

Linda Barker

Shaker style is a timeless classic that translates very well from the US to the UK

Looking for a New England

What a refreshingly simple antidote the Shaker look is to all the eclectic, bohemian and floral interior schemes of late. For minimalists it's ideal, as it's all about clean, uncluttered lines and using colour sparingly. Some may find it rather austere, but I think it can be very warm and comforting when done properly.

The Shakers – an English religious sect who fled to America in the 18th Century to avoid persecution – believed that homes and the objects in them were purely functional. They frowned upon frivolity and decoration – hence the very minimalist look of their dwellings – which is still very popular today.

If you've got a cherry wood or maple kitchen, you're half way to creating the New England look. If you don't have one, I suggest contacting a specialist such as Plain English (www.plainenglishdesign.co.uk) or John Lewis Of Hungerford (www.john-lewis.co.uk). If money is tight, plain MDF units given a rosewood glaze also works well.

The Shakers left their floors bare and painted their walls with natural plant dyes, with earthy greens, dove greys, rustic reds and clotted creams all typical colour schemes. Although they're sometimes described as 'sludgy', they can look really fresh and chic in the modern home. B&Q New England paint range (www.diy.com) would be perfect, or you could try Farrow & Ball (www.farrow-ball.com) or Fired Earth (www.firedearth.com) for inspiration.

Although decoration wasn't a priority for the Shakers, for your own purposes, I think you can weave in some embellishment as a nice contrast to all that wood. A few red and white fabric heart shapes suspended here and there, or red and white gingham curtains and patchwork throws will all look lovely. The odd embroidered cushion would be acceptable, but lavish plumped-up or printed varieties are a no-no.

Everything had its place in the Shaker household, so storage is also essential. Try The Holding Company (www.theholdingcompany.co.uk) for neat-looking stacking boxes and Cath Kidston (www.cathkidston.co.uk) for peg coat hooks. Tongue and groove panelling, painted in a suitable colour, is also a key element. Try EasiPanel (www.easipanel.co.uk) for this.

Both the aptly named Shaker shop (www.shaker.co.uk) and New Heights (www.newheights.co.uk) have a fantastic selection of New England-inspired fine furniture. But if you don't want too much wood, go for plain linen sofas or occasional chairs covered in ticking or gingham – Ian Mankin (020 7722 0997) has a very authentic selection to choose from. To transform your bedroom into a Shaker shrine, the Cotswold Company's (www.cotswoldco.com) Stratford Oak bedroom range would look really authentic.

Whatever room you decorate, make sure you have a traditional Shaker rocking chair, so you can while away the hours knitting – or better still: snoozing!

For information on Linda and her range of products visit www.reallylindabarker.com.



Maple rocker, £365,
Shaker Woodworks,
01495 228118; www.shaker-woodworks.co.uk

Style file

From tiebacks to poles, it's the little details that count when it comes to dressing up your windows. Here's how to do it with style...

Napkins, £10.95;
placemats, £15.95,
Cucina Direct,
0870 420 4300;
www.cucina-direct.com



Cushion, £42.95,
Shaker Limited,
0845 331 2055;
www.shaker.co.uk

Heart garland,
£18.50, Olde Glory,
01225 422460;
www.oldeglory.co.uk



Seven-drawer tallboy, The Cotswold Company,
0870 241 0973;
www.cotswoldco.com

Vermont mission table, £925,
New Heights, 020 8452 1500,
www.new-heights.co.uk



Kautsby chair, £35,
Ikea,
0845 355 1144;
www.ikea.com



Bread boards from £16.95,
Shaker Limited,
0845 331 2055;
www.shaker.co.uk



Oak or cherry peg rails, from £30, Heals, 020 7896 7451; www.heals.co.uk

