

Homes for the Holidays: Shades of New Zealand



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As one of the official colours of New Zealand, red amaryllis blooms add a burst of colour to the minimalist decor. The dining room centrepiece also includes Christmas crackers, sliced kiwi fruit, curly willow, spray roses, ferns and Hypericum berries. **JULIE OLIVER**
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The home: This modern home is the residence of the New Zealand high commissioner. With its exterior of flat panels and minimalist interior awash in natural daylight, it stands in sharp contrast to traditional official diplomatic residences. Designed by Ottawa's Christopher Simmonds Architect and Asian Pacific-based HBO+EMTB Architects, the home is part of a growing international trend toward modern, custom-designed residences that reflect the represented country. The open interior with its emphasis on light and space is typical of "Kiwi" design, and the artwork spotlights the symbolism of New Zealand's Maori peoples.

The stylist: Elise Schmitz, [Artistic Landscape Designs](#)

The theme: A representation of a New Zealand Christmas using flora, fauna and colours (red, white or silver, and black are the national colours). Traditions like the fire symbolism of the Maori are suggested by black garden torches at the home's entrance.

Key features: The formal dining room table that seats 14 has been decorated with a table-length Christmas display including full-sized and delicate spray roses, ferns (a symbol of New Zealand), Hypericum berries, and cut kiwi fruit. Beside each place setting is a Christmas cracker and homemade biscuits with a cream filling and a decorative kiwi on top. In the adjacent, open-concept family room/kitchen is a smaller dining table where the five-member family eats most meals. The table overlooks the backyard and is done up with groupings of roses in square glass vases, tea lights floating in water in tall glass vases, and acres of glassware. Small, furry kiwis and red-and-white Christmas crackers add a whimsical tone.

Quotable: "In New Zealand, Christmas comes during our summer," says Penny Tucker, wife of New Zealand high commissioner Simon Tucker. "We have barbecues and play croquet, and the children have a swim after dinner. Still, we have enough British traditions to have Christmas cards."

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Kermit pom balls are an easy way of adding a festive splash. *JULIE OLIVER / OTTAWA CITIZEN*

Bringing it home: Pom-pom power

These Kermit pom balls, here seen beside apothecary vases filled with glass Christmas decorations (both from the Artistic Landscape boutique), add seasonal splash anywhere in the home.

To make the balls, soak three-inch Oasis floral foam (available at Michael's and other stores) in water, then stuff them with 60 or so Kermit green button pom flowers from a grocery store or florist.

You'll need a couple of bunches of flowers per ball, and you should trim the stems to one inch.

The foam will leak slightly after inserting the stems, so let the balls dry for an hour before placing on wood surfaces.