

# HOME STYLE

## THE CHANDELIER

Words: **CLARE GOGERTY**

There is nothing modest about the chandelier. There it hangs in the middle of the room, shimmering and twinkling, bouncing light from its tiers of pendant crystals, all show-offy and flamboyant. Little wonder, then, that it has been the light fixture of choice for ballrooms, theatre foyers, palaces and rooms with regal pretensions for decades.

Until now. A new generation of designers has reinvented the chandelier, downsizing it for the more modest home, introducing contemporary styling without abandoning its razzle-dazzle. These days, a chandelier can hang above a dining table (where it is often called a 'pendant light'), in a hallway, the living room, even the bathroom. Anyone can now step into its spotlight and share its reflected and dazzling glory.

The chandelier's illustrious and status-symbol reputation was established by the cost of the materials originally needed to create it. Rock crystal and bronze, for example, as favoured by the court of Louis XIV of France at Versailles, was way beyond the reach of ordinary mortals. The king's choice of chandeliers, suspended in glittering phalanxes from the ceiling of the Hall of Mirrors, set a high – and for the majority of people – unreachable, bar.



*“There it hangs, bouncing light from its tiers of pendant crystals”*

These early chandeliers were illuminated by candles,\* which were arranged on crown-like designs, their flickering light cast around the room by prisms. During the 18th century, Bohemian glassblowers developed elaborate chandeliers involving bevels and facets to further dazzling effect. The Venetian glassblowers of Murano took this one step further with the introduction of glazed, polychrome flowers which sprouted in profusion from frond-like stems – chandeliers of this style are still produced.

The advent of gas lighting, followed by electricity, and more recently LED lights, has meant that the chandelier has continued to evolve as designers become increasingly inventive. When it comes to choosing one for your own home, there are a few things to keep in mind: generally, the bigger the better – no one wants a mimsy chandelier; make sure your ceiling rose can take the weight (especially if you plan to swing from it), and although this runs counter to the chandelier's glamorous image, don't forget to dust. **S**

\* 'Chandelier' comes from the French 'chandelle' which means candle holder.

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## THE UPDATE



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