

HOMES & GARDENS[®]

APRIL 2015

BESPOKE DESIGN

TAILOR-MADE HOMES
FULL OF CHARACTER

NEW COLLECTIONS
THIS SEASON'S
FABRICS AND COLOURS

SPRING AWAKENING
EASTER DECORATING
COOKING WITH EGGS
GARDENS IN BLOOM

STUDY SPACES
CREATIVE IDEAS AND
INSPIRING SOLUTIONS

CHIC SHOPPING
MARBLE COFFEE TABLES
ELEGANT BAR STOOLS
STYLISH CERAMICS





As the spring sunshine streams down upon the veranda of Stephanie Conley's elegant Sydney home, the promising sounds of clattering dishes and clinking glasses drift out from the kitchen. Stephanie appears moments later, balancing colourful earthenware plates piled high with olives, figs and bruschetta. "I lived in Rome for five years, so the Mediterranean influence has rubbed off on my cookery a little," she smiles.

The home Stephanie shares with her husband, Oskar, and two-year-old son, Hugo, in the city's Woollahra district, is a feast for the senses. Inside are cool, smooth marble and richly grained glossy wooden floors, while tactile fabrics, swathes of colour and pops of pattern surprise and delight in equal measure. However, it was not always thus. "When we bought the house in 2011 it was in poor condition, but I could see it had the potential to be beautiful," recalls the fashion designer turned food blogger.

Lofty ceilings, expansive bay windows and fragments of Art Deco architecture caught Stephanie's eye when she first saw the house, but she found its warren of rooms stifling. Removing a wall between the kitchen and dining room created a generous family living space ("It's very relaxed; this is where we spend most of our time") and a fourth bedroom was sacrificed to make way for the couple's bathroom and a dressing room.

Having made the necessary structural changes, Stephanie drew on her experience in fashion to pull together the interior. "It's one of my hobbies: buying things and renovating them," she says. "In many ways the house is quite eclectic, but it's been carefully thought through. I wanted it to feel sophisticated, but also to be practical and easy to live in."

Curtains in cream silk, sconces dripping in pearls and an elaborate silver Champagne cooler atop the marble dining table bring an element of splendour to the sitting room. While these

touches reference Stephanie's passion for the golden age of cinema, it is her deep affinity for colour that defines many of the rooms. "Colour has always been important to me; it's a very instinctive thing," she explains.

The blue walls in the sitting room ("such a calming shade") were inspired by a house in Dallas that Stephanie had spotted in a magazine, while the sunshine yellow-coloured de Gournay wallpaper in the bedroom – one of her favourite rooms – bursts with life. "I spotted this in London. I think a lot about how colours and fabrics work together, but it's important to allow a scheme to develop organically, too," she explains.

Wandering through the house, Stephanie picks out pieces that hold fond memories, many hinting at her passion for travel. "When we go away, I'm always on the lookout for objects I can bring back," she says. A relaxed canvas featuring a smiling sun in the living room evokes memories of an old friend (the owner of an art gallery in Rome); a shop in Palm Springs yielded the playful print in the cloakroom; and the silver Champagne cooler in the sitting room was discovered while exploring a market in St Tropez. "I'm very happy to mix things up. I really appreciate a blend of retro, classic and contemporary pieces," says Stephanie.

A cry from Hugo, waking from his afternoon nap, signals it is time to leave. Dinner guests will be arriving soon and preparations must be made. In between writing her cookery and entertaining blog, *The Hostess*, and caring for her son, the busy entrepreneur naturally gravitates to the kitchen where her creative streak extends to devising recipes with the same care and attention that she has lavished on her home. Ultimately, it is this dedication to perfection coupled with her innate sense of style and vision for the end result that are key to the success of Stephanie's home. "As with fashion and food, designing an interior you love is about using self-expression to make something beautiful," she concludes. □

DINING AREA

The marble table by the sitting room's wide bay window (above, far left) is an impressive setting for the couple's frequent soirées. **Saارين oval dining table** in Arabescato marble, £7,044, The Conran Shop, 0844 848 4000, conranshop.co.uk. **For a similar silver-plated wine cooler**, try Canonbury Antiques, 01707 644877, canonburyantiques.com.

VERANDA

This wonderful space (above, second left) reminds Stephanie of an Italian loggia. It is fully glazed, so it keeps the heat out in summer and is warm in winter. **Similar rattan sofa**, Alexander Rose Hyacinth rattan lounge sofa, £805, First Furniture, 0845 177 1199, firstfurniture.co.uk.

SITTING ROOM

Stephanie spotted the artwork above the sofa (left) during a holiday in St Tropez. "Our hotel was showing the artist's

work," she explains. "We didn't buy it, but when I returned home and painted the walls, I knew it would be ideal and tracked it down to a gallery in Germany." **Sofa** in Essex Velvet, £76m, Thibaut, thibautdesign.com. **Artwork** by Anke Schaffelhuber, 0049 89 78 79 79 100, anke-schaffelhuber.com. **For a similar Art Deco-style side table**, try The Old Cinema, 020 8995 4166, theoldcinema.co.uk.

LIVING AREA

Formerly two rooms, a wall was removed to create this capacious open-plan space that includes a seating area (above left) and the kitchen (above right). Slouchy sofas and plump cushions have been chosen for comfort. "It's very relaxed; there are no airs and graces in this part of the house," says Stephanie. **Similar sofa**, The Stella three-seater in sofa in Taupe brushed linen, from £1,440, Sofa.com, 0345 400 2222.