

DECOR



Projecting horror onto your building is a great way to decorate.

Get your fright right

Colin and Justin dig up Halloween decorating tips from Legends of Horror 'scream queen' Nadia Di Donato...



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**ROOM FOR
IMPROVEMENT**

We're huge Casa Loma fans. The fairy-tale castle, in fact, was amongst the first places we visited after moving to Toronto, though back then the tired structure bore little of the sparkle with which it now gleams.

We remember thinking it needed a new team of visionaries to remove the veneer of 'under utilisation' that hung, cloak like, over the potentially magical edifice.

Spool to the present, and the destination is an altogether different affair. Now in the capable hands of Liberty Entertainment Group, it's been transformed into a thriving destination for international tourists and Canadians alike who revel in the magic with which its overflows.

Blue Blood, the city's hottest ticket steak house, occupies a significant part of the ground floor and concerts and symphonies take place in the beautifully manicured gardens.



An old stable becomes a Frankenstein nightmare with the right decor.

Signposting a happy future, weddings are now a large part of Casa Loma's business roster, whilst castle tours have been invigorated to appeal to savvy, global expectation.

But it's from late September until the last day of October we're most

likely to be found at Casa Loma. For it is then, in the spell casting hands of uber visionary Nadia Di Donato (Creative Director and Vice President of Liberty Entertainment Group) that Legends of Horror awakens.

Ah yes — Halloween. One of our favourite calendar periods. Over the years we've been to many scare fests, in many cities, but this experience far exceeds the competition.

At Legends of Horror, ghouls pounce unexpectedly (beware: monsters lurk at every turn) the terror served via state of the art animatronics and a cast of actors whose scream inducing talents are blood curdling.

To amplify drama, Stephen King's Pennywise (from the IT franchise) is in attendance this year (we won't spoil the fun by revealing too much) so prepare for goose bumps big enough to ladder your tights. Or indeed your jeans...

And so, Halloween décor at the forefront of our mind, we slid towards the shadows and crept into Casa Loma to chat with Nadia about her brand of seasonal thrill seeking.

"My Halloween home style", she explains, "is in contrast to Legends of Horror where I aim for Hollywood or Universal Studios type installations with months spent searching for animatronics, decor and performers." Pausing, for a moment, she adds: "My home décor, though, is a little more understated 'autumn spooky'."



Queen of the Night — Nadia Di Donato meets one of the cast of Legends of Horror...

According to Toronto's preminent fear queen, "The best way to conjure Halloween is to search out old books, vintage accessories, twinkling candles and a few Halloween-specific accents to complete the look."

Our host stresses the importance of lighting: "It's a crucial mood setter." Nadia suggests replacing standard bulbs with deep red, purple or blue lights to proffer an eerie vibe.

Chatting further, we tell Nadia we love scouring vintage stores, markets and eBay for spooky paraphernalia, and she nods in agreement. Sometimes, we agree, it's all about looking at things differently. Could that outsized wooden trunk be painted and attired with a crucifix to set the scene as a coffin? Or could old glass domes be filled with plastic rats and pomegranates to elicit a spooky mood?

"It's one thing to compose a commercial project like Legends," explains the event's visionary, but in the home context it's different. The secret, there, is to use as many authentic items as you can. Layer with candelabras, torn blankets and Venetian masks, and pepper in a few high street finds to bolster the magic."

Nadia's favourite shop for seasonal goodies? "I tend to avoid traditional outlets, but Amazing Party Store scour the globe for unique merchandise. They have some great items..."

One of our own tried and tested retail 'haunts' is Home Depot, whose spooky inventory improves each year. Animated 'jack in a box' pop up ghouls? Inflatable witches? Scary tombstone effigies? Aye, the pumpkin toned retailer has you covered.

For further spooktacular magic, bag a set of Salvador Dali Tarot cards by Taschen (find them on Amazon or in good book stores) and before you know it you'll be telling your future in a hauntingly surrealistic manner.

Our time with Nadia drawing to its conclusion, we whisper our goodbyes and slink silently from Casa Loma, hell bent on dipping our quills in devil's blood to write this week's fear drenched epistle.

We hope you're suitably inspired to lavish your nest with all things scary. Alternatively, forgo the effort and head to Casa Loma (for info and timings visit www.legendsofhorror.ca), which runs till October 31st. But be ready to jump out of your skin. Because Nadia and her screaming coven have taken fright night realism to a whole new level...

Watch for Colin and Justin on Cabin Pressure and Great Canadian Cottages (Cottage Life TV) and on Cityline (Citytv). Find the Colin and Justin Home Collection in stores across Canada. For more information, visit www.colinandjustin.tv.