

KITCHEN OF THE MONTH

Santa Fe, New Mexico

There's no rule that says a kitchen has to be just about cooking.

Interview by
CHRISTINE PITTEL

Photographs by
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Design by JUDITH ESPINAR, JIM DEVILLE, AND SCOTT ROBEY

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An old Mexican table is set with Mexican stemware, Portuguese glasses, and Barro Sin Plomo Mexican plates bought at the Santa Fe International Folk Art Market. "I love looking at all my pottery from different countries, all living together," Judith Espinar says. "It's hard to understand why people are so tied into borders." >>



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CHRISTINE PITTEL: *I don't think you could fit in one more piece of pottery.*

JUDITH ESPINAR: Not true! This is just the beginning. In my last house, the walls were completely covered.

Tell me about this house.

It's a traditional adobe, built in 1919 and renovated by Scott Robey and Jim DeVille. They laid out the kitchen, made the cabinets, and painted them that lovely shade of blue, taken from an old cabinet that's still here. Blue is a very important color in New Mexico. Many doors and window frames are painted blue, to ward off evil spirits.

What inspired the yellow?

I pulled it out of an old suzani. I knew it would be a good background for my folk art. It's happy, and not overpowering because of all the plates on top. Every time I walk into the kitchen I feel it's a celebration of my life.

And your art. What draws you to folk art?

It's the voice of a culture, from the time it was made but also reaching back hundreds of years. It's interesting to see how certain patterns endure and evolve. We're attracted to things that tell us about ourselves. I think of these pieces as the beginning of a road that leads to the artists and the stories behind their work. I bought the two green roosters from Juan Almarza, a Spanish artist who was part of our first Santa Fe International Folk Art Market, in 2004. I believe in supporting the work of living artists, and we started the market to connect

artists and collectors.

Display is also an art.

Did you plan it all out?

I see it in my mind's eye, and then I just play with it until it comes out right. The way I arranged plates around windows and doors is very traditional in Europe. In rural areas, there would be plates on the wall for each family member, and the plate came down when that member visited. It's all part of the tradition of being in a kitchen with people you love. These potters are part of my family. I know them personally. When I come in for my coffee in the morning, I feel as if I'm visiting with my friends.

How do you like the farmhouse sink?

I love it because it's big, and I'm not bumping against metal when I'm washing plates late at night after a dinner party. Everything here is used, and I've broken a lot of pottery over the years. I didn't put in a backsplash because I don't like those shiny tiles. It's simpler without them.

Is a wood countertop practical?

Well, I'll rub it with linseed oil, so if you spill coffee, you can just wipe it off. And I don't slice anything on it. I thought about letting it get all scratched, but I don't cook enough to make that work. Although I did want a Viking stove. It's like the stove I grew up with—no gadgets. In my previous house, you had to have three college degrees in order to use the oven. I'm not big on cooking. My kitchen is really a pottery expo. >>



The sunbaked yellow paint was custom-mixed and sets off a semi-circle of Petabillio-style plates, topped by a platter from Capulla, Mexico, above the Viking Professional Series range. Refrigerator and dishwasher also from Viking Professional Series. The Hansgrohe faucet has been discontinued. In favor of a similar model, the Tails S HighArc. Whitehaus fireclay sink. Custom blue paint on cabinetry. Hardware from House of Antique Hardware.



AMERICA'S FAVORITE PAINT COLOR

YELLOW KITCHENS CAME IN AT #1 WITH A NARROW WIN OVER WHITE KITCHENS

See page 38 for full results!

