

'We chose a pretty French look'



My home

ABOUT ME I'm Nicola Dunn, 32, and I live with my husband Matt, 36, an IT sales manager. We have a four-year-old daughter, Keeva, and another baby on the way. I work as a commercial model and also run a party blog, adorabledays.wordpress.com

MY HOME A two-bedroom semi-detached bungalow just outside Cheltenham, which we bought in March 2004.

WHEN WE BOUGHT IT The house was dilapidated with just one bedroom. But we saw its potential and knew we'd be able to extend.

AND NOW We've doubled the floor space, created a large kitchen-diner and added a second bedroom.

MY STYLE SECRET Don't let precious family photos languish in a drawer - pop them in pretty picture frames and arrange on your walls or a sideboard. My frames are different shapes and sizes but they're linked by colour - either white or silver.

Where to Shop
guide on page 128

Stylist at Home Nicola, 32, from Cheltenham, extended her once run-down bungalow then decorated with a dash of French style to create a warm and inviting family home



ELEGANT STYLE

'The living room used to be two separate rooms, but we knocked through to create extra space. We bought our cream sofas about 10 years ago from DFS - the washable covers mean they look as good as new'



STYLE TIP

'Free up floor space by choosing wall lights instead of standard lamps'

DO IT

Turn your fireplace into a focal point
PAGE 21



RUSTIC FINISH

'We use this dresser for extra storage and as a drinks cabinet. The wallpaper is by Laura Ashley - the Isodore design is similar'



ROOM TO GROW

'We knew our bungalow had plenty of potential'

There was no denying that our bungalow was very worse for wear when we bought it,' says Nicola. 'But we'd fallen in love with the area and could see past the property's flaws.'

It took three months to get planning permission for our proposed extensions - one at the back of the house for the kitchen, and one to the side that would become the conservatory. As soon as permission was granted, we spent all our evenings and weekends knocking down walls and shifting bricks out to a skip. Our home was uninhabitable for a whole year, so we moved in with Matt's parents.

Work in progress

Fortunately, my dad and brother are both builders, so we made the most of their expertise. Our first task was to dig the foundations for the extensions, which Matt and I did ourselves - partly with a digger and partly by hand. It was quite exciting to see it all taking shape.

Once the building work was done, we could get on with tackling the interior. I wanted a kitchen where we could eat >>>

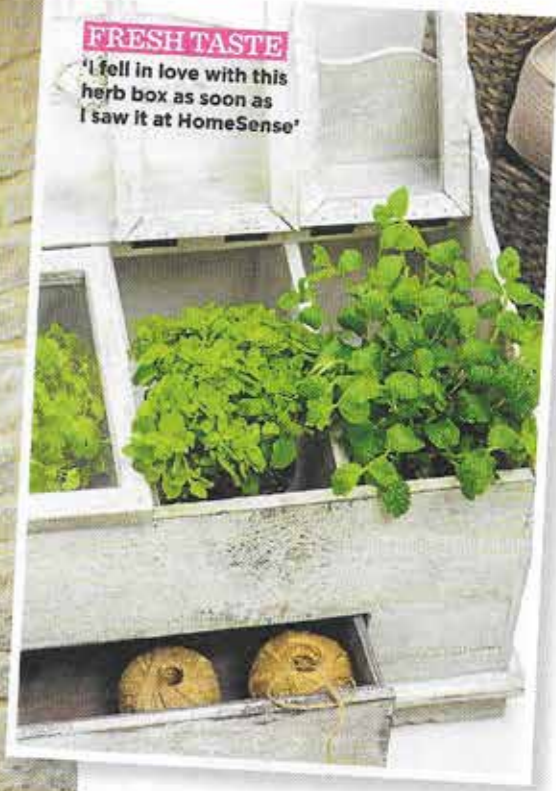


GREAT IDEA!
 'Choose taps with a brushed or satin finish for a softer look'

BIGGER IS BETTER
 'The kitchen doubled in size thanks to our new extension. We found the units at MFI - I love their simple style'



CHILL OUT
 'I love relaxing out here in the conservatory with a cup of tea. The lightweight corner sofa came from Evesham Garden Centre and we move it outside when the weather is nice'



FRESH TASTE
 'I fell in love with this herb box as soon as I saw it at HomeSense'

'By adding rear and side extensions, we've doubled the floor space of our house'

GET NICOLA'S STYLE IN 3 BUYS

1 RUSTIC DISPLAY
 Candlesticks, from £6 each, Matalan



2 TICK TOCK
 Retro Dome wall clock, £25, Marks & Spencer

3 FADED DETAILS
 Paris Printed cushion, £18, Littlewoods



SOCIABLE SPACE
 'The breakfast bar is great for friends and family to sit at - we can all chat while Matt and I cook. The cream canisters are by Nigella Lawson'

» as a family, with a dining table and a breakfast bar. We went for plain white units and added an American-style fridge-freezer for extra character. A second window to the side of the kitchen was a stroke of genius - it lets in lots of light and gives us great views of the surrounding countryside. We also added double doors leading onto the garden - it's lovely to leave them open in the summer; this really brings the outside in. Our kitchen-diner has become a great space for entertaining and we seem to spend most of our time in here.

Layout tweaks

When we gutted the bungalow we took the opportunity to install central heating, but it wasn't possible to restore the

original fireplace in the living room so we turned the chimney recess into a log store, which makes a lovely feature. Originally, the living area was divided into two rooms but we knocked them through to make one large space - the windows at the front of the house let in so much light.

Warm welcome

However, the hallway was rather dark, long and narrow, so we added two strips of glass bricks in the wall adjacent to the conservatory. It wasn't expensive to do (my brother helped us). The result looks really stylish and brightens up both the hall and conservatory brilliantly.

The conservatory happens to be my favourite part of the house - it's small but really airy and peaceful, and it's nice to »

CUTE DISPLAY
 'My rustic bench in the conservatory is from local shop Scarlet Monkey'



BUY IT
 Invest in a shabby-chic bench
 PAGE 18



STYLE TIP
 'Built-in wardrobes are a great space saver and can be filled with lots of clever internal storage'

PRETTY PERFECT
 'The subtle pink touches in our bedroom reveal my girly side. Matt fitted the wardrobes himself using door fronts with window panels from Ikea'



MAKE IT
 Create your own French-style accessories
 PAGE 24

CHIC & STYLISH
 'I use this Ikea chest of drawers in the bedroom to display French-style extras'

» have a place to escape to from all of Keeva's toys! It gets the most sun in the morning and, as it's north facing, never too hot. The corner sofa and coffee table are both really lightweight, so in summer we move them outside onto the decking.

Decorating plans
 At last, once the interior was finished and made good, I could start to decorate and decided to go for a rustic French style throughout the house. I chose a soft cream backdrop to really set off all my finds. In the conservatory I've arranged storm lanterns alongside crates with a mix of distressed wooden and wrought-iron furniture. This space seems to be the perfect place to show off my salvage-inspired finds, perhaps because it's so light and bright. For the living room, I've chosen a more classic theme, with subtle wallpaper in the chimney alcoves and pale carpet and furnishings.

To achieve a personalised touch, I set about displaying our black and white family photos in ornate frames. I found

these while browsing in Cheltenham around little shops selling vintage furniture and accessories, and also antiques shops.

Colour choices
 When we first bought the house we used Keeva's room as a study, but when I found out I was expecting a daughter, we went for a no-holds-barred cute and girly theme in pink and cream. I've added lots of butterflies - you'll find them in the wallpaper and on the rug, as well as on the fabric covering a small pink sofa. And, as children seem to need so much stuff, we made sure to factor in lots of storage.

Reaping the rewards
 I'm definitely a girly girl at heart, and it took quite a while to convince Matt to have pink bed linen in our bedroom. And now we have Keeva he knows he's never going to win the "pink" argument! Although it's taken a while to get our home just right, we're really happy with it. It's a far cry from the house we bought nine years ago - and it's been worth it!

WORDS LOTTIE POTTER PHOTOGRAPHS COLIN POOLE

Hit the shops
 Where to go and what to buy to get Nicola's style

- ❖ **WHITE AND DOVE GREY** is the perfect palette for French-style furniture. Try Sweetpea & Willow (sweetpeaandwillow.com) for a good range of pretty painted pieces for every room in the house.
- ❖ **RATTAN AND WICKER** tables and chairs in deep brown or black are ideal for an airy conservatory like Nicola's. For a similar corner sofa try Tesco Direct's Darwin set, £798 (tesco.com).
- ❖ **STORAGE IS ESSENTIAL** in any home and the toy box in Keeva's bedroom is perfect for hiding clutter. For an alternative design, try The Great Little Trading Company's toy box with a seat on top, £150 (gltc.co.uk).

Stylists AT HOME



'Knocking holes in a wall is a brave move but the panels of glass brick in Nicola's hallway make a wonderful feature and let in extra light.' **LAURA**



'Nicola's home proves that getting the French look doesn't have to be pricey. Watch out for flea market furniture and paint it white or pale grey.' **ELINA**



CLEAN LINES
 'Our bathroom is modern and fairly minimal with a touch of hotel styling'

'Matt and I dug the foundations for the extensions ourselves to make big savings'

FAIRYTALE LOOK

'I love Keeva's room - her bed, wallpaper, rug and bed linen are from Laura Ashley. We found the toy box at Dunelm Mill'





Slim design

Pick a handy extra

Choose a shabby-chic bench, like Nicola's, that's big on style - we've found some that also hide clutter

Create a lovely warm welcome by slipping a bench into your hallway. We love the rustic look that Nicola has created with hers; look out for designs with storage space - ideal for all your outdoor gear.

A bench will look equally as lovely in your living room for extra seating or at the end of your bed, piled with throws. Here are 10 stylish benches that have caught our eye, all for under £250.

Which bench is for you?
Let us know on Facebook. www.housestyle.com/styleathome



£199 THE COTSWOLD COMPANY

Provide a place for all those bits and pieces that pile up in your hallway with the Tetbury Shoe console in Ivory (H53cm x W122cm x D38cm)

WIN IT
Tetbury console, worth £199, The Cotswold Company
PAGE 119



£195 DORMY HOUSE

Take a comfy seat by picking the smartly elegant Triple Storage bench (H59cm x W123cm x D40cm)



RUSTIC LOOK

£159.99 HOMESCAPES

Line up the solid-wood Chateau Shabby Chic dining bench (H45cm x W135cm x D35cm) alongside your farmhouse kitchen table for ultimate Provençal country style



£199 MAISONS DU MONDE

Grab a little French style with the Comptoir des Epices bench (H45cm x W130cm x D43cm)