

OFF-CAMERA STYLE

NICOLE OLIVER DISHES ON LIVING WELL IN A HOME THAT'S LIKE A HUG

BY LUISA RINO / PHOTO MITCHELL PARSONS



Nicole Oliver has been an actor for 16 years, in dramatic and comedic television and feature films. Her most recent movie, *The Foursome*, will be released next spring and features Kevin Dillon. As well as hosting Life Network's reality show *Crash Test Mommy*, Oliver is working on a series for YTV called *Storm Hawks*, set to premiere in fall 2007. When the *Georgia Straight Living* caught up with Oliver for a coffee, she was beginning filming of the fourth season of *Crash Test Mommy*; the show's third season debuted just last month.

How do you describe your home style?

"Well, I think, surprisingly, I'm a bit of a traditionalist. I like what you'd call your Pottery Barn aesthetic, but I like to make it my own: mix in antiques, make it contemporary-cozy, with the odd surprise. I don't want it to look like everyone else's. I want it to reflect my personality and the people who live inside it. My friends describe it as a big hug; it feels like a home."

Where's your favourite place to cocoon?

"There's two. In summer, my back deck. I have a 500-square-foot deck off my back kitchen that becomes another room for us in the warmer months, lots of herbs and plants and terra cotta pots. But in winter it's my chaise longue near my wood-burning fireplace."

Where do you entertain?

"We use our whole house. I use every inch of my home, depending on who I'm entertaining and when. In summer, there are lots of dinner parties on the deck, and I have a nice big front yard. I love to entertain and love people spontaneously dropping over. I kind of grew up with a traditional living room and dining room, and you didn't go into it, only on special occasions. My home isn't like that."

What's your most extravagant purchase?

"The latest one is—I do believe in treating myself—I bought some sheets for my bed, Frette, with a gazillion-thread count, really super-soft. And my next purchase is a new mattress for my bed. I'm coveting the Duxiana beds."

Your best budget find?

"It's out in my garden on my deck. It was in an alley with a sign that said Free. It was an old kind of metal stand with a little side table, looks like a hospital table. I painted it farmhouse red, put it on my deck, and put all my herbs on it."

Most sentimental piece?

"Above our fireplace in our living room is a mirror that hung in my husband's grandparents' house. They had a place right at—it's gone now—right by the Beach House café [at Dunderave Pier], and the house didn't have an address but a name. They passed away, and my mother-in-law brought it to her home in North Vancouver. When they were moving from the house to a condo, my husband and I were helping them move and noticed the mirror, and they were going to leave it so we took it, even before we had our home. I called it my Cinderella slipper because I had to find a house it would fit in."

What's your drink?

"Oh, there's so many. It changes; right now I'm back to the classic crantini. But I've always been a champagne bunny."

What's on your bedside table?

"Lots of things, but bookwise I have *Blink* by Malcolm Gladwell, which is kind of about first impressions—he wrote *The Tipping Point*; *Mary Mary* by James Patterson; a lamp; and a sound-soother DVD sleep-miracle thing. It has a CD player and you can hear the TV through it."

What's in your DVD player?

"Lost: Season One."

What's in your CD player?

"Justin Timberlake's new CD, *Future Sex/Love Sounds*. I have the Best of Def Leppard: *Vault*. I'm a bit of an '80s-hair-rock freak. Red Hot Chili Peppers' *Stadium Arcadium*."

What's your favourite electronic gadget?

"I just got a new iMac G5 with a 20-inch screen. Between that and my iPod, it's heaven."

Favourite kitchen tool?

"My pizza cutter."

What's your colour scheme?

"Lots of espresso browns and creams, all the coffee colours, and my main accent colour is cranberry red."

Proudest gardening achievement?

"The fact that I can garden without killing plants. I had a black thumb, and I've worked really hard at not killing plants, and now I grow vegetables and use them in my cooking and I really like that. I have roses, and that's the one thing I'm trying to master. I find it really relaxing."

What's your favourite...

Sheets?

"Frette."

Dishes?

"Denby."

Bath soap?

"I'm a bit of a product whore, but there is one bath soap: Green Tea at Lothantique."

Candles?

"Love candles. A cabala candle, a prosperity candle, from Fino Lino."

Flower?

"Peonies and roses."

Wine?

"Edge. It's a Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon." ♦