

# OUT OF THE



# BLUE

What's white and blue and rattan all over? This grown-up getaway in Alys Beach, Florida, where old-world style lives happily inside clean, contemporary lines

BY PAIGE PORTER FISCHER PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIE WILLIAMS

## LESS IS MORE

Architect Gary Justiss designed this block of homes in Alys Beach. "He was inspired by Greece, so the exterior architecture is very minimal. That's why the arches are on the inside, because he was carrying over that Mediterranean aesthetic," says interior designer Bo Massey. Mother-daughter design team Susan Bohlert Smith and Massey incorporated many old-world, European elements inside (Venetian plaster walls, hand-painted murals) to make the architecture and furnishings relate to each other.





The Bahamian green (Seacliff Heights by Benjamin Moore) on the shutters, trim work, and doors harmonizes with the blues used inside the home.

Sherry Dougherty had one nonnegotiable when it came to designing her family's new vacation home in the Alys Beach community on Florida's Gulf Coast: It had to be blue and white. "It's timeless," she says. "And I'm a ginger jar junkie." Living in Louisville, Kentucky, her aesthetic skews traditional Southern. But Sherry and her husband, Joe, wanted this house to showcase a more relaxed version of that aesthetic—with a little whimsy thrown in.

The couple hired Bohlert Massey Interiors, a local mother-daughter design firm, to help them evolve their look inside the bones of their contemporary beach house. Designed by architect Gary Justiss, the Mediterranean-style home features clean lines, dramatic archways, and plenty of indoor-outdoor connections.

Bo Massey and her mother, Susan Bohlert Smith, took Sherry's blue-and-white passion and ran with it, developing a case study for the classic combination. They selected furnishings, fabrics, and fixtures based on Sherry's desire to mix a bit of "old-world Bahamas" with a touch of "traditional Charleston." In the context of this consistent color palette, Smith says, their question for each space was "How can we keep it interesting—and do some different things—without it being so one-note?"

The duo succeeded by layering textures, tones, and patterns. Though the backdrop in almost every room is white, Massey and Smith opted for textural applications like Venetian plaster walls and white raffia wallcoverings. They also layered plenty of natural coastal fibers, such as wicker, rattan, and jute. And they played with blue tones throughout the house—leaning in the direction of rich indigos and deep navy blues to keep the look sophisticated rather than sweet.

The designers threaded those deep blue notes throughout the house by way of a dramatic, hand-painted mural seen in both the living and dining rooms. "We looked at it as a conscious decision to use that much blue," says Massey. "One thing about Alys Beach is so many people err on the side of white, beige, and no color. In our opinion, a house void of any color is flat and not comfortable. But when you go into this house, it's really pretty delightful."

## FRESH TAKE ON CLASSIC

A self-confessed ginger jar junkie, homeowner Sherry Dougherty is a fan of classic blue-and-white chinoiserie. To update that look for a modern beach house, the designers hired artist Marion Barnes to create a whimsical, tropical mural for the living and dining room walls. Together, they studied lots of Blue Willow and Asian pottery for inspiration. The hand-painted mural strikes a dramatic note, framed by the arched doorways. A plaster chandelier hangs above a simple painted oak dining table surrounded by woven chairs. "We chose that chandelier because there was no worry that it would be too dainty. We felt it needed to be earthy and plaster, just like the walls," says Smith. In the living room, Massey and Smith used a blue-and-white hero fabric by Brunschwig & Fils on a pair of chairs and layered antique Turkish rugs atop a sea grass one for even more visual interest, pattern, and texture.



### SET THE TONE

The kitchen is anchored by the large island painted Benjamin Moore Polo Blue. The designers chose the saturated tone carefully, endeavoring to make the blue feel updated and modern. It's echoed by a similar hue in the three pendants. A lattice ceramic tile backsplash by Ann Sacks adds warmth and character, while light wooden floors add a fresh coastal vibe.



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### THE RIGHT WHITE

The blue-and-white theme continues in the bedroom, where an upholstered bed sits against a crisp white backdrop. Getting the right white was key: The designers opted for the clean look of Benjamin Moore’s Decorator’s White for the Venetian plaster walls throughout the house. Elsewhere, they incorporated bright white raffia wallcoverings to add texture without disrupting the clean backdrop. The upholstered Serena & Lily bed pops against the white wall, like the ginger jar lamp beside it and the chair upholstered in blue Galbraith & Paul fabric. In the guest bath, an indigo-and-white cabana stripe wallcovering dresses up the walls. “We encouraged the bold use of dark blue as something that adds depth,” says Massey. “We explained that even if we’re using some of these rich blues, the house is still going to feel fresh and light. I think using the high-contrast shades gives the house the snappiness that Sherry wanted.”

## INVITE TEXTURE

"These outdoor spaces really do become a part of the home," says Sherry, who spends a lot of time on the under-roof patio with her husband. The designers brought as much woven material—from caning to wicker and raffia—outside to create a seamless transition. The caned barrel chairs wear crisp white cushions. On another patio, a giant arch frames the hot tub and pool; woven chairs deliver texture and warmth to the minimalistic space. "It's just an easy house for people to have conversations," says Sherry. "I sit out here often in the fall or winter months."

"WE ALWAYS TRY TO USE NATURAL TEXTURES, LIKE JUTE RUGS, BASKETS, AND GRASSCLOTH, IN OUR PROJECTS HERE BECAUSE IT REALLY HELPS SET THE TONE FOR THIS CASUAL COASTAL SETTING"

—BO MASSEY