

URBAN BARN

TASTY CONTEST  
TOP CHEF WINNER  
WILL COOK FOR YOU  
AND YOUR PALS  
IN YOUR HOME



**Tasty idea!** The retailer Urban Barn has teamed up with *Top Chef Canada* winner Dale MacKay, pictured, a Gordon Ramsay protege, to serve up a swank dinner. Running through Nov. 27, Canadians can enter the “Win a Private Chef” contest for their chance to host the ultimate dinner party prepared by chef MacKay in the comfort of their own home. No purchase required. To enter the contest and for details, visit [facebook.com/urbanbarn](http://facebook.com/urbanbarn). The contest is running in conjunction with Urban Barn’s Dine-in Event (15% off dining furniture and accents). The store is stocked with stylish dining-room-related finds. We are crushing on the Dockyard wood table with steel legs (\$699) — pair it with UB’s linen-covered slipper chairs (\$199 each) and a chandelier for an eclectic look, and be sure to make time for the Mayfair clock (\$199). *National Post*

GREAT  
SMALL  
FINDS

Looking to buy your first condo or downsize from a big home? With condo suites shrinking, Tiffany Love of Tomas Pearce Interior Design Consulting offers precious advice on what to look for: **I Generous ceiling heights** Vertical lines accentuate the grandness of a space. And nine- and 10-ft. ceiling heights maximize the use of vertical storage such as upper cabinets in the kitchen, furnishing with extra high storage units, or open basket storage for seasonal items.

**I Maximum wall space** Look for layouts that flow well with open-concept living/dining/kitchen spaces and lots of flat wall space. Such layouts provide great opportunities for mounting a plasma TV or integrating wall storage with extra height such as media units and floating shelves, or mounting decorative wall elements such as a large mirror over the sofa to expend the space. Ditto for bedrooms.

**I Glazing and natural lighting** Suites with an awesome exterior view feel much larger when you’re inside the suite. **I Islands and U-shaped kitchens** Islands provide additional seating and storage, while U-shaped kitchens boast even more hiding places.

S.W., *National Post*



Location, rather than suite size, is luring young professionals to Karma Condos at College Park.

By SUZANNE WINTROB

Sal Vitiello fondly remembers yesteryear’s spacious condominium suites. As he recalls, downtown Toronto one-bedrooms in the 1970s and 1980s came in at about 690 square feet — “and that’s without a den” — and two-bedrooms soared to 1,050 sq. ft. or larger.

No more. With vacant lots scarce and building costs rising, today’s developers are squeezing as many units as possible into the towers going up around town. Consequently, suites are getting smaller.

“Major competition for high rise development is the availability of houses,” explains Mr. Vitiello, senior design partner at EI Richmond Architects in Toronto. “As there are fewer houses available in Toronto, the cost of the houses goes up and that drives up the cost of the condominium and the land. The densities increase as well. So the only way to reduce the cost of having affordable housing is to reduce the size.”

Still, just because a condo is small doesn’t mean it has to feel cramped. As unit sizes shrink, developers are hauling in architects and designers to create spaces that feel bigger than they are. The walls have come down in favour of open-concept and L-shaped layouts. Colour palettes are neutral for an expansive look. Storage and shelving are integrated in intriguing ways. And with amenity areas boasting rooftop lounges and catering kitchens, condo dwellers can still entertain guests in style.

Apparently, small is where it’s at. According to those putting up these little dwellings and those making them sing, it’s what buyers want — whether they’re just starting their careers or heading into retirement.

“Young professionals are not looking for large units,” says Andrew Hoffman, president of CentreCourt Developments that’s behind the 52-storey Karma Condos set for the Yonge and College neighbourhood. “They’re looking to live active lives and not spend a lot of time in the suite itself. They’re after a location where they can work,

live and play in close proximity to each other,” he says. “They’re looking for a safe environment with 24/7 security — and the amenity package augments it. They have the opportunity to entertain and live in space outside their own unit.”

Tiffany Love concurs. Hip young buyers are less caught up on size. Instead, they want manageable spaces that are “comfortable and cozy” and mesh with their lifestyles. That’s why open layouts work well.

“Your kitchen is open to your living space and your dining spaces and they flow together very nicely, and that in essence makes them feel a lot larger,” says Ms. Love, intermediate designer and team lead at Tomas Pearce Interior

Design Consulting in Toronto. “that was their grandmother’s, but generally it’s a clean slate for them. It’s an opportunity to divest of all the stuff that you have when you have a house.”

To ease the transition from home to condo, storage becomes a big seller. At Karma, for example, Cecconi Simone has created two tiers of upper cabinets: standard-depth cabinets above the counter, and additional extra-deep 24-inch cabinets that continue up to the ceiling for maximum storage. As Ms. Cecconi puts it: “We’re maximizing three-dimensional space and trying to gain value from cubic feet as opposed to square feet. There is lots of shelving, lots of closets, things that make it easier to transition from a home into a condo.”

small work spaces “so you’re not bringing your work into the living space.” He adds that buyers are happy to forgo a larger bedroom for a larger living room, he adds, and furniture manufacturers are responding with smaller options.

“The rooms aren’t necessarily larger but the sense of the space and how you experience the space is quite important,” he says.

Then there’s the balcony. One of Tomas Pearce’s current projects is Jade Waterfront Condominiums, a 38-storey, 370-unit tower set for Etobicoke. At Jade, the undulating balconies create a wave effect that is not only eye-catching but also functional with storage units plus electrical power, TV and telephone outlets, and barbecue hook-ups. Even the smallest suite, at 465 sq. ft., has a 105-sq.-ft. balcony that extends the suite.

As spaces continue to get smaller, developers are counting on captivating common areas to woo purchasers. Simple fitness centres and party rooms are giving way to spas, indoor/outdoor lounges with firepits and barbecues, catering kitchens and private dining areas that act as an extension of the condo suite.

“Amenities have become much more elaborate, much more varied, with a lot of options in terms of spaces in the building you can go to if you feel the need to get out of your unit but don’t feel like you actually have to put a coat on and go outside,” Ms. Cecconi says.

For instance, Karma boasts a pub-like Player’s Club Lounge for billiards, Ping-Pong and poker, as well as a sound room to sing or jam and a gaming room ideal for avid videogamers. There’s also a social room with lounge seating and two-sided screen so people can watch movies from inside or outside. Jade has a virtual golf room and a private theatre room for screening films and sporting events.

Says Mr. Vitiello: “We’re not just creating little boxes for people to live in and making them smaller — they also have other opportunities and their lifestyle may be improved.”

*National Post*

BIG  
isn’t better  
In praise of going small —  
with the help of smart spaces

Design Consulting in Toronto.

Empty nesters are also drawn to small spaces. Elaine Cecconi, founding partner of Toronto-based interior design firm Cecconi Simone, says most folks downsizing from houses as large as 6,000 sq. ft. understand they can’t take it all with them. In fact, they’re thrilled to declutter their lives and start fresh.

“They’re not living with their kids anymore, they want to live downtown, they want to walk places, they want to have everything at their fingertips,” Ms. Cecconi says. “They understand it’s not just a physical change, but it’s also a mental shift in terms of their lifestyle. They are ready to leave everything behind. They might have a sentimental piece like a chair

Furniture and finishes can also maximize space. Ms. Love is particularly fond of sofa ottomans where the top lifts off for storage, and beds with storage in the platform. Mirrored or glass dining tables and end tables open up the space, she adds, as do neutral and monochrome paints and finishes.

Mr. Vitiello is pleased that the City of Toronto has given developers the OK to position bedrooms away from the building’s front glazing. Setting the bedrooms at the back of the unit rather than at the front wall offers more planning flexibility, he says, making living rooms wider and more light-infused. Dead spaces like corridors are giving way to open plans, with room for

CONDO  
CULTURE

Upstairs  
cacophony  
has neighbour  
peeved

NOISE COMPLAINTS

By MARILYN LINCOLN

**Q** *The condo owners above me are constantly making loud noises. They drag things across the floor, play very loud music and there’s often thumping noises. I have called the office and complained to the manager but nothing has changed. I have even called security. What can I do to gain back some peace and quiet, besides selling my condo?*

**A** The Condominium Act of Ontario requires the corporation’s board of directors to enforce noise rules and bylaws. Doing nothing is not an option. Start keeping a log of the times and dates you are bothered by significant noise. Then write a letter to the board of directors care of the property manager. Detail the type of noise you are dealing with and the number of times security has been called. When security receives a noise complaint, it is logged in a daily report, a guard is dispatched to investigate and should have contacted the offender. In most cases, the management follows up with a letter to the offender.

Most disputes require mediation and arbitration between the complaining owner and the offender prior to any court application for compliance. If mediation/arbitration fails, the corporation should obtain an order of compliance from the courts.

If the corporation doesn’t follow through, the complaining owner can make an application to the court, either against the noisy neighbour, or the corporation for failing to enforce the rules. If the complaint goes to court, the judge will require proper documentation and paper trail to confirm that the owner in question made every effort possible to have the noise terminated.

The courts do not remedy noise complaints, but will support the corporation rules if they are reasonable and all attempts to achieve compliance have been carried out.

**Marilyn Lincoln** is a condo owner, director and author of *The Condominium Self Management Guide 2nd ed.* Send questions to [marilyn-condoguide@hotmail.com](mailto:marilyn-condoguide@hotmail.com)

*National Post*



MORTGAGE RATES 23.11.11

Rates are subject to change. Selection of financial institutions may vary weekly. Figures supplied by Fiscal Agents

|                              | Variable rate | 6months       | 1yr           | 2yr           | 3yr  | 4yr  | 5yr  |                         | Variable rate | 6months       | 1yr           | 2yr  | 3yr  | 4yr  | 5yr  |
|------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|------|------|------|-------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>BANKS</b>                 |               |               |               |               |      |      |      |                         |               |               |               |      |      |      |      |
| ATB Financial                | 3.80          | 4.45 - 6.30op | 3.50 - 6.30op | 3.85 - 6.50op | 4.05 | 4.79 | 4.09 | Equitable Trust         | -             | -             | 3.50          | 3.85 | 4.05 | 4.79 | 5.29 |
| Alterna Svgs/Alterna Bk      | 2.75          | 4.00 - 6.30op | 3.05 - 6.30op | 3.30          | 3.55 | 3.55 | 3.60 | Home Trust Company      | 3.15          | -             | 2.99          | 2.99 | 3.40 | 3.49 | 3.59 |
| Bank of Montreal             | 3.00          | 4.45 - 6.30op | 3.50 - 6.30op | 3.85          | 4.05 | 3.19 | 3.69 | Investors Group Trust   | n/a           | 4.55 - 6.50op | 3.50 - 6.30op | 3.85 | 4.05 | 4.79 | 5.29 |
| Bank of Nova Scotia          | 3.00          | 4.55 - 6.45op | 4.30 - 6.50op | 3.89          | 4.39 | 4.79 | 5.29 | MTCC                    | n/a           | 4.55 - 6.45op | 4.30 - 6.50op | 3.89 | 4.39 | 4.79 | 5.29 |
| Canadian Western Bank        | -             | 4.45 - 6.45op | 3.50 - 6.30op | 3.85          | 4.05 | 4.79 | 5.29 | MRS Trust               | n/a           | 2.75 - 3.30op | 3.00          | 3.40 | 3.90 | 4.05 | 4.10 |
| CIBC                         | 3.00          | 6.70op        | 3.50 - 6.35op | 3.85          | 3.19 | 4.39 | 3.94 | ResMor Trust Company    | -             | -             | 4.09          | -    | 3.64 | -    | 3.54 |
| HSBC Bank Canada             | 3.00          | 4.45 - 6.20op | 3.60 - 6.35op | 3.95          | 4.45 | 4.99 | 5.39 | Comtech Credit Union    | 2.50          | 6.60 - 8.40op | 2.99 - 9.00op | 3.25 | 3.25 | 3.40 | 3.49 |
| ICICI Bank Canada            | 3.10          | -             | 3.15          | 3.65          | 3.64 | 3.69 | 3.69 | <b>OTHER</b>            |               |               |               |      |      |      |      |
| ING Direct                   | 3.00          | -             | 3.09          | 3.25          | 3.29 | 3.49 | 3.64 | DUCA Fin. Service C.U.  | 2.85          | 4.40          | 3.08 - 5.75op | 3.28 | 3.28 | 3.48 | 3.58 |
| Laurentian Bank              | n/a           | 4.40 - 6.70op | 3.19 - 6.50op | 3.85          | 4.05 | 4.79 | 4.09 | FirstLine Mortgages     | 3.45          | -             | -             | 3.49 | 3.59 | 3.84 | 3.99 |
| Manulife Bank                | 3.50          | -             | 3.00          | 3.25          | 3.50 | 3.55 | 3.59 | First National Fin. LP  | 3.00          | 4.45          | 3.09          | 3.25 | 3.40 | 3.49 | 3.59 |
| National Bank                | n/a           | 4.45 - 6.70op | 3.50 - 6.30op | 3.85          | 4.05 | 4.79 | 5.29 | FirstOntario C.U.       | 2.90          | 6.34          | 3.24 - 6.34   | 3.48 | 3.48 | 3.29 | 3.45 |
| President’s Choice Financial | 3.00          | -             | -             | 3.30          | 3.34 | 3.54 | 3.74 | Industrial Alliance/IAP | n/a           | -             | 3.50          | 3.85 | 4.05 | 4.79 | 5.29 |
| Royal Bank                   | 3.00          | 4.05 - 6.30op | 3.20 - 6.30op | 3.85          | 4.05 | 4.79 | 4.09 | MCDAP                   | 3.10          | -             | 3.60 - 6.30op | 3.95 | 4.35 | 4.89 | 5.29 |
| TD Canada Trust              | 3.00          | -             | 3.19 - 6.30op | 3.30          | 4.05 | 4.79 | 4.09 | Meridian Credit Union   | 2.75          | 4.45          | 3.50 - 6.30op | 3.85 | 4.35 | 3.40 | 3.48 |
| <b>TRUST LOAN</b>            |               |               |               |               |      |      |      |                         |               |               |               |      |      |      |      |
| AGF Trust                    | n/a           | -             | 3.04          | 3.20          | 3.24 | 3.39 | 3.54 | PACE Savings & C.U.     | -             | 4.45 - 6.70   | 3.50 - 6.30   | 3.85 | 4.05 | 4.79 | 5.29 |
| Effort Trust                 | n/a           | 4.45 - 6.30op | 3.45 - 6.30op | 3.80          | 4.30 | 4.75 | 5.25 | Parama Credit Union     | 2.50          | -             | 2.90          | 3.25 | 3.30 | 3.50 | 3.75 |
|                              |               |               |               |               |      |      |      | Teachers Credit Union   | 4.00          | 4.45 - 6.30   | 3.29 - 6.50   | 3.69 | 3.79 | 3.99 | 4.09 |

\*Also offer 7- to 10-year mortgages. op = open mortgage. n.a. = not available from company. ro=renewals only dashes (-) mean companies not quoting at present. ror=rates on request.