



The range hood in this Gulf Coast kitchen is trimmed in pecky cypress and designed to bring the natural textures of the beach landscape inside.

Beach Kitchen Confidential

ANY BEACH-DWELLER WORTH THEIR SALT KNOWS HOW TO WHIP UP A KILLER MARGARITA (OUR SECRET: JUST ADD TEQUILA), BUT HOW ABOUT A SERIOUSLY SENSATIONAL KITCHEN? HERE, SIX WINNING COASTAL COOKSPACES, AND THE SURPRISINGLY SIMPLE INGREDIENTS THEY SHARE

By Caroline McKenzie and Marisa Spyker

DAVID HILLEGAS: STYLING BY HEATHER CHADDUCK HILLEGAS

Natural Beauty

IN SANTA ROSA BEACH, FLORIDA, DESIGNER CYNTHIA RICE TRADES 21ST-CENTURY SLEEK FOR SEA GRASS AND WEATHERED WOOD

WHEN CYNTHIA AND ALEX RICE scooped up their dream lot—one block from the beach on one of the highest points in the Seagrove neighborhood—they knew the wild Gulf shoreline would influence every material that went into their home. “I wanted the landscape and the design to be in harmony,” says Cynthia, who owns design and construction firm Old Seagrove Homes with her husband. In the kitchen, this was especially important: “I was inspired by the windswept trees, sea grasses, and lapping waves, and used materials that echo these elements to soften the hardscape surfaces,” she says. Thanks to a smart mix of natural finishes—including weathered wood—the kitchen has an organic, sun-bleached quality.

THE CHARACTER BUILDER

Cabinets made from handpicked slabs of **pecky cypress** strike the right note: Painted a creamy white, they mimic the look of whitewashed coral. Tip: To keep distressed wood from feeling dated, opt for hues found in nature, and don't overdo it; a little goes a long way.

THE HINT OF SHINE

Brass pendants and **brushed-brass cabinet hardware** read like rays of sunshine, an extra layer of warmth in the kitchen. For the plumbing fixtures, Cynthia and Alex chose polished nickel. “I always use nickel for the items closest to marble. The cool undertones blend better with the stone, rather than distracting from it,” she says.

THE UNSUNG HERO

Unadorned windows maximize natural light and further connect the kitchen's rustic materials to the ones growing right outside.

THE SCENE STEALER

Counter-to-ceiling **marble tile** brings a watery, reflecting-pool effect to the kitchen, and adds a pretty polish to all the natural materials. “The blue is the perfect cool tone for a beach house, and the subtly feminine pattern is a nice contrast to the textured wood—it really stands out,” notes Cynthia.

THE BEACH HOUSE ESSENTIAL

Rattan barstools relax the solid stones and metals, and their curvy seat backs serve up sweet organic style.

THE ALL-STAR ORGANIC

Seeking a material akin to driftwood, the Rices clad the large, 7- by 5-foot island in **black cypress**, a wood native to north Florida. Left uncoated—it brings an earthy foundation (and native chutzpah) to the pastel-leaning kitchen.

DAVID HILLEGAS: STYLING BY HEATHER CHADDOCK HILLEGAS

Cottage Remix

THE CLASSIC COTTAGE KITCHEN GETS A CONTEMPORARY SHAKE-UP IN DESIGNER JENNY KEENAN'S REIMAGINING OF A MARSHFRONT SOUTH CAROLINA CHARMER

"MODERN" ISN'T A WORD YOU'D typically associate with a Lowcountry cottage, but when Jenny Keenan set out to create a modernized version of a classic Carolina escape, she did so in the best way. "I wanted to show how you can take a traditional cottage and really energize it for today, but still keep it warm and familiar," says Keenan. That meant, for Keenan and architectural designer Eric Moser, preserving certain hallmarks of classic cottage design (such as wide-open porches and a liberal use of warm, natural woods) and freshening everything up with bright colors and bold materials. In the kitchen, that philosophy reveals itself in a combination of textures, from sleek tile to traditional shiplap. "Every color works at the beach, even black—it's the tones and materials you pair it with that determine how it feels."

THE CHARACTER BUILDER

A graphic foil for the elegant, shimmering backsplash below, the kitchen's **aqua tile** from Tabarka Studio brings a handmade, artistic quality to the space, while also serving a very practical purpose: It conceals the hood just above the cooktop.

THE BEACH HOUSE ESSENTIAL

While a **singular wall shelf** hovering over the cooktop makes things flow visually, it's the ease of use that makes this kitchen favorite a necessity. "I have open shelving at home and I find it so practical," says Keenan. "The key is using it for things you grab every day." Bonus: Your inevitably frequent guests won't have to ask you where the coffee mugs are.

THE HINT OF SHINE

Glazed square-cut backsplash tiles are a natural reflector of light in the kitchen, as well as a sparkling focal point. "I'm seeing homeowners leaning away from kitchens that are heavy with upper cabinetry and appliances, and rethinking what sits at eye level," says Keenan.

THE ALL-STAR ORGANIC

Bringing warmth (and classic cottage appeal) to the mix, the design team opted for a **white oak island** that seems to extend naturally up from the matching kitchen flooring. A pair of barstools continue the repetition with a similarly finished wood base; camel-colored leather backs introduce a contemporary twist.

THE SCENE STEALER

A shared wall of windows between the kitchen and dining room acts as a gateway to the cottage's serene marsh views just outside. Instead of letting the earthy environment draw the eye on its own, Keenan boldly opted to dress the wall in a **peacock sisal grasscloth**—a move that actually helps to enhance the home's outdoor assets, she says. "The contrast often works like a frame for the view, bringing it into sharper focus."

THE UNSUNG HERO

As the kitchen's primary prep space and entertaining hub, the **marble-topped island** works double duty. Accordingly, Moser chose to incorporate an outward-facing sink into the feature so "hosts don't have to turn their back on guests while readying dinner," he notes.

Watercolor Wonder

IN A PORT O'CONNOR, TEXAS, VACATION PAD, A SHOW-STEALING BACKSPLASH BECOMES THE BASIS FOR DESIGNER RAQUEL SKROBARCZYK'S COLORFUL TAKE

WHEN RAQUEL SKROBARCZYK, owner and principal at Heather Scott Home & Design in Austin, set out to design a Texas getaway for a family of five, she had all the makings for a dynamite beach home—including sprawling water views and a client with a soft spot for vibrant colors. So when Skrobarczyk stumbled upon a striking glass mosaic tile that was equal parts beachy and bright, she knew she'd found part one of her design puzzle. "I just loved it the moment I saw it," she says. "It's playful yet sophisticated, and it ended up informing not only the color palette but the overall aesthetic of the home." In the kitchen, Skrobarczyk paired the eye-catching backsplash with a complementary painted island, woven accents, and lots of white—a combo that feels elegant while still casual enough to suit its coastal setting. "They entertain a lot, so it was important that everything be durable and practical for everyday use."

THE SCENE STEALER

With its striking geometric pattern, subtle sheen, and spectrum of watery blues, the **glass mosaic backsplash tile** from Ann Sacks Lume collection reads more like a work of art than a surface material. "Each little piece has variation in it, so seeing it in such a large format makes for a really special, unique display," says Skrobarczyk. Extending the tiled backsplash to the ceiling allowed for the architectural range hood to really pop; translating its distinct blue hue to the kitchen island (via Benjamin Moore's Blue Hydrangea) helped the whole room flow.

THE UNSUNG HERO

Beachy blues may be the focal point in the kitchen, but it's the **hardworking, often overlooked whites** that have the equally important job of brightening up the space. Here, Skrobarczyk uniformly dressed the cabinets, walls, and ceilings in Benjamin Moore's White Dove, a warmer hue that takes advantage of the kitchen's ample natural light. "When you get the sun shining on a warm white, it just makes the whole room feel even brighter," says Skrobarczyk.

THE CHARACTER BUILDERS

When it comes to **barstools**, backsides are often the most important side. This stylish quartet draws the eye with a frame clad in woven nylon rope (a nod to the husband's love of fishing). The crisscross pattern reflects the geometric motif in the backsplash, while the natural materials pay homage to the casual, coastal setting. "Having so much tile and stone on the walls and countertops makes adding texture that much more important," says the designer.

THE ALL-STAR ORGANIC

While soaring ceilings were among the kitchen's most attractive assets, the height coupled with the sparkling backsplash and all-white cabinetry called for something more grounding. A trio of **oversize woven pendants** from Arhaus did the trick. "They add warmth while also being substantial enough to really make a statement in the space," Skrobarczyk says. "They needed to be the jewelry of the home."

THE HINT OF SHINE

With their glam finish and sophisticated silhouettes, the kitchen's **satin brass fixtures and hardware** add a nice contrast to the beachy blue-and-white palette and woven accents.

THE BEACH HOUSE ESSENTIAL

With the pool area located directly beyond the kitchen and dining room, hardwood floors would've been less than forgiving on wet feet. Instead, Skrobarczyk opted for a **luxury vinyl plank**. "It looks like real wood, but in a beach house, it's a lot more practical."

MOLLY WINTERS CULVER

THE BEACH HOUSE ESSENTIAL

Bronze casement windows with levered panes frame the tropical views and allow in balmy coastal breezes.

THE ALL-STAR ORGANIC

The designers collaborated with architects Peter Moor and Chris Baker of Moor, Baker & Associates to design the **custom oak cabinetry** that's as much groovy midcentury paneling as streamlined storage. It's crafted of whitewashed V-groove planks and includes a cool soffit running the length of the kitchen that reads like an oversize picture frame.

THE SCENE STEALERS

The **artwork** commands this kitchen. Below it, a shallow **floating shelf**, crafted from the same marble as the backsplash and island countertops, adds sleek display space for smaller art and frequently used dishware. The lightly veined marble blends well with the more solidly white quartz on the countertops.

THE UNSUNG HEROES

Building off the minimalist vibe established with the cabinetry, the architects chose a streamlined **down-draft cooktop**. Though it's a standard 36-inch range, it feels smaller and less obtrusive without a hood, and because it fits flush with the countertop. "Like the art, it keeps the space from feeling overly utilitarian," Waddell explains. Another low-profile win: a trio of tapered, nearly transparent **glass pendants**, which shed plenty of light without obscuring the art.

THE HINT OF SHINE

The **brass pendant chains** and **gold wall accents** are a brilliant contrast to the muted, whitewashed wood.

Work of Art

A CLIENTS' ART COLLECTION GETS TOP BILLING FROM DESIGNERS ASHLEY WADDELL AND COURTNEY WHATLEY IN THIS MODERN VERO BEACH KITCHEN

MOVE OVER, GALLEY KITCHEN. Meet the *gallery* kitchen. When sisters Ashley Waddell and Courtney Whatley, who co-own the design firm Olivia O'Bryan, renovated this modern beach house in Vero Beach, they set out to make clever use of the clients' extensive art collection. "The entire house was designed as a backdrop for their fabulous pieces," says Waddell. "We liked the idea of carrying that through to the kitchen, even though art is traditionally more of an after-thought in cookspaces." First, they curated a mix of original sketches and paintings, collected by the homeowners during their travels, and then matted them in a variety of frames that includes gold, silver, and wood tones. Crisp white walls and mod, minimalist-style cabinetry ensure the selections take center stage.

THE CHARACTER BUILDER

You'd never know it, but the **upholstered counter seating** swivels, so guests can work the room. Waddell and Whatley upholstered the oak stools in a faux shagreen made from Edelman leather, which develops a rich patina over time. The minty green hue has gray undertones that help it toe the line between an earthy neutral and an exciting accent color.

In the Navy

DESIGNER KATE LESTER PROVES CONTRAST IS KING IN A YOUNG FAMILY'S FARMHOUSE-STYLE ESCAPE IN HERMOSA BEACH

WHEN DECORATING A BEACH HOME, Kate Lester has one surprising golden rule: "I'm a firm believer that every room, especially a coastal one, should have a hint of black," she says. "You want everything to feel grounded, and dark colors go a long way for that." Naturally, when the designer was brought on to reimagine a California home for a client with a penchant for farmhouse style, she took its beachy palette—turquoise, pale neutrals, and seashells—and transformed it into a sleek, sophisticated space where high contrast is key. Using a rich navy island as an anchor, Lester splashed cabinets and countertops in bright white and peppered accents of black, charcoal, brass, and wood throughout for warmth. "We're constantly trying to get people to push the boundaries in terms of what coastal design means," she says. "Infusing deeper tones of blues, greens, or even blacks into a room—rather than traditionally beachy hues—doesn't make it any less coastal."

THE ALL-STAR ORGANIC

To bring a pop of color and texture into the predominantly white upper half, Lester sourced a **reclaimed beam** from an old barn and used it to design a show-stealing range hood. Clean shiplap balances out the rustic accent and "brings in that coastal element without being too literal," says Lester.

THE CHARACTER BUILDER

Channeling classic farmhouse style, Lester chose a **backsplash** clad in subway tiles with an artistic twist: Each one is handmade of glazed brick and "100 percent imperfect." This makes each tile distinct, and the deep charcoal grout lines running throughout in varying levels of thickness enhance that individuality. "It adds character and dimension and brings the sophistication level up in the kitchen," says Lester.

THE BEACH HOUSE ESSENTIAL

While the kitchen's white **countertops** might exude the sophistication of marble, they're actually clad in a durable engineered quartz. "When you have a family with small children that likes to entertain, there's just no reason to deal with the upkeep of real marble," says Lester. "Quartz gives you that bright, veiny feel of marble, but with really little maintenance."

THE HINT OF SHINE

Taking cues from the mix-and-match palette, Lester employed **three different types of metals** in the kitchen: a brushed nickel faucet (to complement the kitchen's stainless appliances), brass pendant lights, and distressed black hardware. "I'm a big fan of mixing metals," says Lester. "These are decorative elements, so as long as they're grounded by something else in the general vicinity, and there's a repeat happening, they don't need to match the other metals in the room."

THE SCENE STEALER

"It's always interesting trying to relay to a client that you're actually going to make their house feel brighter by **bringing in dark colors**, but that's exactly what we did here," says Lester. The key is letting the deeper hues ground the space. For the island, the designer chose Pratt & Lambert's Gun Powder—a rich, bordering-on-black navy—and splashed the cabinetry above in Benjamin Moore's Simply White. "It's a warmer white, which helps when you're adding warmth through other materials like reclaimed wood and brass," she says.

THE UNSUNG HEROES

With a bold island, striking range hood, and smart mix of metals at play, Lester sought a set of **barstools** that could do the hard work of tying everything together. To accomplish the task, she chose a blonde wood that wouldn't compete with the dark finish of the hood's reclaimed accent, while also balancing out the brass in the light fixtures. "Even though there's no brass in them, the tones are there," says Lester.

LAUREN PRESSEY

Blue Streak

IN AN ALL-OUT SALUTE TO THE SHORE'S SIGNATURE HUE, DESIGNERS PARRISH CHILCOAT AND JOE LUCAS CREATE A TONAL MASTERPIECE IN MANHATTAN BEACH

"SAPPHIRE, SKY BLUE, TURQUOISE—we hand-picked each of the colors in the kitchen tile to showcase the best of blue from light to dark," says Lucas Studio, Inc. designer Joe Lucas of the Manhattan Beach home he co-designed with Parrish Chilcoat of Cameron Design. While the rest of the beach house is outfitted with white horizontal paneling and a more mellow palette, the clients wanted the spacious kitchen to really draw the eye in to the house's hub. Lucas and Chilcoat turned to the beach's all-star hue: blue. "Going all in with one color is the perfect way to create drama but maintain sophistication," Chilcoat explains. "Sticking to a palette of blues that exists together in nature ensures you can't mess it up."

THE SCENE STEALER

Glazed terra-cotta tiles feature a traditional Moroccan zellij design and served as the starting point for Lucas's and Chilcoat's rush of blue. "They come in large squares, so while there is an actual grout line, you can't see it, giving the appearance of one solid mosaic," says Chilcoat. "This puts the focus on the overall design instead of individual tiles, like you would have with more of a subway-tile design."

THE UNSUNG HERO

Gauzy Roman shades in an ethereal blue create a beautiful filter for the strong California sunlight.

THE CHARACTER BUILDER

These **aqua pendants** have loads of nautical swagger, with curvy silhouettes and metal cages reminiscent of vintage ship lamps. Plus, aqua is a dynamite foil for moodier shades of blue and feels like a playful nod to the beach just a few yards away.

THE HINT OF SHINE

Blue's favorite sidekick, white, makes a mod cameo by way of the **enamel-encased range hood**. The opaque fixture pops among the sea of blues, and also visually links the space to the surrounding white shiplap rooms. Likewise, the range's stainless steel trim complements the **britannium cabinet hardware**. "Cool, silvery tones really suit blue color schemes like this one," says Lucas.

THE BEACH HOUSE ESSENTIAL

"The **blue-green cabinetry color** is muted like a neutral, but it envelops the other blues more than, for instance, traditional white cabinetry would have," explains Chilcoat. The hue was inspired by an accent color in the tile, "and adds depth to the kitchen," she says. The upper cabinets are inlaid with antiqued mirrors to reflect the blues of the sky outside the windows.

THE ALL-STAR ORGANIC

Lucas and Chilcoat upholstered the stools in a **pecan-hued faux leather**. It grounds the room in a material that looks and feels very organic. "We loved how the rich material gave the room an instant lived-in look, without appearing beat up," Lucas says, adding that it's super durable.

KARIN MILLET, STYLING BY PARRISH CHILCOAT AND JOE LUCAS