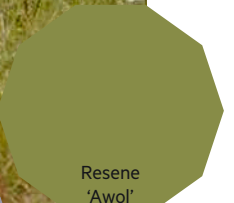




Happy to hygge

There's a reason why the Danish are among the happiest people on the planet. Lift your spirits this winter by bringing a little 'hygge' into your home



Winter. It's the season of steaming hot chocolates, alpaca-wool socks, cable-knit sweaters and frost-nipped pink cheeks. It's staying in all day on a Saturday snuggled up in front of the fire with zero guilt. It's walking in from the dark at 6pm to the aroma of a slow-cooked stew bubbling away in the crockpot. We don't have a term for this warm, cosy feeling in English, but the Danish do - and it's catching on everywhere, even making it onto last year's shortlist for the Oxford Dictionaries Word of the Year.

'Hygge' (pronounced hue-guh) is the simple notion of enjoying the good things in life in good company. According to hyggehouse.com, hygge is all about "being present enough to recognise and acknowledge an act, moment or feeling when the ordinary feels extraordinary". The other night when you enjoyed a glass of merlot by candlelight with your partner? That was hygge. Or when you sat around the dining table doing a puzzle with the kids while eating homemade cookies? Maximum hygge points for you!

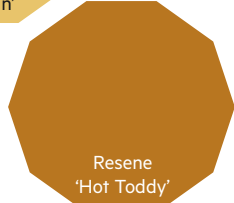
For Danes, the term evolved from a need to survive their country's bitterly cold, dark winters by embracing those small, feelgood moments. And it works. The inhabitants of Denmark are consistently counted among the world's happiest people, despite seeing very little daylight during their coldest months. Danes acknowledge the fact that something as simple as lighting a candle while a storm rages outside or brewing a fresh pot of coffee on a cold and frosty morning is enough to lift the spirits.

Down here in New Zealand, our winters are a little less extreme than those in the north, but this doesn't mean we can't embrace a more Scandinavian way of thinking. Go on, stock up on your favourite pinot noir and fluffy pink marshmallows next time you're at the supermarket, and find ways to make the ordinary a little more extraordinary this winter.

How to hygge

- > When you're redecorating, paint your walls in soft, warming colours that complement your furnishings, such as these swatches from Resene.
- > Invest in scented candles (you'll save on your power bill, too - bonus happiness!).
- > Add texture to your decor with sheepskin throws, velvet cushions and mohair blankets.
- > Go shopping for sumptuous loungewear such as a soft cashmere knit or snugly slippers.
- > Spend an extra 10 minutes in the bath, stop rushing and appreciate the good things in life. •

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the paint the professionals use