

SCENE-MAKER JEFF STOBER  
ON CREATING HIS PERFECT GETAWAY  
(OH, AND A HOTEL AND MOTEL)  
IN PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY.

# Cool in the County

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**THE BRAIN BEHIND** some of Toronto's trendiest addresses has a simple strategy for success: "We've always followed the artist," says Jeff Stober. His knack for sniffing out exactly what the culturati is craving has earned the former owner of an information technology consulting firm a stable of restaurants and bars (Drake One Fifty, Drake Mini Bar and Drake Commissary, among others), multiple Drake General Stores, plus the original Queen West flagship hotel, which celebrates its 15th anniversary this year. In 2014, the list expanded to include Drake Devonshire, a low-key, 13-room outpost in the heart of Prince Edward County, Ont.

From the start, reservations at Drake Devonshire were hard to come by. Harried urbanites flocked to the hipster-chic waterfront property for rest and rosé at such a volume that staff sometimes expressed chagrin when Jeff spent too much time in the top-floor owner's suite. To meet demand, this summer sees the opening of the pet-friendly Drake Motor Inn, a nod to drive-in motels.

"I didn't realize how much I would love it," says Jeff of spending time in the county. Which is how the avowed city slicker found himself on the hunt for his own perfect PEC retreat. The winning property is a two-storey traditional country home once owned by a local doctor. It's a personal residence but very much a co-pro with Stober's "team" as he calls Joyce Lo and Carlo Colacci, co-founders and directors of Drake General Store. Together they've created a space that feels contemporary, nostalgic and oh so Drake.

SEE SOURCE GUIDE

Jeff Stober leans into the laid-back lifestyle of time spent in Prince Edward County, Ont. Savuti wallpaper, Cole & Son.



## Q&A

**HOUSE & HOME:** Before Drake Devonshire opened, The Drake was such a city brand.

**JEFF STOBER:** It was and it wasn't. Definitely with the Toronto places, there's a sense of being part of an urban environment but, from the start, we were rooted in Canadiana that included a strong sense of rural appreciation.

**H&H:** How did you settle on Prince Edward County?

**JS:** I visited an old friend from Montreal there about 10 years ago and totally fell in love. Growing up, I always loved the Laurentians and the Eastern Townships. Both PEC and the Eastern Townships were settled by the United Empire Loyalists, who brought with them a certain architectural sensibility. You see it with the material choices and the big front porches.





There's an idea that Canadian leisure looks like a dock in Muskoka, but to me it's a porch. When we saw this property, we jumped on it.

**H&H: What else sold you on this place?**

**JS:** I wanted to be close enough to Drake Devonshire that I could walk over. I wanted lakeside and I wanted a historic home done in the Loyalist style, which is deeply rooted in practicality and common sense, like having very small hallways to preserve heat.

**H&H: The look is very Drake. Was that intentional?**

**JS:** It's kind of The Drake gone residential. It's completely consistent in terms of our style guide and design pillars. We laugh because, often when I'm walking through a Drake property, whatever I'm wearing will be a perfect match with the design backdrop.

**H&H: How does designing a personal space differ from designing a Drake property?**

**JS:** When it's a personal space, you're not having to deal with some of the realities of public spaces where, on a given evening, you might have 500 people in a space. We're not thinking the same way in terms of wear and tear. I have a lot of my collections displayed here, which wouldn't make a lot of sense at the commercial properties. Every time I go to Asia, I bring back some kind of elephant, so that collection is displayed on the dining room table.

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SEE SOURCE GUIDE

An edited colour palette helps create a principal bedroom that's spare yet cosy. **Bed, Article; blanket, MacAusland's Woollen Mills; desk, Maison Corbeil; rug, Design Within Reach; table lamp, Crate & Barrel.**

**OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT:** Just off the dining room, the Annex room is an ideal place to entertain friends and workmates from The Drake. Eclectic furnishings, large-scale wallpaper and a vintage storage unit create a look with serious wow factor. **Bonsai wallpaper, Pierre Frey.**

**OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT:** The porches that often adorn Prince Edward County homes were a strong pull for Jeff to invest there.

**OPPOSITE, BOTTOM:** A generous island and comfortable stools mean friends can keep Jeff company in the kitchen while he's whipping up dinner.





Creekside Tile Company, (416) 256-3800 or creeksidetile.com; faucet, Taps Bath Centre, (416) 785-0224 or tapsbath.com; runner, Wayfair Canada, wayfair.ca. **Page 73:** **Foyer:** Floor tile, Marble Granite Depot, 1-888-379-1111 or marblegranitedepot.com; wall colour, Grassy Fields (2034-30), Benjamin Moore, 1-855-361-5898 or benjaminmoore.ca. **Living room:** Sofa, Absolutely Inc., (416) 324-8351 or absolutelyinc.com; sofa upholstery fabric, Designers Gallery (to the trade), (416) 964-3714; grasscloth (on coffee table) by Ralph Lauren, Kravet Canada (to the trade), 1-800-535-3258 or kravetcanada.com; marble-top side table, Structube, structube.com; white side table, Wayfair Canada, wayfair.ca; drapery fabric, Memo Showroom, (647) 350-3700 or memoshowroom.com; green and white upholstery fabric (on chairs), rug, Y&Co., (416) 968-7700, (514) 287-8998 or ycocarpet.com; armchair upholstery fabric, Kravet Canada (to the trade), 1-800-535-3258 or kravetcanada.com. **Page 74: Banquette:** Dining chairs, Bungalow 5, bungalow5.com; throw pillows, Suzanne Brown & Associates, (416) 944-8311; dining chair upholstery fabric, blind fabric, Memo Showroom, (647) 350-3700 or memoshowroom.com. **Page 75: Principal bedroom:** Drapery trim by Clarence House, Primavera Interior Furnishings (to the trade), (416) 921-3334 or primavera.ca; bed frame and accent pillow fabric by Raoul Textiles, Y&Co., (416) 968-7700, (514) 287-8998 or ycocarpet.com; bed linens, Serena & Lily, serenaandlily.com. **Guest bedroom:** Headboard upholstery fabric, table lamp, Kravet Canada (to the trade), 1-800-535-3258 or kravetcanada.com; linens, rug, HomeSense, 1-800-646-9466 or homesense.ca; ceiling fixture, Vintage Fine Objects, (416) 686-5614 or vintagefineobjects.com; artwork by Rundi Phelan, rundiphelan.com. **Home office:** Rug, Y&Co., (416) 968-7700, (514) 287-8998 or ycocarpet.com; table lamp by Bunny Williams, Kravet Canada (to the trade), 1-800-535-3258 or kravetcanada.com; desk, Casalife, (416) 922-2785 or casalife.com; chair upholstery fabric, Quadrille Fabrics, quadrillefabrics.com. **H&H**

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**H&H:** *Travel is one inspiration.*

**What are some others?**

**JS:** I'm fascinated with the way things like fashion, music and design reflect what's going on socioeconomically at any given time. I'm also inspired by organic, natural materials, which is a pushback to technology. It's that sort of point-counterpoint aesthetic that runs through all Drake spaces.

**H&H:** *That kind of juxtaposition can be hard to pull off. Done wrong it looks almost...*

**JS:** Forced, right? Our method is very much trial and error, with the goal of marrying things that are slightly awkward so you get this tension — like different wallpaper side by side. You want to challenge people, so sometimes the reaction is, Do I like that?

**H&H:** *Does a rural location change the design approach?*

**JS:** Definitely. There is a more relaxed vibe both with the home and with the other PEC properties. From a design perspective, that means choosing pieces that feel maybe a little more whimsical. I have this classic, white wicker outdoor table and chair set that I absolutely love. It's not something I would put in my home in the city.

**H&H:** *The large dining room table is perfect for entertaining. Do you host a lot?*

**JS:** Absolutely. My Toronto home, on the other hand, has become a cocoon — my place to escape and have privacy. My love of hosting and cooking has come back with a surge in the county. I've hosted a number of dinner parties, partaking in county wine and hosting sleepovers for friends and family. If there's one thing we know how to do at The Drake, it's a great party. **H&H**

# HOUSE & HOME

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