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... HOME & GARDEN

Pretty yet practical

Condo in the city suits chick-lit author
By MARCY CORNBLOM, Special to QMI Agency

Growing up, Chantel Simmons excelled at two things: writing and swimming.

She moved from competitive to synchronized swimming and even tried out for the national team in Ottawa. But being part of the literary community is what she yearned for.

Which path would she take?

Well, that question was answered when her debut novel, *Stuck in Downward Dog*, became a *Winnipeg Free Press* bestseller and a *Chatelaine* Book of the Month.



Photo: Melissa Di Pasquale

It followed a nearly decade-long career working for numerous publications, including the *Toronto Sun*, *Elle Canada* and *TV Guide*, and contributing to many others. Simmons now teaches magazine and website writing and editing at Toronto's Centennial College – when she's not writing, that is.

[See the gallery of Chantel Simmons' home.](#)

In her latest contribution to the chick-lit genre, *Love Struck*, a woman discovers that her husband is cheating, but before she can confront him, he is struck by lightning and loses his short-term memory – including that of the affair. Simmons' takes readers on a comical ride as the couple deals with this chapter in their marriage.

Simmons invited Star Spaces into her home.

Q: How would you describe your home in two words?

A: Comfy-chic.

Q: Tell us about your home.

A: It is a condo located on the 25th floor. It's about 1,500 square feet with an extra 500 feet in the summer, thanks to a private terrace that overlooks the city. It is located at Bay and Wellesley [in downtown Toronto].

Even in the worst part of winter, the floor-to-ceiling windows let the sun in, making it feel like a warm oasis. It features dark hardwood flooring, custom-made bookcases, granite countertops in the kitchen and stainless steel appliances.

The master bedroom, which we are renovating, has a walk-in closet and another wall-to-wall, floor-to-ceiling closet and an ensuite bathroom. When the renovation is complete, we will have a new spacious shower and separate soaker bathtub and double-sink vanity.

Q: Who shares your home?

A: My husband Brent and our cat, Mr. Baz.

Q: What attracted you to this space?

A: The rooftop patio and the private terrace. The terrace gives us a place to garden, entertain friends or just read and relax. We never have to worry about grass to cut.

Q: What is your favourite room and why?

A: I love the living room. It's open-concept, so the dining room, living room and kitchen all flow into each other, which makes it a great space for entertaining.

Q: How would you describe your decorating style?

A: Pretty yet practical. We wanted our living and dining room to be inviting to our guests and a place we would love, since we'd be in it every day. The couches are classic and neutral. The accessories are deep red. We painted the walls a light and creamy yellow.

All of the art on the walls is either made by my husband's uncle, who's an artist, or bought at a local gallery. Our latest piece was one we bought when I sold my first novel. It's a thoughtful writer with a bizarre little muse sitting on her head. It's on the wall outside my office, so whenever I need a bit of inspiration I can look over at it.

Q: What is your fondest memory in this home?

A: When my husband and I moved in, we bought a sectional for the living area. The previous year we had a bought a couch and we made sure the two would be complementary without being identical. When the sectional arrived, we realized that two couches was one couch too many for the area. Then we remembered that I was sitting [on the old one] when my husband got down on one knee and proposed to me. We knew it had too much sentimental value to get rid of.

Q: What's the one item in this house you can't live without?

A: My desk. It was a gift from my husband.

Q: Weekends at home, what are we most likely to find you doing?

A: I love spending Sunday mornings in bed, drinking tea and reading a book or writing on my laptop.

Q: If your walls could talk, what would they say?

A: "Please don't leave" – at least, that's what I'm hoping they're saying.

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