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DIANE BENBOW

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In my kitchen, I have many tools, utensils, and dishes that I use daily that were passed down from my grandmother and great-aunt.

These heirloom items bring back memories of Sunday family dinners and magical weekend sleepovers at their home, where I learned about cooking from scratch.

When using these cherished items to cook in my own home, I am connecting the generations.

One of my favorite items in my kitchen is my great-aunt's rolling pin.

When I use the rolling pin to make something special for my family and friends, I think of the wonderful time I spent in the kitchen with my grandmother and great-aunt, measuring ingredients, rolling dough, and smelling the goodness of that day's treats. At the same time, I am making new memories with my family and sharing my heritage.

It's interesting how something so simple as a rolling pin can carry such valuable memories and convey them to the younger generations. ♡



Campbell
Residence

Presented by Living Stone Design + Build

THE REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

The Elements of Smart Kitchen Design

BY TENNILLE TRACY

When I invite guests to my home, we almost always end up around a large island in the center of my kitchen, sipping wine or drinking beer and standing around a handmade wood board laid with baguette slices, Brie cheese, and chunks of green apple. My kitchen is the brightest room in the house, lined with windows and basking in sunlight, and the dark gray cabinets complement the light-blue walls and marble countertops, and make the room inviting.

Truth be told, the kitchen is probably the coziest room in my house.

For a lot of modern American homes, this is indeed the case. While the kitchen was initially designed purely for function, a space created to contain heat and smells and messes, it has evolved into a showpiece and a central gathering place. In fact, no other room in the house has undergone a bigger transformation in the last few hundred years than the kitchen.

I was curious to find out what made the kitchen a unique presentation of both form and function—a place where children giggle over cookie dough and friends toast to special moments, while simultaneously being a place that stores the home's largest collection of sharp objects and hosts machines that produce sub-zero temperatures and electromagnetic radiation.

I reached out to a well-known husband and wife duo, Sean and Laura Sullivan, the respective owners of Living Stone Design + Build and ID.ology Interiors & Design, and asked them to explain the elements of smart kitchen design. They agreed to help and invited me to tour the kitchen of a home they recently built for Scott and Starla Campbell, a couple who moved to Asheville from Dallas earlier this year and settled into the mountains north of downtown Asheville.

On a sunny weekday afternoon, I met Sean and Laura at the top of the long, winding driveway to the Campbells' home. We knocked on the door and were welcomed by Scott and Starla and ushered into a kitchen that made me drool.

Like the rest of the home, the Campbells' kitchen is stylish and sophisticated, but also warm and inviting. The sink faces a gorgeous set of seven-foot-tall windows, looking out into a rich green forest, while the casual dining space is a built-in booth on the west side of the kitchen, welcoming stunning mountain sunsets. The white and gray color palette is grounded with walnut floors from Shaw Floors. And, of course, there is a kitchen island, topped with a beautiful piece of marble from Asheville's RockStar Marble & Granite.

If you're blessed to be designing your own kitchen—either



because you're remodeling a home or building one from the ground up—Laura says it's key to consider how, why, and how often the kitchen will be used.

“How do you cook? And what appliances or conveniences are you interested in? Do you like to entertain and congregate in your kitchen, aside from just cooking? If so, consider a layout designed to accommodate ‘bystanders’ along with the chefs. [Also think about] the durability and clean-ability of the products,” Laura said.

For people who are looking for easy and affordable ways to update their kitchens, Laura suggests a fresh coat of paint or new hardware to cabinets or drawers. Even the addition of a simple backsplash can make a big difference.

There is a lot of countertop space in the Campbells’ kitchen, and nearly all appliances and tools are stored in cabinets and drawers. The trash and recycling bins are placed in a pull-out drawer, and a dual water cooler/coffee maker is stored in a tall cabinet. Cooking spoons,

spatulas, and ladles are stored in a drawer. And with the gas cooktop on the center island, even the vent hood is hidden. A pop-up vent moves up and down with the push of a button, so as to not disrupt the flow of conversation or block the scenic views.

The positioning of the vent hood “can make or break the look of a kitchen,” Laura said. “One mistake that [designers] can make is making the wrong item the focal point, distracting from the ideal viewpoint.”

In my own kitchen, I need to do a bit of work to clear up the clutter on my countertops. I have several items on the counters near my stove, including a knife block, a coffee pot, a jar for cooking utensils, and a set of salt and pepper shakers. A small counter space near the refrigerator, meanwhile, is claimed by a stack of mail and a freestanding paper towel holder. On the kitchen island, a decent amount of space is taken by a large wooden bowl, which could easily be put away during the winter, when it holds no more than a few potatoes and maybe an onion or two.

The modern American kitchen is the byproduct of years of technological advancement. Historically, it was not a room most people wished to visit. The kitchen was a work space and nothing else. In some cases, it was even built as a separate building, away from the main house, in order to protect a family’s living quarters in the event of a fire. Today, the use of appliances has eliminated much of the risk of cooking, as well as the mess, helping to make the kitchen a welcoming space.

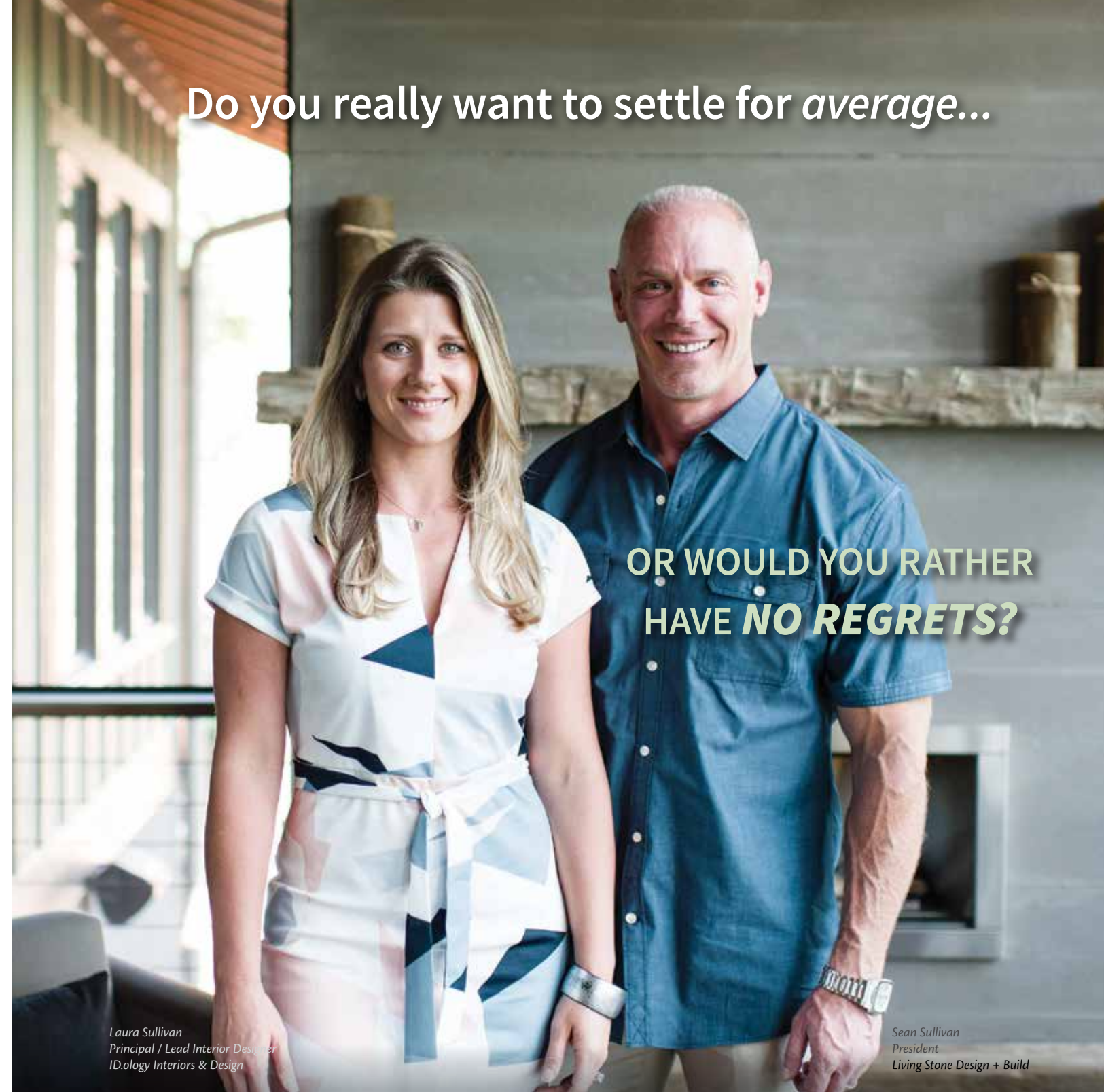
With the kitchen so often serving as a gathering place, it begs for decorating and personal touches. In the case of the Campbells’ home, Scott and Starla took on some of that role themselves. Scott built the couple’s dining table out of 70-year-old boxcar wood, and Starla put together a showstopping display of artificial succulents using an old dough bowl purchased from the Antique Tobacco Barn in Asheville. This piece sits in the middle of their island, which, just as it is in my house, serves as the focal point for guests.

Indeed, when determining the layout and design of the kitchen, Starla said she knew she and her husband would be inviting friends to dinner, and she placed a high priority on the ease with which guests could congregate in that space and feel welcome.

“When we entertain, everyone gathers around the kitchen,” Starla said. “This tends to be where everyone gravitates.” ♡

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Laura Sullivan
Principal / Lead Interior Designer
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