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VITA



The Holiday Issue

SPARKLE SEASON
Hello Ho Ho Toronto!
'Tis the time to *shimmer*,
shine, and bring *VITA*
magazine to town

INSIDE *the* ISSUE

STYLE Tea Time Our featured influencer, **Sasha Exeter**, reveals her top holiday pick to *give and receive*

BEAUTY Singular Vision Today's coolest beauty brands are *stripping things back* to just one or two products to suit *everyone*

FASHION Off Runway Creative designer collaborations are prompting *a reimagining* of the way we define fashion

WINE Storied Sips *Penfolds' 2021 Australia Collection* offers a *compelling reason to collect*



michael hill

Make their Christmas



Editor's DESK

A Note From Noa

Welcome to the very first issue of *VITA Toronto*! True, the magazine has been around for years (since 2014, 74 issues ago), but only in Vancouver; it has been a dream of mine, since day 1, to bring it east. Not only do we work with countless incredible individuals, businesses, brands and agencies (really, friends) in Canada's largest city (not to mention, enjoy hearing from and engaging with our longtime and loyal Toronto-based readers), for me this launch is, too, a personal "full circle" moment. I graduated with a degree in journalism from Ryerson and cut my editorial teeth at glossies like *Flare* and *Wish*; I don't recall a more exciting time in my life than those years spent in The 6ix (though that nickname didn't exist back then!). Coming from Vancouver, barely 20 years old, the thrill of the city is something I can still feel, like it was yesterday. Maybe, just maybe, curating and publishing a unique Toronto magazine is, selfishly, a way to relive those days, but it's also an opportunity to bring our unique brand of lifestyle content to you. More from me in future issues; for now, enjoy our magazine!

Noa Nichol EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Our featured influencer for this first issue of *VITA Toronto* is **Sasha Exeter**—we simply couldn't think of a better fit to kick off our inaugural edition!

Sasha Exeter

@SASHAEXETER



Hi Sasha! Please tell us a bit about yourself to start.

I am a 40-something former corporate hustler-turned-entrepreneur and mama to Maxwell. As I've gotten further into my career, my job title seems to have gotten longer (giggles), but I think I am most known for being a content creator who has recently been able to add "designer" to the list of things I do now, which is pretty cool!

How do you use your platform to impact those who follow you?

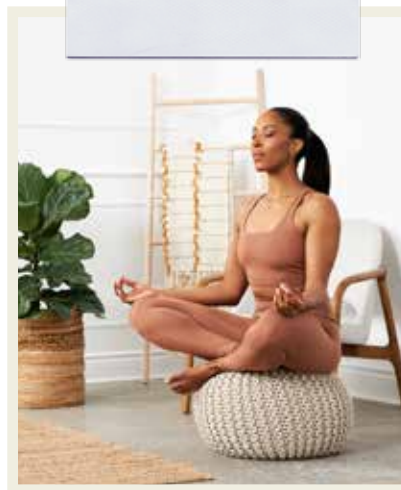
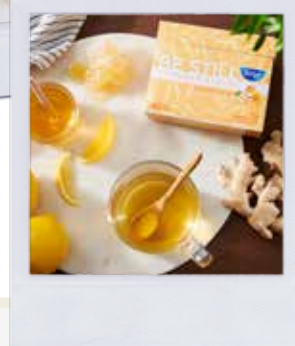
I just live my true, authentic life online. Sharing the highs and, of course, the lows, with my community. There is a lot of "perfection" or perceived perfection in the social space, so I think that being vulnerable, open and honest regarding wellness, mental health, co-parenting, self-love and fitness has just been what's inspired those who follow me. I am far from perfect and have had to deal with my own fair share of challenges along the way, but I've still managed to find happiness and success—and if my journey can inspire even just one person out there, I feel like I've done my job!

What's your personal style/beauty mantra?

The older I get, I've really leaned into the "less is more" mantra for basically everything, but especially when it comes to my personal style and beauty/skincare routine.

'Tis the season! What's your favourite thing about the holidays?

Spending time with loved ones. Our family really gets into the holiday spirit, especially Maxwell. I have continued the same traditions at home we had growing up when I was little: listening to the same holiday playlists, getting dressed up to put up the tree, baking and all the holiday movies. It's truly a magical time of year.



PHOTOS BY DAVID PIKE

I've really leaned into the "*less is more*" mantra for basically everything, but *especially* when it comes to my personal style

How will you be spending the holidays this year?

Relaxing, refilling my cup and fully enjoying the festive season with my family and friends. I'm so grateful 2021 was a successful and eye-opening year, and look forward to the adventures that 2022 will bring.

What's your top holiday 2021 gift pick to give and/or receive?

I typically prefer to give practical items that I know will be loved and used, though there are people on my list who I go all out for, and like to surprise with something over-the-top like jewelry, that I know they wouldn't buy for themselves. I know one thing for sure though: everyone on my list will be receiving Be Still, my delicious custom tea collaboration with Tetley. It's an herbal tea with notes of ginger and honey that tastes incredible and encourages moments of peace. With the holidays being such a hectic time of year and with Be Still made with calming moments in mind, it makes for a great stocking stuffer and the perfect addition to someone's daily tea ritual.

THE MAKING OF THE
Holiday Issue

No. 01 ————— 2021

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VITA
PUBLISHED BY
VITA DAILY MEDIA INC.
CANADA POST PUBLICATIONS
MAIL AGREEMENT #42849020

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Sparkle Season

BY LOUISA CHAN & NOA NICHOL

Sequins, diamonds and gold dust: 'tis the time to shimmer and shine

1. MACH & MACH PUMP, \$1,410
Talk about a statement shoe! Crystals sparkle around the signature double bow, transparent pointy toe and ankle strap of this celeb-fave stiletto. [Nordstrom.ca](#)

2. DIOR TOP COAT, \$36
Use this limited-edition pearlescent top-coat lacquer with gold and silver sparkles for a festive manicure. [Holtrenfrew.com](#)

3. LISE WATIER LIP GLOSS, \$27
Gild your lips with this high-shine Irresistible gold shimmer gloss. [Lisewatier.ca](#)

4. YSL EYESHADOW PALETTE, \$175
The Couture Clutch Holiday 2021 palette contains 10 festive shades in a case adorned with gold leaves. [Yslbeauty.ca](#)

5. OPEN EDIT BLAZER & PANTS, \$234
Pair this sequin-soaked one-button blazer with these twinkling trousers to deliver a disco-diva vibe. [Nordstrom.ca](#)

6. ALDO HEAD BAND, \$40
Level-up your holiday hair with this cute little number, called Severahar. [Aldo.ca](#)

7. MICHAEL HILL RING, \$1,599
Update your jewelry box this season with this breathtaking cluster ring, featuring 0.75 carats of diamonds set in white gold. [Michaelhill.ca](#)

8. GUERLAIN LIPSTICK, \$350
This luminous, limited-edition brick-red lippy is housed in a "bee"-jewelled case. [Holtrenfrew.com](#)

9. RADO TIMEPIECE, \$3,800
The True Square Open Heart watch offers a crystal-clear view to the magic of its inner mechanical workings and sparkles with a dozen diamonds. [Rado.com](#)

10. BALMAIN GOWN, \$6,650
Glittering stones frame the astral cutouts of this jersey dress that's sure to make you the star of the holiday party. [Holtrenfrew.com](#)

11. CHANEL NECKLACE & EARRINGS
Inspired by Russian embroidery, Chanel's Sarafane set boasts a camellia motif in diamonds and pearls. [Chanel.com](#)

12. GUCCI SHOES, \$1,100
Gucci and Balenciaga's capsule collection has produced these must-have monogram heels loaded with rhinestones. [Gucci.com](#)

13. BUGATTI CARRY-ON BAG, \$150
The Milano carry-on in rose gold will see you jet-setting in sparkling style. [Bugatticollections.com](#)

14. LOUBOUTIN LIP GLOSS, \$115
With star-like pigment pearls for a metallic finish, this gloss helps lips appear fuller with long-lasting shine. [Holtrenfrew.com](#)

December's It Bag

\$10,200 BY ALEESHA HARRIS

The limited-edition 24K Galuchat Serpenti top handle bag from Bulgari is a piece of high jewelry that can be carried, in hand. Numbered to only 10 available units, and available only in North America, the structured, top-handle design features Galuchat—a signature Bulgari material from stingray—along with a malachite nappa leather lining and a classic Serpenti head closure. The iconic serpent design, in 24-karat gold, has glistening eyes made of malachite. The unique accessory also comes in a custom "moulded box" to help preserve each precious piece. [Bulgari.com](#)

Hot Shops

Toronto's latest and greatest retailers



relevé

There's a new clothing boutique in town that's so gorgeous, it's giving us serious style envy. Situated on Bayview in East York, relevé curates a selection of fresh, modern and functional activewear and lounge-wear for the contemporary, fashion-forward woman. Founded by former dancer (and Toronto-based mom of two) Gillian Medina, relevé exists to offer women clothing and accessories that don't just complement their lives, but gear them up for whatever it is that their day may bring. Whether it's a workout, a school drop-off/pick-up, a work-from-home uniform or a patio dinner, the brands and curation are designed to complement the modern woman's daily life—and everything that she fits into it! The relevé woman was also kept in mind when celebrated Toronto design firm, M House Inc., designed the space; Medina envisioned a spa-like environment where her clientele could enjoy shopping in a casual but elegant surrounding—a space that incorporated all of the things she herself loves when treating herself to a destination shopping experience. You honestly won't want to leave this place—it's stunning. And the name? Medina always loved the French term "relevé" (a basic ballet move that means to "rise up"), and it took on added meaning while she hustled to open the store amidst a global pandemic! Ultimately, she rose to the challenge and, with styles from Alo, Donni and Stance, we're sure glad she did! **1727 Bayview Ave., East York, 416-546-8346. Releveclothing.com** NOA NICHOL

Noize

Make some Noize! The Montreal-based brand has expanded into Ontario with twin boutiques in Square One in Mississauga and Mapleview Centre in Burlington. Alongside its vegan outerwear, the label's expanded offering for women and men includes sweats and sets, accessories, boots, dresses and puffer vests. Noize has also gotten in on the dog-apparel game, with styles that will have local pups twinning with their owners—fitting, considering the company is famed for using PETA-approved materials like vegan fur and leather for its designs. **100 City Centre Dr., Mississauga, 905-848-2310 | 900 Maple Ave., Burlington, 905-631-1238. Noize.com** LAUREN WALKER-LEE



Permission

Located on the Ossington strip, Permission is a multi-brand performance and athleisure store that's all about inclusivity and body positivity. The store carries clothing in inclusive sizing from brands like Girlfriend Collective, Michi, Varley, Lesley Hampton, Adam Selman Sport and Good American. Footwear and accessories are also on offer; the shop recently launched a handbag collab with Ai Toronto Seoul handbags. Chic fitness equipment (hand and ankle weights, mats and elevated water bottles) rounds out the assortment, making this a one-stop haven for many athletic pursuits. **127 Ossington Ave., 437-339-8881. Ownyourpermission.com** LAUREN WALKER-LEE

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

Holidays at The Bay

With all the entertaining, gifting, decorating and more, the holidays can be stressful as well as celebratory. This year, The Bay is bringing ease, comfort and joy to shopping.

Without even getting out of bed, you can experience a one-stop discovery destination for the season's top gifts, elevated holiday services, innovative digital experiences and everything in-between on [TheBay.com](https://www.thebay.com). And with an expanded assortment from trusted brands on Marketplace, faster delivery, price matching and more, The Bay has you covered all holly jolly season long.



Deck The Halls With Digital & IRL Experiences

The Bay is calling on all Canadians to share their own diverse and unique holiday traditions through the Holiday Your Way effect on TikTok for a chance to be featured in Hudson's Bay's iconic windows at its flagship store in Toronto, which will boast new TikTok content bi-weekly. As well, every video uploaded between now and December 18 will be entered to win a grand prize \$1,000 gift card (contest rules apply; one entry per account). To unlock the experience, scan this unique stripes-branded TikCode now! The Hudson's Bay Holiday Your Way windows have already launched across Canada, in addition to the animatronic windows coming to life at Hudson's Bay Queen Street in Toronto. The magical vignettes return to give a glimpse into Santa's secret workshop and deliver much-needed merriment to all.

The Ultimate Gift Guide

The Bay's gift guide is here to spark discovery and make checking every name off your list as seamless as possible. Whether shopping for the beauty lover, the locally-made enthusiast, the cosy homebody or the style seeker, TheBay.com is here to make you look like a gifting genius (sorry, Santa). Our top picks from the guide: the luxe Lesley Hampton x The Bay Holiday Beauty Calendar (\$225), a jolly red Smeg Mini Kettle (\$180), UGG men's Ascot suede and faux-shearing moccasins (\$140) and fresh-looking Golden Goose High Platform Glitter Lace Leather Sneakers (\$745) for a happy holiday high kick!

SHOPPING MADE SIMPLE

The Bay is taking the stress out of holiday shopping with new and extended services:

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AUTO-LOCATE

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MARKETPLACE

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Jumping the Runway

Cool designer collaborations are prompting a reimagining of the way we define fashion

BY ALEESHA HARRIS

A designer bag created by a celebrity; a city guide curated by a French brand; a fitness tool featuring the logo of an iconic fashion house—just a few of the creations prompting a reimagining of the way we define “fashion”. At the heart of this evolution is collaboration between designers and creatives and also other brands—think, the wildly coveted partnership between Louis Vuitton and the skateboard-lifestyle brand Supreme or the unexpected pairing of Birkenstock and Valentino Garavani—many the likes of which have never been seen before.

Of course, fashion brands branching out into other realms of consumer goods isn't entirely new. Louis Vuitton's popular *City Guides* book series, which debuted in 1998, sees the company issue recommendations for hotels, shopping and nightlife in 15 international hotspots including Paris, Beijing and Rome. This fall, the editions were revised and updated. But it's the increasing frequency and prestige of the collaborations that seem to be pushing the envelope even further.

“Seeing these large fashion houses collaborating has truly disrupted the fashion industry,” says Joseph Tang, fashion director at luxury retailer Holt Renfrew. “Designers have been collaborating with artists for a while now, but having two lead designers of iconic fashion houses has been something we only started to see a few seasons back.”

Tang points to the Spring 2020 Dries Van Noten collection designed alongside Christian Lacroix as one of the first examples of an unexpected partnership that brought “a revolutionary blend of two



FENDI BY VERSACE



GUCCI VAULT

“HERITAGE BRANDS are continuing to think of ways to RE-INVENT & ENGAGE new customers”



ANNA SUI X KNIX



VERSACE BY FENDI

creative geniuses” to the runway. “This intersection of design has also been seen within Moncler's Genius collections, where leading designers like Simone Rocha, JW Anderson and Pierpaolo Piccioli of Valentino showed their take on the iconic puffer coat,” he adds. “Ultimately, this drives hype and excitement around the brands and also helps large fashion houses reach new audiences and customers for the brands they collaborate with. The unexpected collaborations are always newsworthy collections that drive people into stores and create a ... buzz.”

One such buzzed-about release occurred on the runway in Milan in September, when the creatives behind Fendi, Silvia Venturini Fendi and Kim Jones, created 25 looks for Versace, while Donatella Versace created an equal number of designs for Fendi. They called it Fendace. In October, Jones also announced a collaborative collection with Kim Kardashian West's line, Skims. These types of designer mashups are part of a larger industry story that sees brands eager to hold on to consumer interest amid the constant onslaught of newness encountered online and via social media.

“Heritage brands are continuing to think of ways to re-invent and engage new customers,” Tang says. “Within the past two years we've seen a significant increase to fashion collaborations that is being driven by the customer's thirst for something new and special.” Canadian label Knix, known for size-inclusive undergarments and activewear, recently teamed up with American designer Anna Sui. The partnership signifies the first foray for the Toronto-headquartered brand into “the fashion space,” with bras, underwear and loungewear separates featuring the “bold prints and whimsical wearability” often found in Sui's designs.

Further pushing the boundaries of fashion, Dior's teaming with high-end Italian sporting equipment brand Technogym will see a release in January of a treadmill, weight bench and other workout accoutrements—including dumbbells and a gym ball—each one featuring the moniker “Christian Dior” along with the Dior star and the five horizontal stripes that are emblematic to the house. In a similar vein, Gucci and Xbox are joining forces to celebrate the former's 100th and the latter's 20th anniversary via a very limited-edition (there are only 100 available) Gucci Xbox Bundle. Each set includes a custom Xbox Series X console laser-engraved with a GG-pattern, two wireless controllers in carbon black featuring Gucci's Web stripe in red and blue and an Xbox Game Pass membership, complemented by a hard case inspired by Gucci's archival luggage.

Fashion collaborations such as these undoubtedly resonate on a social media level—the hashtag #fendace has been used nearly 4,500 times on Instagram alone—and it's a level of hype that Tang says often translates strongly into sales offline, too. “We've started to develop a shopping culture where the release date—or drop date—has cultivated a sense of urgency to buy into these collaborations,” he says. “Creating exclusive collaborations apart from the traditional brand offering allows the customer to see the brand in a different lens that validates their relevancy in the market.”

But how the collaboration makes the jump from virtual reality to in-person experience is key to its success. Shoppers, Tang says, want to feel as engaged with the products in person as they do with the online content promoting each limited-edition drop: “We find customers best resonate with these collections at the retail level when we engage them in a fulsome, 360-experience, from in-store displays to online animations.” And as the interest in unique, boundary-pushing partnerships continues, shoppers can expect to see more of these mashups in the future.

“The fashion industry is always changing, and the design talent of today is always challenging the traditional fashion calendar and rules of the houses,” says Tang. “So, we hope to see more innovative ideas and groundbreaking designs come forward.”

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Dream Team

BY NOA NICHOL

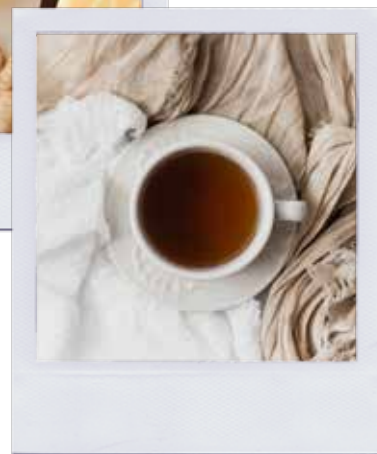
With several fashion collaborations under her belt, Canadian content creator Sasha Exeter felt it was high (tea) time to partner on a different sort of product. Teaming with Tetley, her custom herbal tea, Be Still, boasts soothing notes of spicy ginger and sweet, mellow honey (both flavours from her childhood) to create a perfect blend rooted in comfort and nostalgia. The perfect addition to your daily tea ritual, Be Still encourages Canadians to take the time to pause, unwind and embrace the moment.

Congrats, Sasha, on your collab with Tetley! When and how did this partnership come about, and what made it a perfect fit for you?

I've been drinking tea for as long as I can remember and have been a long-time fan of Tetley. I've been working with the brand for many years now, so this just felt like a natural fit, to collaborate on a custom, signature tea blend. It's an absolute dream to have been given the opportunity to create the Be Still signature blend to share with tea lovers across Canada.

Tell us about the process of creating your limited-edition custom tea blend, Be Still, with Tetley.

The last year has been a fascinating and eye-opening experience, working on this project. When I started to think about flavours and what I wanted it to taste like, I pulled inspiration from my childhood experiences of teatime and the flavours I've always found to be soothing: ginger and honey. I worked closely with Tetley's master blenders in the U.K. to perfect the blend. I also had the help of my amazing online community. I like to look to them for feedback in projects of this scale and polled them very early



on, as I wanted to create something that I know they would love, too. Lucky for me, most were wanting a warming herbal tea, which the team and I thought was the perfect choice for the fall/winter season, featuring flavours that are both classic and universally loved.

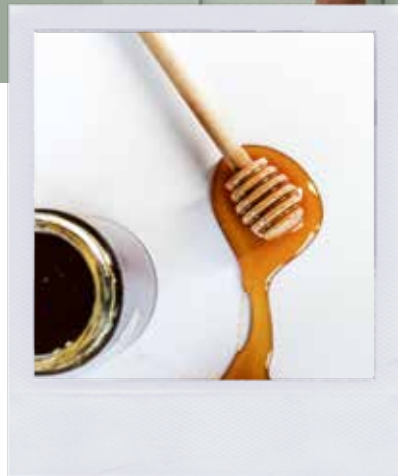
What do you hope those who drink this tea experience or feel while sipping?

I'm a big believer in self-care and the value of taking time to recharge. Be Still was created with these beliefs in mind: offering tea drinkers an opportunity to pause, unwind and embrace the moment. The key flavour notes also reminded me so much of my childhood and British-Caribbean roots. Plus, I just loved the idea of creating something that was nostalgic to me.

What does curling up with a piping cup of tea do for your wellbeing during a busy day/week ... or hectic holiday season?!

I'd say I have a favourite tea for every season, occasion and mood, but Be Still is perfect for any moment that calls for a bit of calm. [Tetley.ca](https://www.tetley.ca)

PHOTO BY DAVID PIKE



Hot Shops

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

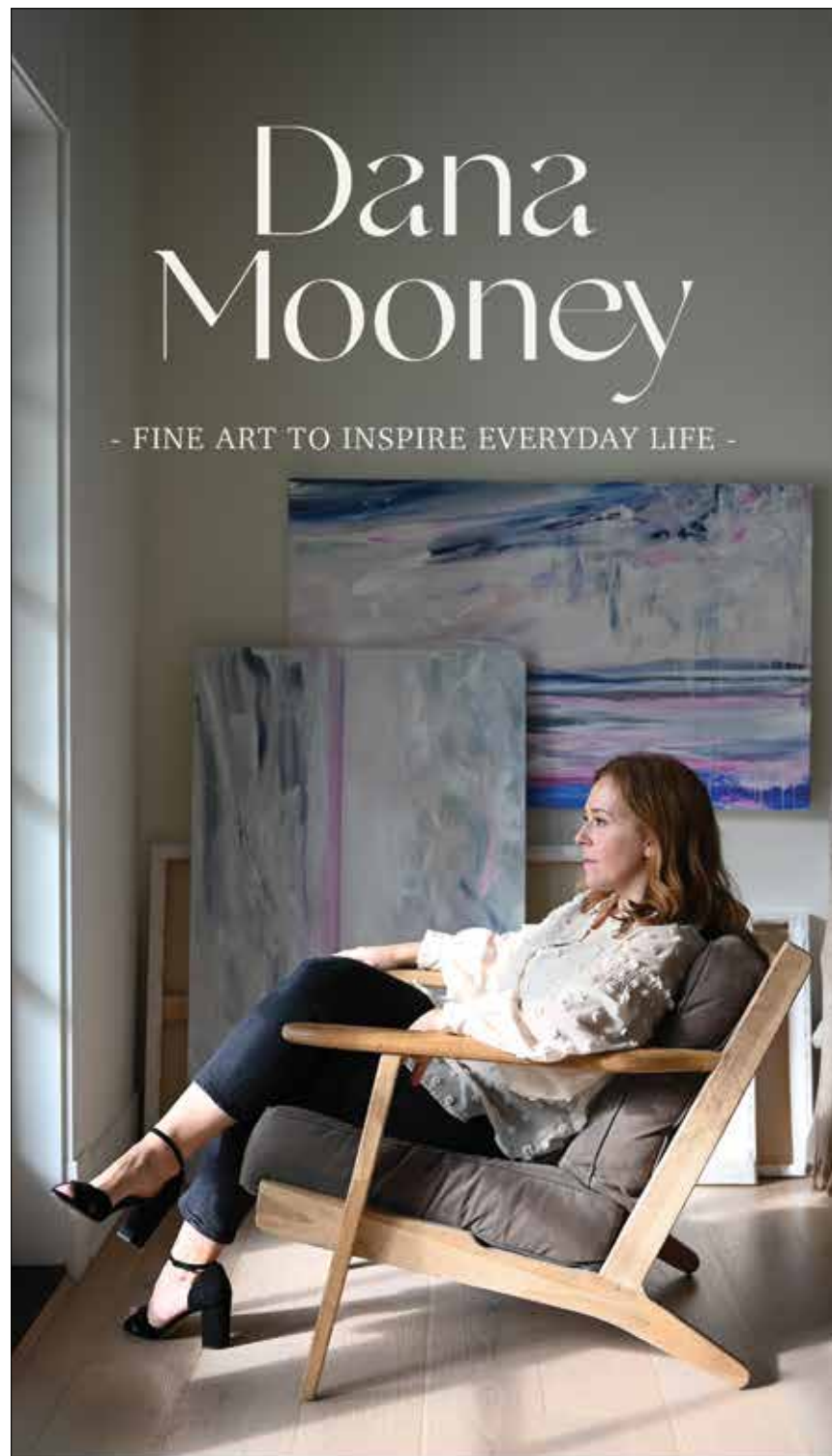
Numi Pop-Up

Numi, known for seriously stylish high-performance basics, has opened a temp retail space in Yorkville Village, giving you the opp to touch, feel and try on IRL. Until January 16, the shop will feature the Canadian fashion brand's famous sweatproof undershirts, stain-repellent silks and other bestselling products coveted by celebs like Kelly Ripa. From Numi's new easy wear, easy care Sustainable Silk loungewear collection, which will make its debut at the pop-up, the Amelia Playsuit is a two-piece set that can be worn to bed or out to brunch, while the Raven In & Out Dress is an elegant slip for WFH or actual-office comfort. Plus, Numi will host several in-store events during the pop-up in partnership with likeminded brands, including appointments with an in-store stylist to help make your perfect purchase, a monogramming event with Ela Handbags and a collab with Radford Studio for beauty touch-ups and photoshoots. Pop in, before this pop-up is gone. **55 Avenue Rd. [Wearnumi.com](https://www.wearnumi.com)** NOA NICHOL



Millie Marketplace

There are gifts to give, and then there are gifts to give that give back. With a fierce passion for this important distinction, Toronto native Chelsea Brown has launched the Millie Marketplace—a virtual gift shop—just in time for the holidays. From Millie's Pin Project—a kite-shaped pin designed by Canadian designer Jenny Bird and crafted by Turquoise Mountain in Jordan—to undyed linen pyjamas handmade in India, all items listed on the Millie Marketplace directly benefit organizations and artisans around the world, many of whom are displaced women or refugees. Check out the Holiday Edit on [Millie.ca](https://www.millie.ca) for gifting inspo, including colourful woven tree ornaments made in Rwanda, a soap set that aims to raise awareness of the importance of education for women and girls, and gorgeous scented candles that give back to nature with their wildflower seed-embedded boxes. Or, give a Millie Marketplace gift card! Spend some quality down time during the holidays tuning in, too, to the Millie Podcast, where Brown, a longtime human rights and women's advocacy champion, connects with extraordinary women who inspire a new way of thinking and invite us all to see the world in a different way—and isn't that the greatest gift of all? **Millie.ca** NOA NICHOL



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Hair Weather

Balayage, ombre and bronde are just three of the big hair trends this season

BY NOA NICHOL

Carin Freidag started with Clairol answering questions on the brand's hotline 35 years ago; she fell in love with hair colour, and secured a full-time job with the company. Now, she runs Clairol's Global Retail Hair Education program. With balayage, ombre and all-over highlights trending this winter, we picked Freidag's brain about the ins and outs of all three styles.

Balayage is trending in hair, big time; why is it so hot right now?

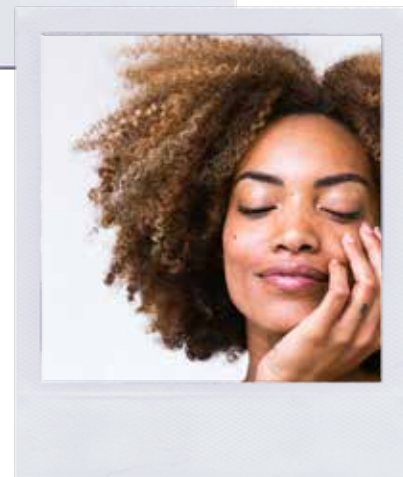
Balayage is the art of painting on highlights, versus the foil technique. This provides a more natural result overall since it is generally applied to the top surface of the hair instead of going all throughout the hair and underneath; think of it as how the sun hits your hair. It offers so much versatility to women to create many different looks.

What about ombre? How is it different than balayage?

Think of ombre as the final look, where as balayage is the way to achieve it.

What's involved in achieving each balayage and ombre?

For balayage, you want to work with how you normally style your hair. For instance, where you normally wear your part. You also want to decide how heavy or light you want the final effect to be so you know where to place the lightener if you are doing it on your own. If you're doing it on your own, I always recommend doing a trial run with a thick conditioner first so you can get the feel of how to use the brush. For ombre, the overall effect usually starts at the chin if you have long hair and the ears if you have shorter hair, with a little piece framing the face. The key in either case is to create a soft



transition from the natural hair to the full ombre, otherwise it will look like you just have grown-out hair colour. The technique to use is to lightly apply the lightener in tiny strokes called feathering a little above where you want the more solid ombre look to be.

Can we do balayage at home ourselves, or is this an in-salon job?

You can do it at home! At Clairol we offer a balayage kit, one for blondes and one for brunettes. We provide everything you need for an easy DIY experience, including instructions for how to achieve three different end looks: ombre, babylights and all-over highlights.

Let's talk about all-over highlights: how is this look achieved?

All over is a way to get a more solid colour look. In addition to using permanent colour, you can get an all-over look in two ways: by using highlights or an on-the-scalp lightener. When highlighting, you either do a very heavy placement in foils, with balayage or by pulling through most of the holes in a highlighting cap. This is great for people who want to be blonde but may have a scalp sensitivity so can't use permanent colour. When using an on-the-scalp lightener, it's applied the same way you would a permanent all-over colour. This has the ability to lighten more than a permanent colour.

What are your top maintenance tips for balayage, ombre and all over?

Keep your hair conditioned! Lighteners are strong products that make the hair more porous. In the Clairol balayage kit we provide a dedicated conditioner in the box that's designed to work on porous hair, creating a smooth surface that lasts through three washes. In 2022, we're coming out with Repair-Plex, which restructures the hair on the inside. If you are getting your hair done at the salon, ask for a plex or bond-rebuilding product to take home. This tip is to be gentle with your hair. This is really important if you pull your hair back in a ponytail. Try not to make it too snug on the hair and change up the position of where you put the ponytail otherwise it may cause breakage.

Any other hair colour trends on your radar for winter?

One of the biggest trends I'm seeing is the return of the "money shot"—but in a very bold way! That is the chunk of lightened hair that comes off the part by the hairline, down through the ends, with very little or very subtle other highlights in the hair. This look works on all starting hair colours. It can be subtle or bold, blonde, copper, gold—whatever you want—and it draws the eye right to the face. This is the perfect trend to use balayage for! A second trend is "bronde," which is the shade right between the transition from brown to blonde. This can be an all-over shade effect or with some highlights in a warm or neutral tone. It looks flattering on all skin tones and ethnicities and it's looking to be big this season. **Clairol.ca**



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FOR WOMEN

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Singular Vision

Today's coolest beauty brands are stripping things back to just one or two products that suit everyone

BY AILEEN LALOR

A few years ago, multi-step beauty routines were everywhere—we went from three steps (cleanse, tone, moisturize) to nine or 10, including masks, pre-serums, emulsions and more. Hair care was getting more complex, too. The term “skinification” took hold—the idea that we ought to be exfoliating and priming our scalps, and nerding out over hyaluronic acid in our conditioners.

Then came Vintner's Daughter, launched in California by April Gargiulo in 2014 with just one product: Active Botanical Serum, a 100 per cent natural multi-beneficial face oil suitable for all skin types, all issues, all ages. It was a challenging start; retailers just didn't know how to merchandise it. “They would say, ‘Call us back when you have five more products,’ and I would say, ‘I don't know if I'm ever going to have another!’” Gargiulo says. “In order to show your commitment to skin care you needed 12 steps or they didn't believe you were a serious brand.”

Then Vintner's Daughter was discovered by Lady Gaga, Tracee Ellis Ross and Gwyneth Paltrow, who described it as “a little serum I love” to *Vogue*. Sales skyrocketed—and the multi-step beauty backlash began. “There's something I think—in this wild, crazy world where more is better—in carving out a quiet and thoughtful niche,” Gargiulo says.

Her brand, which now has a whole two products (Active Treatment Essence debuted in 2019), was launched just as self-care was starting to be part of the cultural conversation. “I was a new mom and self-care to me was not spending an hour in the bathroom,” she says. Part of what spurred her to explore beauty was her complex skin; she suffered from cystic acne and found even luxurious products did nothing for her.

In Montreal, Amandine Azran was having a similar experience. She suffered from multiple skin issues like eczema, dermatitis and acne. “I'd taken the approach of trying many different products and they made my problems worse. And then I stripped things right down to basics and found I had fewer problems, but my skin was dull and so was my regimen. It wasn't luxurious at all.”

Azran moved to a farm just outside of Toronto and “realized how well my troubled skin reacted well to the simplicity of being outdoors.” In 2019, she and mom Heather launched Amandine Sol Botanicals Inner Glow, a product she felt “would be able to carry so many benefits in one simple step. The ingredients marry together without competing with or overshadowing each other.”

It was a challenging time to launch a single-product brand, “the peak of the Deciem era when people were really into layering up many single-ingredient products,” Azran says. “We needed to explain ... that we were prebuilding all those ingredients into one product and educate them on the value of that.” She sees Inner Glow as a multivitamin, and described her Dream Dew (an essence), launched early this year, as a green smoothie.

Another value that simple regimens have? People are more likely to comply with them. Azran says: “There's no wondering what goes first, last, in between. I'm a skin-care junkie and I don't have the time or patience to do all those steps, but I still want them to feel luxurious.”

The same philosophy is now being applied in the hair world. “We don't want to add 10 more products to your lineup—and if you're using a quality shampoo and conditioner you shouldn't really need a lot either,” says New Zealand's Jaimee Lupton, founder of Monday Haircare. “We are currently expanding our range in a really considered way, with the products our customers most ask for and want to see.”

It's all about quality, agrees Clarissa de Queiroz, founder of The Hair Routine. “The important part ... is not necessarily the number of products we use, rather the quality and purpose of the ingredients in those products. It's important to only focus on the necessary ingredients our hair needs to be healthy to replenish it with water, oil and protein. It's about understanding what the hair needs and when it needs it.”

De Queiroz helps customers understand their hair and streamline their regimes by asking them to complete a



“We make a serum that is for skin, and all our skin thrives off the same nutrients”

simple questionnaire to determine when and how much of a product they need. “The goal is to be able to leave your house with fresh hair without worrying about styling it,” de Queiroz explains. “It's about having beautiful and healthy hair every day and not just for an occasion.”

But, if you're basing your approach on not having too many products in your range, how do you expand and grow your business? Azran says she doesn't have more skin care in the pipeline because the plan for growth is to continue to make products that are meaningful, effective and simple—though she envisages innovation in other areas where she can make simple products more luxe and beautiful. “Maybe there'll be a point when there are no more products to make,” she says.

It's the same for Gargiulo. “We will not be doing serums for mature skin or dark skin or acne-prone skin. We make a serum that is for skin, and all our skin thrives off the same nutrients,” she says. And she's not looking to the beauty industry for inspiration as she builds her brand. “I think of Brunello Cucinelli as a brand that has gone its own way and is so steadfast in its commitment to its purpose. Or old family wineries that are passed down from generation to generation and uphold the same philosophy. We are going for that—being a heritage brand, with formulas that are passed from mom to daughter, sister to sister, friend to friend, because they'll always be able to communicate with skin at a deep level.” V

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3 Gifts that Give Back this Holiday Season

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①

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②

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③

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MILLIE.CA

New Noshes

Where and what to eat this month

Joni

Joni is the new kid on the culinary block in Yorkville, taking up residence in the re-imagined Park Hyatt. Inspired by Toronto's art and culture scene, the restaurant offers international cuisine, reinterpreted cocktail classics and an expertly curated wine list in a space designed by Alessandro Munge, who found inspiration in Canada's own striking natural landscapes. (The aesthetics carry over to the waitstaff, beautifully dressed in a modern take on the uniform designed in collaboration with La Closette x JLMP to complement the interiors.) The menu offers a bistro approach, marrying casual bistro dining, contemporary cooking techniques and fresh ingredients in dishes like Hawaiian kampachi crudo, beeswax poached lobster, chestnut cappelletti and sunchoke soup with black apple. Insider tip: the neighbouring Gardiner Museum lends works to fill display cases, bringing the arts right into the dining room. **4 Avenue Rd., 416-925-1234. Hyatt.com** LAUREN WALKER-LEE



Fonda Balam

Longtime pals Kate Chomyshyn and Julio Guajardo, alongside chef Matty Matheson, have (thankfully) opened a more-permanent iteration of their delicious Birria Balam pop-up taco shop. Head for the white brick building on the corner of Dundas and Palmerston for a meal that draws inspiration from the city of León in central Mexico. Signature dishes include menudo, Vuelve a la Vida, perfect guac and chips, and aguachile. But it's really about the birria: a hearty stew of tender meat scooped into corn tortillas. Legend has it that the tasty consommé is a hangover cure, which might cancel out the margs and Oaxacan Old Fashioned you find yourself re-ordering. And for the true mezcal fans (sip don't shoot), Fonda Balam offers different stoneware options to drink from. A bit of an imbibing choose-your-own-adventure. **802 Dundas St. W., 416-815-8484. Fondabalam.com** LAUREN WALKER-LEE



Silver Swallow

There's a new way to "cheers" this holiday season, without the booze. Created by two Ottawa entrepreneurs, Silver Swallow (\$19) is the first non-alcoholic Champagne-inspired kombucha on the market in the country. Now available in most areas of Ontario and Quebec, the luxury kombucha is carefully brewed in Canada using a rare organic white tea, silver swallow, which is hand-picked in Yunnan, China. "We love hosting dinner parties with friends and celebrating special occasions in style, but we noticed that a premium non-alcoholic Champagne alternative was missing from the table," says Genna Woolston, co-founder. "This led us to create Silver Swallow, a high-end non-alcoholic sparkling kombucha with a sophisticated taste and fancy bottle to leave people feeling good in the moment—and the next day." Presented in a curvy Champagne bottle complete with cork and cage, Silver Swallow offers a well-balanced taste that is light, bubbly and refreshing, with notes of clover, wildflowers, honey and tropical fruit. Made with all-natural ingredients, it pairs well with fresh fruit, seafood and cheese (read: all the munchies before the big holiday meal), and is vegan and preservative-, sulphite- and gluten-free. Says Woolston: "Our dream was to create a high-end better-for-you sparkling Champagne alternative. By using the most prized organic white tea, silver swallow, we developed a truly delicious effervescent kombucha that's worthy of toasting." **Silverswallow.co** NOA NICHOL



Modern Crumble Festive Pan Stuffing

A great dish for a crowd, this plant-based party pleaser will pair perfectly with your fave gravy.

MAKES 8 SERVINGS, BUT THE RECIPE CAN EASILY BE HALVED

THEMODERNMEAT.COM



Ingredients

- 1 LOAF WHITE SLICED GLUTEN-FREE BREAD, APPROX. 500-600 G
- 3 TBSP (45 ML) VEGAN BUTTER OR NEUTRAL-FLAVOURED OIL, DIVIDED
- 1 1/2 CUPS (375 ML) DICED ONION
- 3/4 CUP (180 ML) DICED CELERY
- 3/4 CUP (180 ML) DICED CARROT
- 2 SMALL SWEET AND TART APPLES (E.G., SPARTAN, HONEYCRISP, GALA) CORED AND DICED
- 1 TSP (5 ML) DRIED THYME LEAVES
- 2 TSP (10 ML) DRIED RUBBED SAGE
- 1 TSP (5 ML) SALT
- 1/4 TSP (1 ML) GROUND BLACK PEPPER
- 2 CUPS (500 ML) LOW-SODIUM VEGETABLE STOCK OR WATER
- 1 ONE-POUND (454 G) PACKAGE MODERN CRUMBLE, THAWED

Instructions

Heat the oven to 300 F (150 C). Cut the bread into 1-inch (2.5-cm) squares; transfer to a large, rimmed baking sheet. Bake for 10-15 minutes until bread is dry and golden in spots. Transfer to a large bowl. Heat 2 tbsp (30 ml) butter in a large frying pan over medium-high heat.

Add vegetables and cook until onion is translucent. Add apple, thyme, sage, salt, pepper and stock. Bring to a simmer and cook until the carrot is tender.

Remove from the heat. Heat the oven to 350 F (175 C). Clean frying pan and return to the heat. Melt the remaining butter; add the crumble. Cook, breaking it up, until firm and lightly browned.

Add to bowl of bread. Pour vegetable mixture over all; toss gently to keep bread intact. Transfer to a 2-quart (2-L) shallow baking dish. Cover tightly with foil; bake for 30 minutes.

Remove foil; bake for 15 minutes longer to crisp the top. Can be made the day before; cover and refrigerate. Increase the initial cooking time to 45 minutes.


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Storing Wines With a Story

Penfolds' 2021 Australia Collection offers a compelling reason to collect

BY LAURA STARR

When it comes to cellaring wine, folks are often split into two camps, either delightedly jumping at the chance to showcase their personal curation of special bottles or outright scoffing at the idea of letting any wine go undrunk by the end of the evening.

This is a good time, however, to replenish those collections (which might be looking a little light these days) or, if you fall into the latter camp, to perhaps consider starting one of your own. Many wines are designed to be cellared, evolving over time and broadening in complexity, depth and character, but an often-overlooked part of holding onto a bottle of wine is that you get a story that grows with age. Opening a bottle can transport you back in time, historically, viscerally or emotionally, and who you share it with can forge memories that last forever.

Recently, Penfolds, one of Australia's oldest and most esteemed wineries, celebrated the 70th anniversary of its flagship wine, Grange—an innovative project whose first vintage in 1951 was mired in skepticism and controversy. To the great benefit of anyone who has tasted the wine, Grange not only persevered, but overdelivered on its original goal of crafting an Australian wine that stands up to time; in fact, Grange has demonstrated a capacity to endure six or seven decades and still shine, and who knows what the future might hold for some of its most promising vintages?

Who would you share that bottle with? Where will you be decades from today? The Grange anniversary serves as a reminder that patience with wine can really pay off. Although 70 years of cellaring might sound extreme to some, there is a cheeky type of romance in waiting, and reaping these romantic rewards is more accessible than you might think. You can cellar countless types of wines from wineries all over the world, focusing on those tried and true, or experimenting with your personal preferences, but know that holding onto special bottles offers delayed gratification to amateurs and collectors alike.

Whether you wait seven months or 70 years, there is no doubt we will all have a lot to reflect on when we remember the year 2021. From the Penfolds 2021 collection, here are a few bottles worth hiding away. [Penfolds.com](https://www.penfolds.com)



FOR THE CELLARING NEWBIE

Penfolds 2020 Bin 311 Chardonnay, \$50 at LCBO

Drink one now and save one for a few years down the road, so you can taste how this clean-yet-luxurious Chardonnay gets richer with age.

Penfolds 2019 Bin 389 Cabernet Shiraz, \$100 at LCBO

A collector's favourite with an affordable price point. A striking balance between fruit and structure grants this wine great potential to age.

FOR THE AVID COLLECTOR

Penfolds 2017 Grange, \$1,000 at LCBO

Not only is this vintage the 70-year-anniversary release, but it is also one of only seven vintages ever to boast 100 per cent Shiraz, making this bottle ultra-collectable.

Penfolds 2018 Superblend 802.A Cabernet Shiraz, \$900


The first release of a limited-edition superblend project, showcasing the best of Penfolds' Cabernet and Shiraz grapes under two different production methods (the sister bottle 802.B is slated for release in 2022). Available early 2022, please contact Mark Anthony Wine & Spirits to purchase. [Markanthonywineandspirits.ca](https://www.markanthonywineandspirits.ca)


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