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Every single thing in Michelle Ogundehin's home supports and promotes her wellbeing, from the pictures she looks at to the weight of her cutlery to the smell of her soap and sheets.

The former editor of *Elle Decoration* and presenter on TV shows such as *Interior Design Masters* and *Grand Design* trained as an architect and has been developing a comprehensive theory of domestic bliss since she was a child.

Last year, while translating her thoughts into *Happy Inside: How to Harness the Power of Home for Health and Happiness*, Ogundehin had no inkling that when her book launched we would be confined to our homes, with ample time to reflect on how they make us feel. Her recipe, with ingredients from Buddhism, mindfulness and

COMFORT AND JOY

Interiors guru Michelle Ogundehin shares her decorating tips for creating a truly happy home

colour psychology, seasoned with 20 years' experience editing magazines, is intended to be adapted by each reader according to taste, she says. "[But I can tell you] how I personally have created my domestic idyll."

Ogundehin left London about 10 years ago to live full-time in Brighton. As a student in London, she moved every year and subsequently lived in "many an unappetising rental" in New York and Los Angeles. "Every single [home] taught me something. I've learnt all my lessons the hard way so that my readers don't have to."

Her pretty East Sussex home, chocolate box on the outside, updated inside, was built in 1821. The first impression is one of warmth. From the blush pink quilt on the bed to the sunshine yellow ceiling in the kitchen, from the curated clutter on her shelves to the squishy cushions on the sofas, it looks deeply inviting.

"When I'm at home, I want to exhale and feel relaxed," she says. "It's cosy, which is a word that people mistrust. Perhaps they associate it with chintzy cottages. I understand cosy to mean warmly supportive and a comfortable environment."

Sitting in her study, she lists the reasons why these rooms make her happy. "My stuff. I am no minimalist. I love my things. They tell my story and are an intrinsic part of who I am. The key is they must be contained. So throughout my house I have a series of display shelves, on which I display the things I love.

"I'm sitting on a cushion. My great love. You can never, ever have too many cushions. They are joyous." She has an impressive collection of seven on the kitchen sofa, in a mix of materials, colours and textures that reflect the palette of her home. "My son loves to

make a den among them. If I'm cooking, he will snuggle himself up in the middle of those." Sources are Caravane, Kirsten Hecktermann, Madam Stoltz and Habitat. "There are some I've made myself from fragments and patchworks of vintage materials and chinoiserie with blowsy blooms. I do like a good blowsy bloom!"

The big-ticket buy was the parquet floor from Ecora, which runs down the hallway from the front door and fans out into the living room and kitchen on either side. "I literally cried when it was first done because it was the thing of my dreams. It was the thing I'd always wanted and finally, in this house, I had the opportunity and funds to do it. You can sit on a box on a great floor – which I jolly well had to do for a while – and it will always look magnificent."

According to Ogundehin, the practice of splurging on a high-end kitchen, at the cost of other areas of the home, is often ill-advised. Her own kitchen is compact and contains only what she wants and needs. "I have a good sharp knife and a chopping board, a set of three saucepans and a frying pan. There's a

heck of a lot you can do with that," she says. "Your kitchen is not a trophy. It's the engine of the home. It's there for you to create healthy food. I think it's wonderful these spaces are receiving attention, but let's not let it get out of hand. If you are a supremely enthusiastic cook, then good – but most people are not. If you like watching TV while you eat, then give more space to your sofa. I make no judgment. I just say be honest about it and accommodate it."

She is equally implacable on the subject of fancy bathrooms. "I don't need a 'bathroom as spa'. More to the point, I don't need to feel bereft because I don't have it." The ex-editor's advice is that we resist the siren song of the glossy magazines and be true to ourselves. Does this mean ignoring trends? "I've never felt any pressure to be on trend. I know what works for me. When you are firm in your own convictions you don't get swayed by trends. But there's nothing wrong with trends. They're fun."

Classic furniture designs that make an appearance in her own considered interior include Eero Saarinen's Tulip table, with an Arabescato