

At Home with Molly Britt

[at Home](#)





Today, on AOBF, we tour the home of interior designer, wife and mother, @Mollybrittdesign.

Molly Britt has long been a "girl crush" of mine since having been introduced by our mutual friend @chris_fenmore (who owns Garden Studio Design and did the landscaping on Molly's house). We all live in the same neighborhood and have kids the same age, so this intro was an extra fun one for me (thank you Chris:) I noticed right away that I admired how Molly mothers, I appreciated that she speaks kindly and fondly of her husband and I love how she's made her house a home. She has great taste not only in her wardrobe but

also in her topics of conversation and general way of being. To us, she embodies the *art of being female...



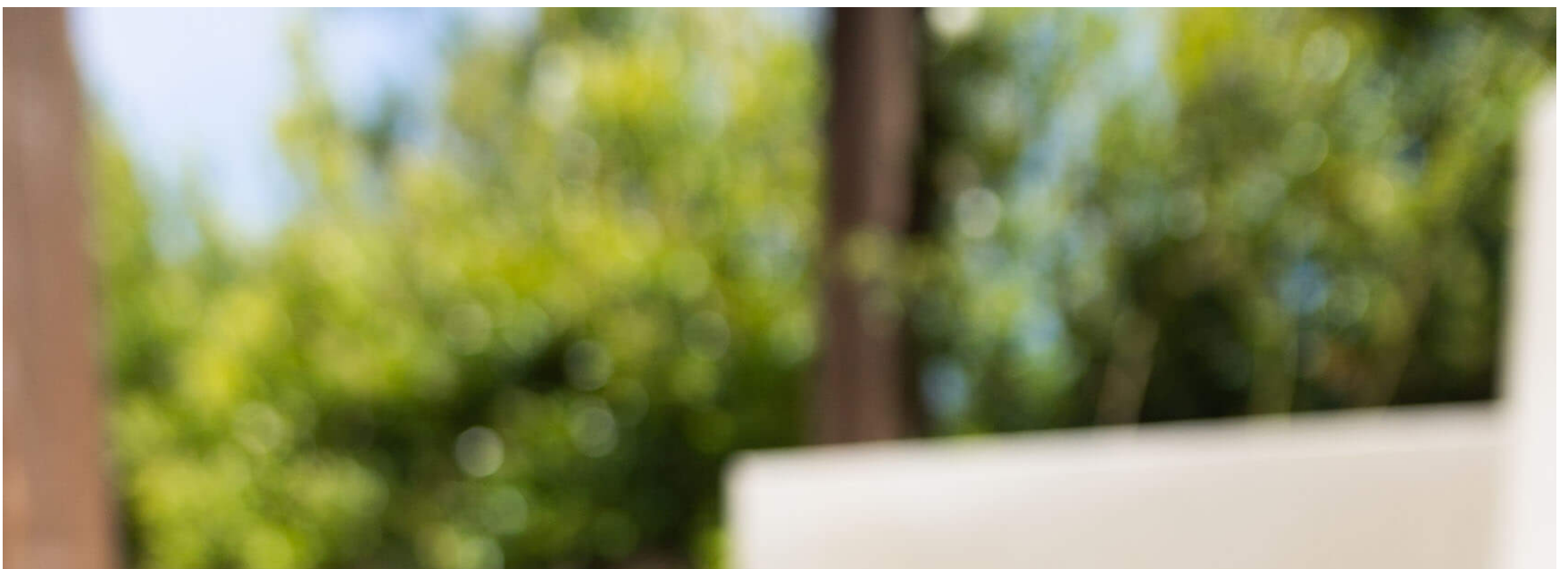
Tell us about your home and home life. What kind of environment were you trying to achieve for your family of 6 when building this home?

I had to wait a long time to build this house, but the upside is that I could give it a lot of thought! I like having lots of kids around and I like to cook and socialize as a family so I tried to create a place that would welcome those activities. I wanted the hub to be the kitchen and I didn't want to feel like I was leaving the action when I was preparing meals, which I do a lot!





We made the upstairs bedrooms pretty small, without TVs or sound systems because *I wanted the kids to be downstairs with me most of the time*. I also really wanted to be outside whenever possible. We open the steel doors to the fire pit and pool much of the year, and we eat many family meals at the table in front of the raised fireplace.







Beyond just our family, I really wanted a home that could accommodate our large extended family for holidays and could handle a crowd for bigger parties. The dining room seats 14 comfortably and we have had a few parties for

crowds of 150!











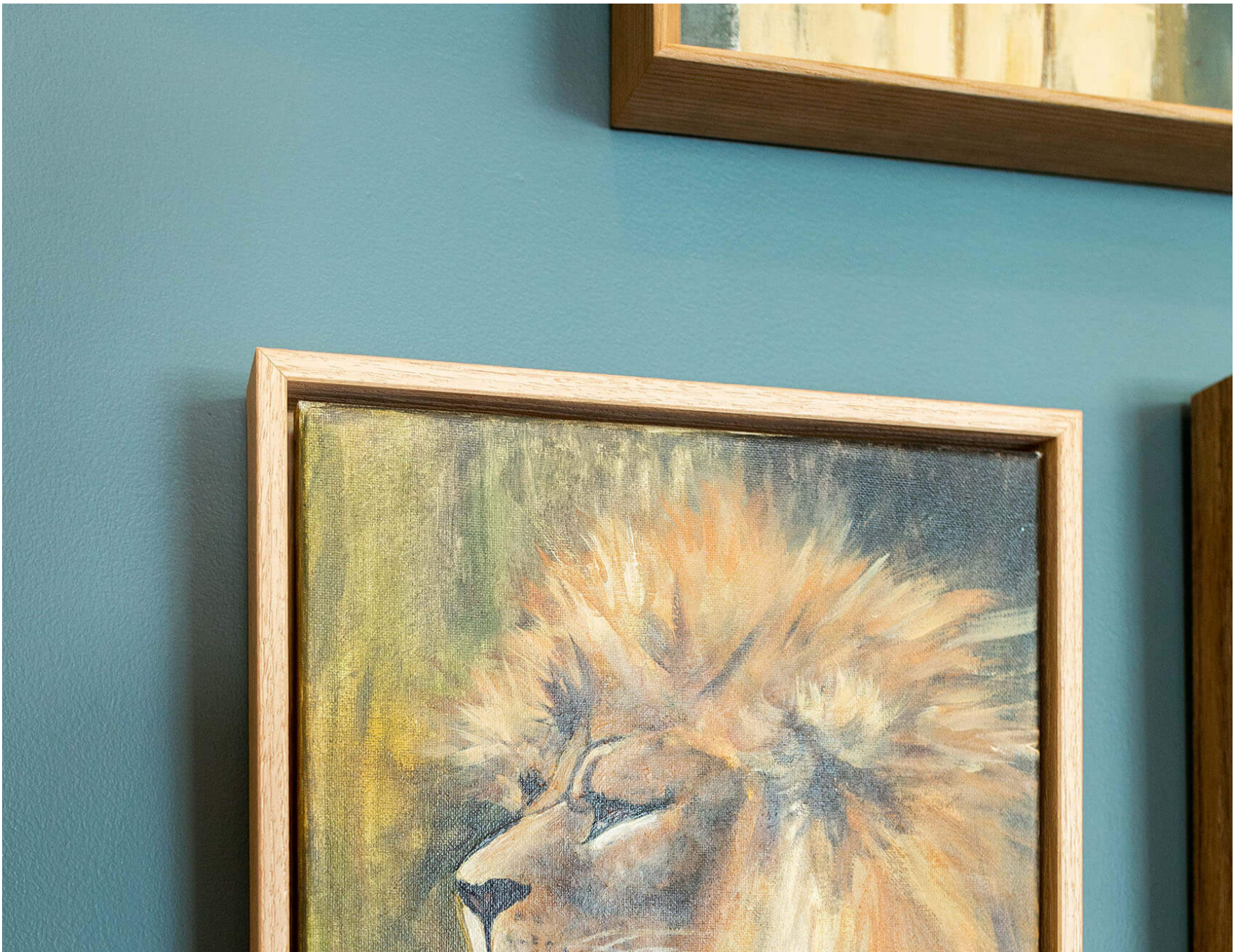




What are a few highlights of your kitchen? Favorite kitchen items and accessories?

Hmm.... so of course I love my Faema espresso machine. It was a huge splurge but since it's such a focal part of my kitchen I sort of justified it as both **form AND function**. I also love my La CornueFe range, which has two small side by side ovens and five gas burners. The ovens took some getting used to because they are smaller than normal, but I actually like them now because they heat up quickly and cook really well. I also really like my Vitamix and still use an old Cuisinart all the time. Oh, and a few practical things I love are my two dishwashers (I don't know how I survived all those years without them!) and the foot pedal beneath my sink that controls the water.



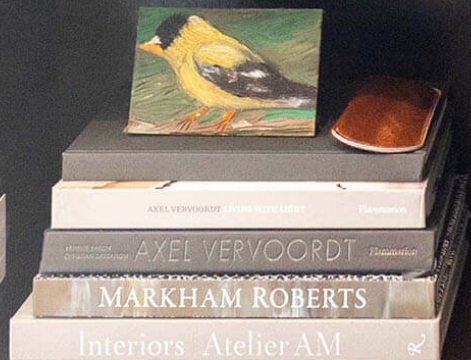




We are neighbors in the idyllic family-centric Port Streets in Newport Beach, how do you like living in this neighborhood? Why did you choose to build a home here?

We love the Port Streets. It has been home since we moved to California from the Midwest almost 20 years ago. I love that my kids have had such a wholesome and neighborhood-centric experience growing up. It also didn't hurt that they rode their bikes to Anderson Elementary for many years and that they toddled up to swim team practice on their own when I couldn't leave a younger sleeping sibling. It was ideal in so many ways, at least for my family. When we moved into this house four years ago we still had three kids at home; now we are down to only one, but *I am so happy that we have decided to give her the gift of a childhood in the Port Streets* as well. I'm not sure what we'll do once they've all moved out.... we will cross that bridge in a few years 😊









You worked with a dream team to create your vision with this house... who are they and what did you love about working with them?

I loved working with the architect Eric Olsen. Of course I think he's super talented, but beyond that he was always very respectful of my opinion, patient and kind. I felt like we were good compliments – he leans more modern and clean while I tend to be a bit more traditional and warm. I also adore my landscape architect, Chris Fenmore from Garden Studio Design; she and I worked closely to maximize our outdoor space for the way our family lives. A few of the trades were especially fabulous: the super talented and detail oriented cabinet maker, Joe Worland from H&J Cabinets. He had a great team, including an artist Deborah Allen, who sketched cabinetry elevations so we could really get a feel for the spaces; she also helped me to position the artwork in the kitchen nook when it came time to do that. RDM was the builder, and I'm so grateful for the level of quality they brought to the project, and their ongoing support when issues arise (although there have been very few!).







You were the designer of the home... you didn't hire one, what was that like and did it spur you on to pursue design in a more professional avenue?

So when we started the project I was working with my Chicago-based sister, who focuses mostly on hotel design, and is super talented. She helped me with important initial decisions such as window mullion shapes and the bathroom layouts. But the challenges of working remotely and busy schedules took over, and we stopped working together pretty early in the project. As I didn't have trade accounts or access to vendors until more recently, I reached out to a few local designers who really helped me and provided invaluable input: Sandra

Ludlow had the great idea for the design of the front door. Carol Estes from San Diego helped me source fabrics and art, and acted as a sounding board for many of my decisions. Kelly Nutt sourced some of my favorite things (my family room coffee table and the outdoor lounge chairs); Maria Isles (Isles Interiors) and Susan Ellison (Blue Springs Home) helped me with the last layer and the styling when we were prepping for the CDM Home Tour. Without all their input I never would have ended up with what we have today. All that work, and a rapidly emptying 'nest' (most of my kids are out of the house), led to setting up a real design business with many of my own clients. I have hired a team of amazing women to help me bring that same collaborative spirit to our projects, both locally and throughout the US. ***I really enjoy the creative design work, and also the relationship that develops when helping someone create a soulful space that works for their family.***

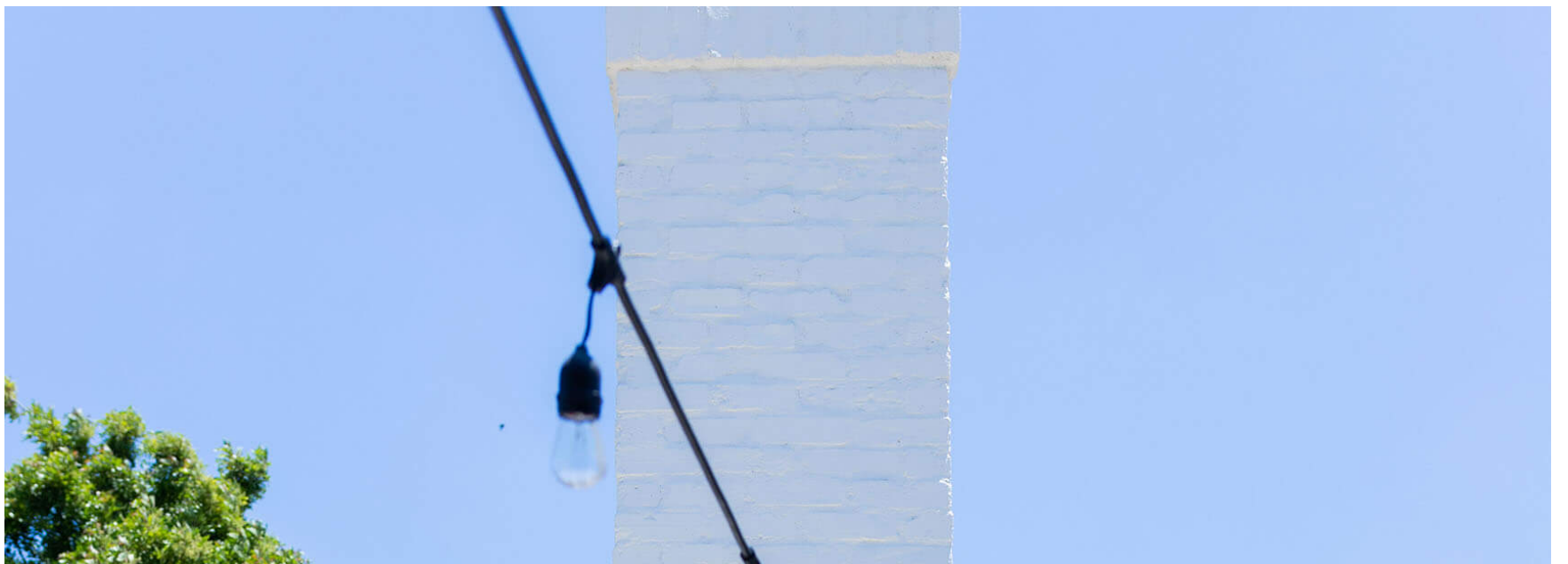




What are your favorite nooks in the house?

My favorite cozy and inviting spots in our house are actually both outside: the comfy outdoor chairs around the fire pit and the deck off our master bedroom. *In my next chapter I will spend hours reading books in these two places!*









Which rooms are most important when designing a family focused home?

Of course the kitchen is super important, and I gave that a lot of thought in

terms of layout and flow. Like for example, I wanted an awesome coffee station very accessible, but I didn't want everyone underfoot while making their morning cup of joe, so I put it off to the side. But the room that gets the most use for us as a family at this stage is the den. It is super cozy and comfortable with a big sectional and a huge TV on the wall. It is the room where we gather as a family, or as a couple, and it feels warm and inviting no matter how many or few of us are in residence!







Tell us about your daughter's talent for painting... She is such a treasure and her artwork is really so good!

Thank you! Lily loves to paint and both she and her sister Carter have worked with Stephanie Godbey ([Godbey School of Art](#)) for many years. I have always encouraged and supported them, though it hasn't been easy with all the sports and schoolwork. ***I think a creative outlet or passion is so important, especially for girls.*** Recently Lily had jaw surgery, and the only thing that she really looked forward to for a few weeks was her painting with Stephanie. To be honest, it has been about so much more than just the art. The relationship that Stephanie has with my girls is so special, and the hours in her studio provide more than just beautiful paintings.





Tell us about your other three children as well... a recent graduate, you must be so proud...

I always tell people that my highest and greatest use was (and

continues to be) raising my four children. Now that 3 of 4 are well on their way, I guess I'm in the tail end of the intense period! I'm always a bit nostalgic about raising children, and the inevitable transitions that all parents face. My oldest recently graduated from Princeton and she is working for Accenture in NYC so will be far from home for the foreseeable future. My second, and only son, is a senior at Claremont McKenna, preparing to graduate next week, likely doing a grad year in Data Analytics and playing another season of water polo. The third is an underclassman at Michigan's Ross biz school. She also played water polo and is a total stud – a Junior Guards instructor and the babysitter of your dreams. I am super proud of all of them, and I attribute much of their success and work ethic to our community swim team and CDM water polo. It has kept them (mostly) out of trouble, and has provided incredible opportunities. They are the loves of my life, and truth be told I would have frozen time when they were 10, 9, 7 and 3 and I was a full time mom, crazy busy and physically exhausted at the end of the day (even though we were living in a really shabby house!).







What are some blanket rules that you use when designing and decorating- always stick to neutrals? Lean toward warm tones?

For me personally, my mantra was *timeless* and *warm*. I didn't want to timestamp our project as 2017, or as something from a specific era. Of course since we chose Eric Olsen as the architect I knew that it would be current and modern (high ceilings, open plan, steel doors/windows), but the finishes were very warm (vintage beams, European oak herringbone floor, reclaimed brick), and antiques throughout were a given. In general, I think that two things are very important when designing: Stick to a theme, and make choices that are a reflection of who *you* are and what *you* love. I remember when my mom walked into my house when it was completed and she gave me the greatest compliment I could have received when she said, "It looks and feels just like you Molly". That made me so happy and gave me the confidence to make my own choices. *Aren't moms great??*





How do you balance having nice things but also having a home that's used and loved by teens and their friends and entertaining?

Everything... absolutely everything.... can be cleaned or fixed!! Even the big steel doors that jumped off the track last week when someone opened them too aggressively can be fixed. I still tell kids not to sit on the furniture in a wet bathing suit, or not to eat on the white sofa. I have places where everyone can be comfortable and do that (like the outdoor chairs around the fireplace), but not everything in my house is meant to be a free for all. Personally, ***I think it's good for kids to have limits and know how to be respectful of nice things.***

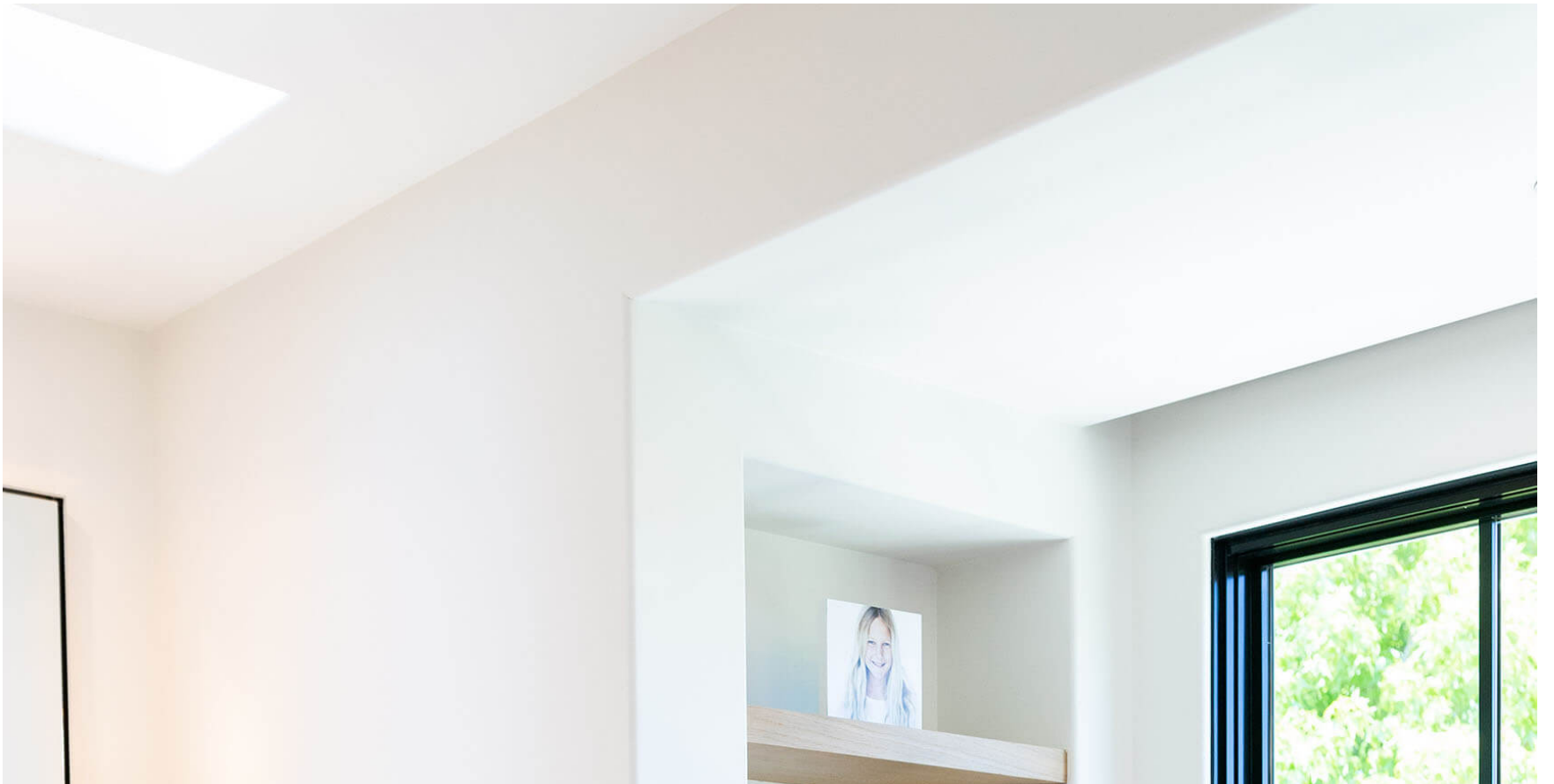


You not only have great taste when it comes to your home but you also have impeccable personal style as well. We always love what you're wearing every time we see you:) Can you share favorite places to shop, beauty routine and fitness regimen?

Oh, I am flattered, but in reality I am such a minimalist. I love a bargain, so I will shop once a year with my girls at the Cabazon outlets or pop into a consignment store when it's convenient. I also often find something at Zara (like the yellow skirt I'm wearing in these pics). For a splurge I adore Wakim at Michael Nusskern.... he is just the most positive and kind person to shop with, buying something there is pure joy. I also have a hard time walking by Laguna Supply or The Red Balloon! If I didn't have a clothing budget I would shop at Zimmerman or Chloe or Ganni, and I love almost everything by Ulla Johnson. I have almost no beauty routine, except a monthly facial from Eva Maygar that I never miss, and my exercise routine consists of walking my dogs and yoga with Andrea Martin at Ekam. She stretches both my body and my mind and I

feel so lucky to have discovered her during Covid – – she's the gift I give myself a few times a week!







You also love to cook, you're hitting all of the boxes on our checklist of ideals. .

What do you like to make, how did you learn to cook and what are your must-have kitchen cooking items/utensils/cookbooks?

My mom is a great cook, and a lot of what I make I learned from her. There is still a lot in her bag of tricks that I don't know yet (incredible pie crust, cinnamon rolls, French bread... the list is LONG) and I would love to document

her teaching me these things someday. My sister is a trained chef and knows a lot about food and cooking as well. So to say the bar is high in my family is an understatement! Many of my "normal rotation" meals come from them (sausage pasta, steak and bernaise, creamed spinach, homemade meatballs). I have added and taken a few out of rotation through the years. It's interesting to think about. When all my kids were home and swimming every day I made some mean carbo-loaded dinners!! They loved lemon pasta and lasagna and pork tenderloin and homemade enchiladas. I rarely make those things anymore (sorry Lily) because we try to be a bit healthier. Although during Covid we ramped the cooking back up again and really focused on perfecting wood fired pizza! If you have room/budget for a wood fired pizza oven I highly recommend the one I have from Home Depot by Forno Venetia. It not only makes the best pizza or chars anything beautifully, but it's a super fun way to get everyone gathered around the kitchen and involved in making a meal together.

Regarding cookbooks, I have cooked out of Barefoot Contessa and The Silver Palate for years. And I have gathered recipes from many random places, like the Nicoise salad I made for you guys from this little Summer cookbook by Susan Branch, and the lemon pasta recipe I learned from an Italian that I worked with in my mid twenties. Many of our family recipes have been adapted from James Beard or Marcella Hazan. More recently I really like a cookbook called Cook Beautiful by Athena Calderone. And I love anything that my good friend Jimmy Stafford from Stafford Prime puts on the table!

Honestly, almost anything homemade tastes good to me! And if it's served with family at the table, in front of the fire with good music and lots of conversation about our days, then it's guaranteed to fill us up in many ways. ***I feel so strongly that families should gather around the table at least once a day...*** Maybe that's my "life hack".

To stay connected to Molly, follow her on Instagram at [@mollybrittdesign](https://www.instagram.com/mollybrittdesign).

Thank you Molly for letting us into the nitty gritty of your life. We want to be more like you:) Way to set a positive example... xx.