



ONE BUFFET, TWO WAYS

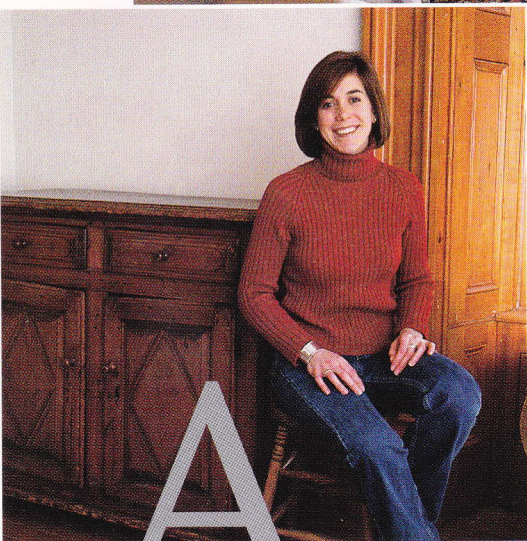
A diamond-point buffet gets ready to greet the holidays with a little help from interior designer Sarah Richardson.

proportions might have dominated a room, working with the lower appendage only, contributing design editor Sarah Richardson is able to instead create a cozy nook by “filling a corner,” with the unassuming piece.

Freestanding storage furniture such as this was commonly found in churches before the 14th century. Domestic residences tended to house dishes, cutlery and linens in built-in wall units instead of the cupboard or buffet that gained in popularity from the 1300s on. The double buffet, as this once was, may have stemmed from the southern German habit

of stacking two chests on top of each other, to open at the front instead of at the top.

As the buffet’s importance in the home grew, so did the ornamentation it took on. Utilitarian furniture became art, with finely carved designs and open tracery (for food ventilation). The diamond points carved into the door panels on this buffet would have been echoed in the missing piece, and are characteristic of Louis XIII form and the period’s penchant for geometric accents. The love of the lozenge-shaped decoration crossed the Atlantic and was an equally popular embellishment for 18th-century Quebec furniture.



At some point over the past 300 years, this 18th-century buffet parted ways with its upper half. According to *The Painted Furniture of French Canada* by John A. Fleming, a smaller scale cornice would have sat atop this buffet à deux corps (two bodies), almost doubling its height. Nevertheless, its loss is our gain. Whereas the original grand



formal country

IF YOU FEEL AT HOME WITH POLISHED SILVER, DARK WOOD, VELVET DRAPES AND PERSIAN CARPETS, THEN FORMAL COUNTRY STYLE IS YOUR ESSENCE. "It doesn't necessarily mean using formal pieces, in and of themselves," says Sarah. The pressed glass jug and water goblets, for instance, needn't be crystal or even a matched set to be "elegant, pretty and useful – all at the same time." Arranged on a vintage hammered brass tray, the tumblers take on a warm glow from the aged amber metal. Glass decanters, of varied proportions and heights, create a sparkling still life. A Sarouk carpet and its opulent palette force the eye to wander to the buffet's feet. A tall mirror made from antique pine trim gives height and depth to the sparse scene. Fresh cut flowers offset the room's masculinity.

"While this is by no means a museum quality piece," says Sarah, "its owners (who picked it up in eastern Quebec 30 years ago 'for a song') appreciate it for what it is." Made from pine, it has the substance and clean lines capable of making it the focal point in a casual country vignette – the perfect tableau for displaying a favourite collection. Yet the cherry stain it acquired in a former life helps deepen the shadows and burnish the wood, allowing it to blend in a more formal environment as well – a bar where guests can help themselves to an aperitif before dinner hour. ©

casual country

"CASUAL COUNTRY STYLE IS ABOUT TEXTURE," SAYS SARAH. IT'S A LOVE OF WEATHERED ITEMS, FOUND OBJECTS, NATURAL BEAUTY AND FOR THOSE DRAWN TO TOUCH INSTEAD OF BOLD COLOUR. A driftwood sculpture, crafted by the ebb and flow of the tide, is the ocean's artwork. A triad of pebble-glazed rice bowls hints at an Asian influence, the introduction of which is becoming more common in country decor, says Sarah. Leafy greenery, effortlessly arranged in a grey ceramic jug, is a subdued splash among other neutrals. A woven sea-grass mat is Mother Nature's answer to carpet, and a simple stool is pulled up to act as an impromptu side table. A looking glass fills an old window frame, reflecting the view from the outside in.



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