

go with the flow



BY
JASON TESAURO
PHOTOS
MELANIE ACEVEDO
STYLING
FRANCES BAILEY
PRODUCED BY
MONIKA EYERS

BELLA MANCINI'S HOUSE IS THE EMBODIMENT OF CAREFREE SUMMER STYLE. SHE SHARES HER SECRETS TO CREATING A HOME THAT FEELS PERSONAL, COLLECTED, AND HAPPILY IMPERFECT.



Layers of accessories bring indoor ambience to this outdoor seating area.

sitting pretty

Like her breezy cotton maxi dresses, Bella Mancini's home is an affable combination of style and ease. "I like things that are really pretty, but I also want them to feel beachy and casual," the interior designer says. Daughter Paloma, *opposite*, helps by making bouquets. "She loves to be in the garden. She always wants to put a flower or two in her bedroom."



For interior designer Bella Mancini, decorating her family's Greenport, NY, home hasn't been a pick-fast, spend-big, love-at-first-sight summer fling. It's been a slow and steady relationship between house and designer going on for 13 years now. In fact, slowing down is Bella's first secret to creating the kind of space she wanted for herself, husband Jeff, and their kids, Paolo and Paloma, without breaking the budget.

A familiar adage states that on any given project there are three primary qualities—good, fast, and cheap—but the catch is you can pick only two. For Bella,

good is never optional and fast is reserved for clients. So that leaves taking time to find great buys and let the place evolve.

Bella asks herself *Do I want to live with this?* about every potential purchase. "I'm always looking at fabric and furniture, and I like a lot of things," she says. "But I don't want to *live* with a lot of things. If I'm still thinking about it the next week, it's probably something I want."

Secret number two: Understand your taste. "My home is different from a client's home," she says. "It's more chaotic. I love patterns; I love natural materials; I love color; I love vintage." Embracing



“The rope-and-string pendant lights give the right amount of beachiness without being an anchor.”

BELLA MANCINI



surface appeal

Summer living is about the outside even when you're inside. "I want people to be in their swimsuits all day long. There's nothing precious in the house," Bella says.

LIVING ROOM "Every fabric is cleanable," she says. Bold colors and patterns brighten natural materials. Pillows tie the "awesome-ugly ochre yellow" on the bookshelves to the room.

KITCHEN "That's our cocktail-making counter; it's pitted and stained," Bella says. She tells clients to rub lemon juice on a sample before committing to marble. "Be clear about how it will wear or else you'll drive yourself crazy."

DINING ROOM Bella got the table off eBay. "I don't care that there's glitter glue all over it."

in the mix

Bella's trick to pulling a look together? Go with your gut. "Not overthinking it can sometimes be awesome," she says.

MASTER BEDROOM

Decorating started with the lampshade. "One of my first big-girl purchases. I love the red-and-white pattern."

BATHROOM

In the shared bath, Jeff wanted bright, but Bella wanted historical. "We met in the middle over this happy yellow."

GUEST ROOM

Her buy-what-you-love attitude drove the pattern mix. The secret to its success? "Look at the color wheel and group complementary colors."



that variety is at the heart of Bella's design code. "All brand-new looks boring," she says.

Third, lean into your roots. Each space needs to say something about the people who live in the house. Take the mantel covered with conch shells in the living room. "We only collect broken ones," Bella says. "It's a fun thing that my kids and I look for at the beach nearby."

The whole home, in fact, feels personal because Bella aims for things that are sentimental in addition to being beautiful. "Thinking back to the house I grew up in in Southern California, I wanted to weave in a breezy West Coast influence," she says. Embracing that style meant this house is a respite from the hard edge of weekday city living. "It's the antithesis," she says. "This is relaxed."

Her casual approach extends to the patio, which doubles the family's living space from Mother's Day until the end of October. "I look at my outside space as an extension of the inside." Bella emphasizes indoor comforts on the patio with a collection of indoor throw pillows ("I let them get sun bleached") and weatherproof side tables. "I want the whole house to have a the-door-is-always-open feel," she says.

◀◀
Sunshine yellows appear throughout the house. This shade is Farrow & Ball's Babouche.



gather & serve

Summer meals revolve around the back patio. "We have long lazy lunches that roll into cocktail hour," she says.

THE MENU Jeff is an avid angler, so fresh fish tacos are a staple. Corn from the farmers market and tomatoes from the yard are always on the table.

DRINKS STATION Bella keeps it simple by serving one round of batched drinks, then it's help yourself to beer and a local rosé.

THE TABLE Bella has been scooping up vintage plates at flea markets since her 20s. "I love the irregularity of the prints and finding them in unusual colors." ■



Bella's mom taught her to use, not store, special pieces like this wedding gift put to use as an ice bucket. "Looking at them makes us happy," she says.



WE LOVE
The high-low mix of this silver urn (a thrift store find) stuffed with garden zinnias.

