

Advertorial



## Cooking up the latest kitchen trends

While the hottest trends might not always match your personal taste, there's likely something that will inspire you to try something new. Whether you're planning to do a complete kitchen renovation, or just looking to add some trendy touches, here's what you need to know for your next kitchen update:

### Fun with colour

Say goodbye to boring all-white kitchens. Contrasting colours are big this year and since the kitchen is the social hub of the home, it's the perfect place to get creative. If a full colour overhaul is too big of a commitment, consider mixing things up with tuxedo cabinets or two-toned cabinetry.

### Quartz is queen

Quartz is gaining popularity due to its ability to look like natural stone without many of the drawbacks. It's man-made and available in a variety of colours and patterns. It's nearly indestructible and non-porous, so it will not retain bacteria,

making it easier to clean.

### Smooth finishes

Speaking of countertops, straight edges allow for a timeless look. Seamless and smooth is a big trend, including in the cabinet-fronts that now have less hardware and more subtle edge-pulls.

### Functional minimalism

We saw a lot of open shelving last year, but that left little room to put away daily items. Now we're seeing a mix of open shelving for aesthetics, as well as hidden or enclosed storage for more practical items. You can achieve this look by having clean lines mixed with natural textures like wood, brick and concrete.

### Mixed metals

From matte black to brushed bronze, we're seeing a variety of metals being used. Kitchens can now have different metal finishes for their fixtures, hardware, lighting and accessories.

Find a contractor to make your vision a reality at [homestars.com](http://homestars.com). (NC)

For all your print and digital needs, contact

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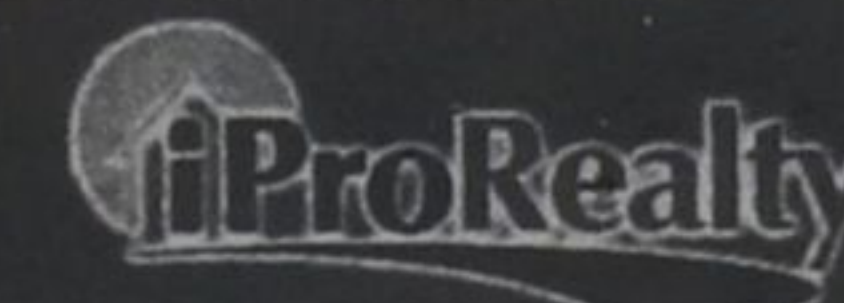
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If the sight of the mercury creeping upward fills you with spring fever, we're with you. We, too, are restless for the toastier and longer days that are just around the corner.

But before you can kick back on a balmy evening with a crisp glass of rosé or a cool IPA, you've got to get your home in shape.

The month of March—when temps are beginning to rise but before those April showers—is the ideal time to get down and dirty with those maintenance projects, says J.B. Sassano, president of Mr. Handyman, a commercial and residential repair, maintenance, and improvement franchise. March "home maintenance projects can extend the longevity and improve the quality of your home, inside and out," he says.

### 1. Clean the gutters

**Task:** Remove leaves, pine needles, and other debris that have accumulated over the winter so your gutter system is ready to handle spring showers. Overflowing gutters and blocked downspouts can damage siding and foundations.

## 5 HOME MAINTENANCE TASKS YOU SHOULD TACKLE IN MARCH

**Shortcuts:** Install gutter guards—screens, foam inserts, surface tension covers—which help to keep debris out of gutters. In general, screen types work best, according to the folks at Consumer Reports.

### 2. Clean the AC condenser

**Task:** Remove dust and debris that have accumulated on the AC condenser (the big metal box outside your house) so that the AC works efficiently.

**Shortcuts:** Hook up a garden hose and spray the outside of the condenser. The water will melt away the gunk. Don't use a brush, and be careful if pressure washing—you could damage or bend the fins.

### 3. Prep the yard

**Task:** Start bringing your yard back to life now, before temperatures warm up for real.

**Shortcuts:** Remove branches and stones, and use your lawn mower with a catch bag to make short work of dead leaves and twigs. Got roses? For full, beautiful blooms, most landscaping experts will tell you to prune your rose

bushes just before the plant breaks dormancy and after the final frost—around mid-March for much of the country. If any buds are diseased, bag and toss them in the trash to avoid spreading fungus and infestations.

### 4. Inspect the roofing

**Task:** Take a close look at your roofing to check for loose and missing shingles, worn and rusted flashing, and cracked boots around vent pipes.

**Shortcuts:** Make it easy on yourself by checking your roof with a pair of binoculars while standing firmly—and safely—on the ground.

### 5. Inspect walkways and driveways

**Task:** Winter is tough on concrete and asphalt—freeze and thaw cycles can break apart stone and concrete. You'll want to seal cracks with sealant made for the specific material of your driveway or walkway to prevent further damage.

**Shortcuts:** Stuff foam backer rods in large cracks to reduce the amount of sealant you'll need.

John Cavan is an Approved Mortgage Planner with Mortgage Architects. Mortgage questions and concerns can be directed to John Cavan's office, located at 14 Martin St., Milton. John can be reached by phone: 905-878-7213 or by email: [john.cavan@mtgarc.ca](mailto:john.cavan@mtgarc.ca). John Cavan's website is [www.stressfreemortgage.ca](http://www.stressfreemortgage.ca). Contact John today about your stressfree mortgage opportunities.