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Kitchens



ISLAND TIME

Cuba Cuba owner Kristy Socarrás Bigelow adds a dash of the tropics to her Mile High home kitchen. —BRADLEY NESBITT

Kitchens



WHOEVER SAID A HOUSE should be an extension of the person who lives in it was probably referring to Kristy Socarrás Bigelow. The first-generation Cuban-American effortlessly mixes island style into the Bonnie Brae Tudor she shares with her husband, Brian Bigelow. “I wanted my space to scream tropical...but subtly,” she says. “The colors and art I go for are always influenced by my Cuban culture.”

Her love for all things Latin isn’t confined to her home. If you like a properly made mojito, you’ve most likely dined in one of her restaurants: Golden Triangle’s Cuba Cuba and its fast-casual offshoot, Cuba Cuba Sandwicheria.

Enlisting the help of Jonas DiCaprio, owner of Denver’s design/build firm Design Platform, the restaurateur opened up the choppy floor plan of her 1940s home to create an open (and colorful) kitchen that’s high on design and function.

FUNCTIONAL FORM

The kitchen’s design is a nod to owner Kristy Socarrás Bigelow’s Cuban heritage and also her life as a restaurateur. Says designer Jonas DiCaprio: “The overall look of the kitchen has a commercial feel.”



CUBA CUBA’S “PERFECT MOJITO”

Ingredients:

handful of mint leaves
 ¾ of a lime, cut in wedges
 3 ounces Bacardi Limón (Cuba Cuba infuses its with fresh mint leaves)
 3 ounces soda water
 1 tablespoon simple syrup

1. Muddle the mint leaves and lime wedges.
2. Add ice cubes. Pour in rum.
3. Top off with soda water and simple syrup.
4. Stir to mix mint and lime throughout.

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"Kristy and I worked closely on the design decisions to make sure her influences were carried all the way through," DiCaprio says.

But there's a fine line for pulling off island-infused design when you live more than a thousand miles from the nearest coastline: One minute you're in a tropical paradise; a few palm fronds later, it's Captain Jack's Crab Shack. The key is originality, says Bigelow. "I didn't want [my kitchen or restaurants] to be too cheesy, so I decorated with the things I rarely see but still have that influence. For instance, choosing art that has that vibe but isn't your 'typical' Cuban photo with a lady smoking a cigar." Bigelow gives us the 411 on how to bring a slice of island life to a Mile High City kitchen. ■

DESIGN TIPS

Banquette:

Pile on some pillows and instantly transform your breakfast nook into an all-day hangout. There are no rules, Bigelow says, so have fun and be fearless with patterns and colors. The restaurateur's kid-friendly tip: Upholster the bench with wipeable vinyl fabric. (She chose a diner-inspired silver glitter version.)



Get the Look: *White Swirl Hand-Embroidered Decorative Floor Pillow*, \$94, Pure Home, purehome.com

Chairs:

Bigelow connected the main dining area to the breakfast nook with bright, canary yellow Tolix chairs. "I picked industrial-style furniture that was indestructible," Bigelow says. "I need pieces that make me happy—and what makes me happy are things that don't break."

Get the Look: *Tolix Chair in yellow*, \$119, Instyle Modern, instylemodern.com

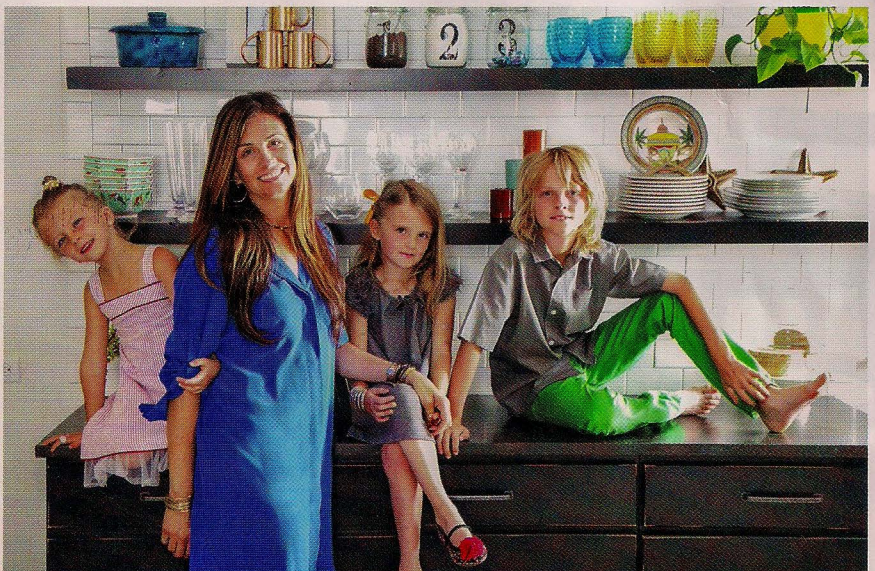
Tile:

"The wall tile is my favorite design element in the space," Bigelow says. To get a similar look, try encaustic-style tiles. Their rich patterns are the result of colorful clay or cement instead of paint. Use on the floor, ceiling, or walls.

Get the Look: *Sicily Cement Tile*, \$6.96–\$7.29 per tile, Villa Lagoon Tile, villalagoon.com



Bold tile



RIGHT AT HOME

Bigelow hangs out in her light-filled, brightly colored kitchen with her three kids: Leelé, Giana, and Mitchell. The breakfast nook (top right) functions as the hub of the home for this busy family.