

FAMILY *Styling*

How one modern mom designed a home
that works for her family.

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The living room is a study of form and kid-friendly function. The slipcovered couches are easy care, yet chic. The built-in entertainment center was custom designed with wood trim that enhances the room's architectural details and round metal pulls that reference the home's many arches.

WHEN GUESTS ARRIVE AT MICHELLE Tingler's home, they immediately sense the laid-back global style that permeates the interior. Bamboo accents frame a set of sleek yet cozy oversized sofas, recalling a chic West Indies vibe. Elsewhere, vintage accents such as mercury-glass lamps and flea market chandeliers impart classic romantic touches. However, what isn't immediately noticeable are the small personal touches that carry stories that show that this home is truly a place for family. By the front door, for example, Michelle has two bowls: one filled with sea glass collected by her daughter, a second for a motley cluster of rocks collected by her son simply because he too wanted a spot to display his finds. Both are welcome contributions to the household décor that Michelle relishes having.

"My style is just easy breezy," she says. "As a mother of three kids, it's about making a home for my family—merging my needs and their needs with the things that we all love. My son has his rock collection that is not particularly beautiful, but I love them because he loves them."

This loving, all-inclusive attitude has brought Michelle to the forefront of modern motherhood by way of the Web site she founded, o-mama.com. It's a place where, she says, "Opinionated moms can come together and be proactive about social concerns. Our motto is that change begins at home." On the site, she takes a common-sense approach to modern-day issues, relying on idioms and tried-and-true advice, drawing upon generations' worth of wisdom. That attitude dominates at home too, where, with 10, 7 and 4-year-old children, Michelle designs her rooms to withstand rigors of energetic kids and yet still maintain a grown-up aesthetic. "My house is really all about comfort; it's kid-friendly and adult-friendly, and merges new things I buy, things from my grandma and things from the swap meet with things I've coveted for a long time," she says. "The main thing is that my kids and their friends can



(Opposite) The dining room balances casual coastal style and global sophistication with a mix of wicker seating, a two-tier chandelier and a bold zebra-print rug.

Shell details abound. Rattan and shell-trimmed placemats coordinate with a shell centerpiece and shells at each setting.

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The kitchen's clean lines allow it to be a centralized work station for the whole family. Michelle shoots her Web videos here, and the countertop often serves as a homework spot for the kids.

(Opposite) The hallway is adorned with a collage of family pictures unified in presentation with the use of black frames. The bright breakfast nook looks out onto the garden and is a casual place for a snack.



tromp through and I don't go into a panic. Our common spaces are designed to be comfortable for all of us."

Slipcovers are a key ingredient for this formula. They are washable and easy to care for. Vintage items whose worn surfaces only gain appeal with extra nicks and scratches work well too. Another important element is a designated playroom, where the kids can let loose and have fun. "It's a place they can grow in and be comfortable, and they know the rules for each space," Michelle says. "I can keep my antiques in the living room; they don't jump around there the way they do in their playroom."

The living room is a smartly designed space where white-slipcovered furnishings translate into low-maintenance peace of mind. Dark reclaimed walnut wood floors throughout camouflage kid and dog tracks and are a good balance to a mostly white color palette.

The family's collections add even more personality. "We love all things beach, so I collect antique shell-topped bottles by Dan Marty that are mixed along with my grandmother's little shell boxes. We also have a collection of Seltzer bottles and globes," she says.

Vintage linens—especially French linens—are another common accent. Michelle collects them at flea markets and antiques malls, and often transforms them into everyday items such as throws, slipcovers and even a dog bed. In the bedrooms, the French influence is the most apparent. Her daughters' rooms have the feel of true *petite maisons*, with each donning identical antique chandeliers and antique dishes that form sweet arrangements on the walls.

In the master bedroom and bath, Michelle created an elegant retreat with antique embroidered linens and an antique *suzani* embellishing the bed and earthy bamboo punctuating the ethereal white bathroom suite.

In the kitchen, the bamboo accents continue with shades that add a layer of natural texture that contrasts the smooth, white marble countertops. The large island is a hub for the whole family. Here is where the homework is done, family meals composed and the occasional Web video produced for o-mama.com. Michelle's favorite feature in the room, however, is the pot filler they included into the custom design. "It's such a small detail but so well used, it's a true luxury that makes life easier."

In the dining room, a few signature items add drama, such as a zebra-print rug and a two-tier chandelier. On the tabletop, cobalt glasses add a dash of ocean blue to the seashell placemats and centerpiece.

Beyond the French doors, the garden is an extension of the home. A large pergola provides shelter from the elements and houses a large outdoor dining table that the family uses often during the summer. Throughout the property there are small seating areas that make the home ideal for entertaining. These cozy spots are used often and confirm that every inch of the home is definitely used.

"I think the heart of my home is everywhere," Michelle says. "It's the yard in the summer, the living room in the spring and the den in the winter." Indeed, Michelle has crafted a truly warm and inviting home where she has made sure that a change for good has certainly begun. With her no-fuss approach to beautiful design, her children are growing up contributing to their environment, which makes Michelle proud. In short, they know that everyone has a place, and there is a place for everyone.

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The bedrooms are appointed in vintage linens. The girls' rooms (this page and opposite) are fit for princesses, with coordinating bed canopy and bed linens and even matching chandeliers that Michelle found on two separate trips to the flea market.



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INSIDER TRADING

Michelle Tingler has designed a home that suits the whole family, a place where children are encouraged to express themselves and she still can run o-mama.com effectively and efficiently. How does Michelle keep order and style in place and keep everyone happy? She shares her tips:

- Buy things with zippers. You can easily wash and maintain these types of items so life can happen and everything can still look good in the end. Slipcovers are the key to making sure everybody is comfortable.

- I use my fancy china whenever I feel like it. I believe in using the things you love and letting my kids use it too. Instead of telling them no all the time, teach them how to treat these things. You'll find children want to be gentle and respect special items.

- I pick and choose my battles. I don't mind water stains on my table, but I do set boundaries for those collectibles I keep behind glass. Be reasonable, but also give your children parameters as to what's off limits.

- Put thought behind your design decisions and plan for what works best for your family. I have a huge kitchen island that serves as the hub of our home and a place where I shoot videos for my site. And everyone has their spot to do homework, make pizzas or work on projects. We made the decision not to put bar stools at the island because we'd rather have storage there instead; it makes sense for us.

