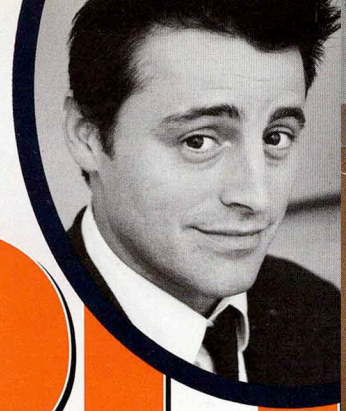


**THE SECRET 'JOEY' FILES**  
NEW PLOT TWISTS FOR NEWTON'S MATT LEBLANC



# Boston

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**DREAM HOUSE:** The owners of Fresh carved out this Brookline haven by playing with surface, light, and texture. Page 140.

# BETTING ON THE HOUSE

BY PATRICIA HARRIS AND DAVID LYON PHOTOGRAPHS BY KELLER AND KELLER



BEFORE THE DRILLS WHIRL AND THE PLASTER FLIES, A DESIGN PRO SHOWS YOU THE FIX-UPS THAT STRETCH THE MOST VALUE OUT OF YOUR HOME—AND WALLET.

BOSTON HOME



**SITTING ON THE BENCH:** Wraparound bench seating provides both a cushion of comfort and a practical solution to group entertaining. Vibrant ruby red tones stand out against the dark gleam of the polished floor and natural textures of the chairs. Creamy egg-white colors tie the look together. On the wall, the José Gonçalves painting complements the room's straight lines without distracting the eye from its rich details.

**Designer Mollie Johnson of Mollie Johnson Interiors** in Wellesley jokes that she and her husband don't bother with the stock market: They get a better return selling their homes. The key to hitting the top of the market is to add quality where it counts, which is Johnson's aim whether she decorates for herself or for a client.

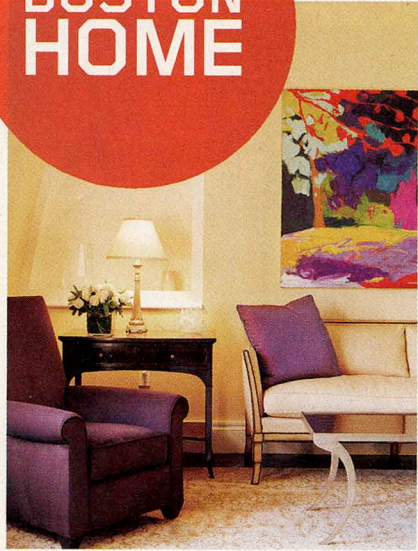
This airy Back Bay townhouse on Marlborough Street drives home the point. The client provided Johnson with specific marching orders: to infuse a feeling of warmth and character into the two-level home. Working with architect John MacDonald of Morehouse MacDonald &

Associates in Lexington, Johnson pulled off the final remodeled look by turning her eye to everything from silver leaf on a new coffered ceiling in the dining room to selecting the right drawer pulls.

Honing in on these specific details—and parceling out the work in stages—was Johnson's secret to the successful transformation of this 2,900-square-foot interior. "From an architectural and design standpoint, it pays to plan ahead so you can make intelligent choices," Johnson says. "As long as you know the end-state scenario, you can work toward that goal in stages." Here the designer

details step-by-step instructions you can use as a guide to increase the sum of your surroundings, too.

The center of the expansive upper level (reached via elevator from the first floor entrance) serves as both foyer and dining room. Johnson grounded the entry into this space by laying a dark-stained oak parquet floor. "I always darken the floor to add a sense of age and richness," she says. She also addressed lighting, a subject that often confounds homeowners. A modern glass chandelier and wall sconces with architectural details add visual interest and mood [continued on page 158]



**FIXED RESULTS:** Once the heavy lifting was completed on the fix-up projects and custom building jobs around the apartment, Johnson focused on filling the home with character. At right, this page, greenery adds life to a room, while rain boots ground it in the reality of Boston's temperate climes. Below, the open kitchen invites conversation. Opposite, the living room, with its custom built-ins.

