

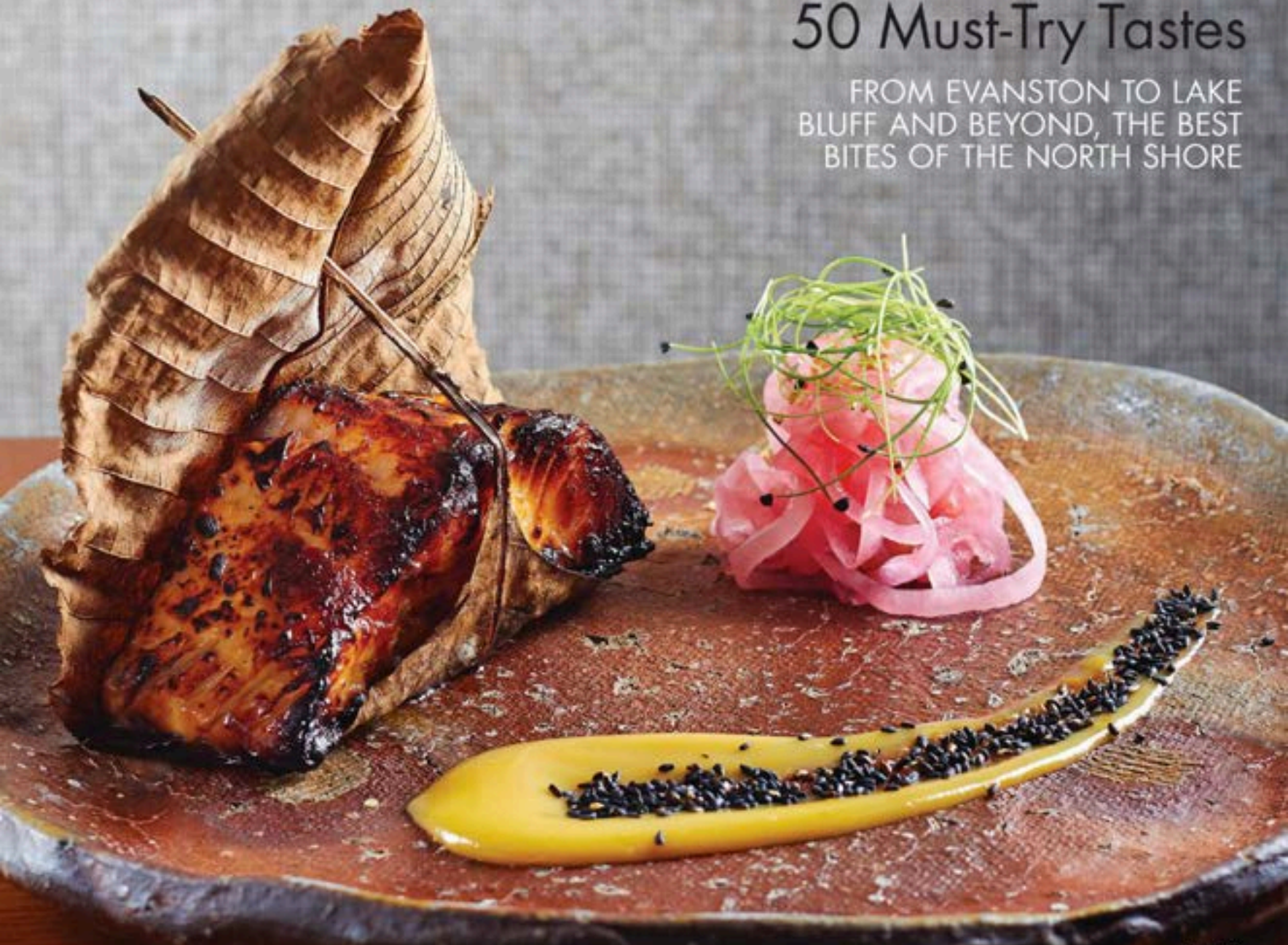
MODERN LUXURY

NLS

The Dining Issue 2014

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FIFTY SHADES OF GRAY

A rich palette creates a warm and cohesive feeling in a Highland Park mansion.

By Tate Gunnerson

Photography by Evan Thomas

"As big and dressy as this house is, it has warmth," explains interior designer Stephanie Wohlner of the 15,000-square-foot mansion in Highland Park that she designed for a couple with three young children. The wife first saw Wohlner's work while paging through a design magazine. Impressed with the French-inspired interior, the wife inquired among her friends and learned that Wohlner lived just down the street and had designed the homes of others in her circle of acquaintances. "I had actually seen some of her work before in person without realizing it," the wife says. "When we finally met, we clicked immediately. She understood our style, and she felt like somebody I would enjoy working with."

Wohlner's involvement in the project began when the home was still in the planning stages. Working with architect Michael Hershenson, of Michael Hershenson Architects, and contractor Matt Pollack, of Red Rock Custom Homes, the designer had a hand in every aspect of the interior design, from the flooring to the intricate wainscoting and molding throughout. "It was very copacetic," Wohlner explains, noting that the challenge for this project was to create an elegant home that would still feel comfortable and warm despite its cavernous spaces. "She wanted it to be dressy yet livable. It's really hard to create cozy spaces in these very large homes," Wohlner explains.

EXPERT EYE
Crystal light fixtures, luxurious fabrics and touches of silver leaf establish a sense of formality in the living room. Wohlner designed to feel elegant yet cozy. To balance the luxurious finishes, Wohlner brought in a pair of sofas that have a weathered frame and comfortable chenille fabric.



THE BIG COZY

To make the master bedroom seem less cavernous, Wohlner incorporated a custom four-poster bed and covered the ceiling in the same vinyl grass cloth wallcovering that she used for the walls. Silver leaf accents on the bed, bench and armoire add elegance and sophistication.

gray. Concerned that the space still felt a bit cold, Wohlner also incorporated a silver metallic wallcovering that has a pattern resembling window frames. "The room is so enormous that it needed something to add interest or it might have looked like a giant conference room," Wohlner says. "The wallcovering is interesting and daring."

The nailhead trim and contemporary pattern that the designer selected for the dining chairs pulls the dining room in a modern direction, while a gold-leaf console with a marble top, and a crystal chandelier and sconces add a more formal aesthetic. "I always try to put a lot of layering in my work," Wohlner explains. "It's like a dress with jewelry or a suit with a pocket square. You need those layers to create warmth and interest."

The nailhead trim makes another appearance in the spacious family room, where Wohlner has incorporated plush, comfortable furnishings upholstered in complementary shades of dark gray, charcoal and black. With the three children in mind, the designer eschewed vulnerable silk and velvet in favor of wool and cotton. "I wanted durable fabrics that would stand the test of time," Wohlner says. "It's more refined than a country home, yet you can plop down on the fabrics." Adding classic sophistication are two pairs of wing chairs—one set in front of the fireplace, the other next to french doors that overlook the backyard. "People think design has to be casual to be comfortable but that's not always the case," Wohlner explains.

Indeed, this home is a study in contrasts—spacious yet cozy, elegant yet comfortable. According to Wohlner, every detail in the home works together to create a continuous feeling throughout. "If you take down all the walls in a house, you still want it to feel connected and cohesive," Wohlner explains. "This house has a sense of peacefulness. Life is so chaotic that I think you need that in a home."

For the owners, moving into their new fully furnished home after the nearly 18-month build felt a little like the reveal that culminates so many televised decorating shows. "It was a surreal experience, like a dream come true," the wife explains. "We feel very fortunate that we had the opportunity to build such an amazing house, and we appreciate it every day." ■