having an 8,500 sq ft house when most people basically live in the Family Room / Kitchen? A home should be lived in. Every nook and cranny should be utilized. It isn't much different than cleaning out your closet. If an item of clothing no longer fits or is never worn, we weed it out. If you aren't using a space, then find another use for it. Our lives are ever changing and our spaces need to adjust as well. Don't be afraid to turn the Nursery into a sewing room, crafts room or art studio. The baby is grown so it's OK to throw out the bath water.

I like kitchens for cooking, not entertaining, and certainly not for curling up to watch Downton Abbey. Do you really want to watch TV and the dirty dishes simultaneously? I prefer TV rooms that are just large enough to squeeze in 8 people but are cozy enough when it is just me.

Why have a Living Room that no one "lives in" because it is so uncomfortable and unwelcoming? If the last time you used your living room was when you met your daughter's new boyfriend, then you are under utilizing what should be one of the most important rooms in your home. A living room's size should be in proportion to the rest of the house. Many houses now have such small living rooms they look like an afterthought (and they are). If there is no reason to spend time there, you won't. If you are a TV family, then put a TV in your Living Room. Maybe utilize it as a library with bookshelves, a desk, and a couple comfortable club chairs. Don't save it for special occasions and design it so formally, you couldn't imagine sitting in its upholstery wearing denim. Elegance doesn't have to be silk. I like Living Rooms that have fabrics sturdy enough to read a story to a small child with muddy shoes, curl up with a book, or offer a friend a glass of red wine..even if she is a bit tipsy.



The Great Room at Lismore Castle, County Waterford, Ireland  
Originally the Grand Entrance. Now cocktails are served every night at 7pm.

Call me a traditionalist, but I like guests who ring a doorbell and enter the house through an entrance that's a transition into a home's living spaces. Why are most houses designed so that even guests enter through the garage or the family mudroom..."Hello...anybody home"? I think it is important that houses are designed with an obvious physical approach, such as a path or walk, that is a reasonable distance from the front door. In fairness to guests, neighbors and traveling salesmen, they need to be directed where to go. Doorbells are a good thing, too.



Exterior entrance at Lismore Castle.



Carriage house entrance at Kykuit.

Last, but certainly NOT least, why save your "good" china and silver for special occasions (what are you saving them for)? Pass down your set of stainless steel flatware, mismatched glasses, and plastic serving pieces to your college age children. Honestly, with very few exceptions, dishwashers these days are safe enough for most any dishes. To quote Auntie Mame, "Just LIVE" !!!!!

Even though I may have my own design philosophies, I also respect the lifestyles of others who may have just as many strong opinions but are different than mine. Don't be afraid to be honest with your designer. Its OK that you don't have 2,000 books for those bookcases, but it is important to let them know. Otherwise, you will spend your precious Saturdays for months on end at garage and library sales stockpiling books.

Don't worry if your favorite room is the Eat-in Kitchen / Family Room and that your Living Room is only used once a year. The important thing is that your home is YOUR Castle...and it should reflect your personal taste and lifestyle. Hopefully, it is always evolving and changing with you while you are living your best life.

**After all, who's castle is it anyway?**

**President**

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