

Mi Casa has small stuff for your casa

*Furniture and accessories From funky to functional
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As televisions have been reinvented to take up less space, so too has the humble TV tray, popularized in the 1960s to take advantage of the growing popularity of TV dinners.

Consider the Cee table, which sits on casters and is designed to fit snugly between two people sitting on a sofa by tucking underneath the sofa bottom.

Manufactured by Sprint, it sells for \$149 at Mi Casa, a Cabbagetown store specializing in condo-sized furniture and accessories.

Owner Alex Zamayoa opened his Carlton St. store about three years ago, having operated before that under the same name a few doors away with wares from Mexico.

Inventory changes seasonally, leaning toward furniture in fall/ winter and accessories as people's thoughts turn to spring and summer.

"We have a wide range of prices," Zamayoa says. "We have something for everybody."

He points to a funky stand designed to hold a flat-panel television. Called Aspect, the stand comes in silver or black with clear glass shelves (single shelf, \$579; two shelves, \$950.) It's sleek and modern, suited to today's small spaces.

"We sell a lot of them," he says.

Ottomans - round and square, small and large - remain popular, with storage underneath and tops that flip up to become trays. Arranged in a row, they can function as a coffee table.

Coming soon is a unique innovation by Ewest, a Toronto company, which has four ottomans covered in cowhide tucked under a glass top with a wooden cross underneath. Pull out one square for seating and the table still stays up.

Short on beds for guests? The Milan is an ottoman that turns into a twin bed, with the top flipping up to become the headboard. Made in Toronto by Palette Furniture, the ottoman is stylishly wrapped in top-grain leather, Ultrasuede or vinyl. It sits 35 inches by 45 inches and 16 inches high (0.8-metres by 1.1-metres by 0.4-metres) before folding out. Prices range from \$850 to \$1,250.

"This is perfect for condos," he says. "We can't keep them in stock."

Silva, another Canadian manufacturer, makes custom chairs and dining tables "and the quality is beautiful," Zamayoa says.

As well, Silva makes headboards in four styles and in a wide range of colours and fabrics. Prices start at \$950 for a double headboard and rise to \$1,150 for a king.

A bench/coffee table by Chair-Tech in red or black leather, reinforced with wood underneath for seating, is \$350. Another stunner is the Dune table, with a pedestal base wrapped in red, brown or black leather and topped with a 48-inch (1.2-metre) glass round, which sells for \$799. Matching leather chairs are \$210 each.

Dining tables that fold out to double their size, condo-sized sofas, nesting tables - all suit the small-space crowd. That's not only condo dwellers, but homeowners in Cabbagetown and beyond whose rooms bring to mind the adage Think small.

Esprit, a hydraulic coffee table on casters, is a modern interpretation of a games table and is a stylish addition for tiny spaces. It's priced at \$1,150 and is available in natural, cherry or wenge veneer with an aluminum frame and wheels.

Zamayoa says he likes to get to know his customers, find out what they need and get it for them. Although the store is not large, he sources items from a wide range of suppliers. Shoppers can look through a variety of catalogues to order items.

Nimmi Aunger, an interior designer with Douglas Design Studio, is one of several designers who shop at Mi Casa. Aunger says the store has a great selection of bronze sculptures and unique mirrors, as well as a lot of unusual objects, "which is exactly what we're looking for."

The day we visited, she was searching for unique mirrors for a client, exploring a catalogue selection from Harrison & Gil, a U.K. company known for its unusual, quality pieces. Its trademark cross-legged chairs are also sought by high-end designers (www.harrison-gil.com).

She praises the store staff's efficiency in getting objects to her as well as their friendly service. "I really like working with them," she says.

Yanic Simard, owner of the Toronto Interior Design Group, notes "It's the place we go first to get our accessories." He recently bought a cowhide rug for a client in a Miami condo, because the quality was exceptional. The client was impressed.

Mi Casa gets high marks from Simard for its selection of lighting.

He also praises the service, saying it's not unusual to spend three hours sorting through catalogues to find the right pieces. "Not every store will spend the time," he says. Although he shops in many stores, "for us it's like a little treat going there."

Like a favourite vacation hideaway that's been discovered, the secret is out.

Mi Casa is at 238 Carlton St. in Toronto. Call 416-929-1913 or visit the website at www.micasatoronto.com.

[Illustration]

The hydraulic Esprit table with veneer top, aluminum frame and wheels, lets you adjust its height from 12 inches to 33 inches. It sells for \$1,150 and is available in natural, cherry or wenge veneer. Right, Harrison & Gil mirrors range in price from \$1,590 to \$7,900 at Mi Casa, 238 Carlton St. The Dune table and chair set features a round, tempered glass top with leather-covered base. The ensemble comes in red, brown or black. The table is \$799, matching leather chairs are \$210 each. The Dune table and chair set features a round, tempered glass top with leather-covered base. The ensemble comes in red, brown or black. The table is \$799, matching leather chairs are \$210 each.

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