



All Is Calm

SOFT PASTELS WRAP A HISTORICAL CONNECTICUT HOME IN QUIET ELEGANCE

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Take one look inside this fashionable Connecticut home at Christmas and you just might suspect that Santa's got a brand-new bag—from Gucci.

Blush and champagne, soft blue and lavender join traditional green, gold, and silver in a holiday palette that also wraps the rooms year-round. "I've never been a fan of red-and-green Christmas," homeowner and designer Michelle Morgan Harrison says with a laugh. "I joke that the only red in my house is my grandmother's cherry-top cookies."

Chic colorways are part of Michelle's DNA after a career in fashion—her life before interior design. The career change was born from Michelle and husband Marc's love of historic houses.

They had three renovations under their tool belt before they bought this 200-year-old Colonial farmhouse and launched a to-the-studs refresh that restored charming Dutch doors and 12-over-12 windows. Boxes of old pictures and blueprints discovered in the attic guided the rejuvenation, done in concert with builder Patrick Kennedy.

The house celebrates the past as it also embraces contemporary family living. "I'm not a historical purist," Michelle says. "The interior nods to the tradition of the house, but I also freshened it, made it more modern."

To visually expand rooms with an old home's notoriously low ceilings, Michelle called on a light palette of whites and greige enlivened with threads of pretty pastels—whisper-soft pink, blue, and lavender—and shimmering silver and brass.

"To me, color is the most important thing in design," she says. "Here, it's subtle to suit me, to bring the sense of calm that I crave. Personal style should always carry over from how

Christmas tree Designer Michelle Morgan Harrison loves a pretty pastel look during the holidays and year-round at her Connecticut home. **Exterior** The Colonial-style house, built in 1816 and first renovated in the 1920s, exudes New England charm with shingle siding, dormers, and muntined windows. **Previous pages** Sumptuous velvet covers furnishings and silk drapes windows in the softly tailored living room. Acrylic side tables and a glass coffee table accentuate the mood of airy elegance.

Dining room Ribbon-back chairs upholstered in mohair pull up to an antique pine farm table in the bright and cheery dining space. It's crowned by a sparkling vintage chandelier from the Paris flea market. Walls are covered in a Cowtan & Tout metallic grass cloth.





someone loves to dress to the look and feel of their home.”

In addition to the airy palette, Michelle called on open shelves and glass-front cabinets to imbue rooms with an expansive feel. “Nothing punctuates low ceilings more than short little upper cabinets,” she says. “So to trick the eye, I used floating shelves and tall cabinets that sit on top of the counter, elongating the look of the upper cabinets.”

Runs of shelving give Michelle prime spots to display collected serveware: hobnail in the kitchen, Haeger and McCoy in the library, and her family’s heirloom china in the dining room. “My grandmother was an etiquette and home economics teacher in Baton Rouge,” the Louisiana native says with a smile. “I own every serving piece you could possibly have.”

That’s a win for this entertaining-minded homeowner who can’t wait to share holiday joy with friends, family—even the entire charming town of New Canaan, Connecticut.

Kitchen A stainless-steel Thermador range makes easy work of holiday cooking and baking. An island painted in Benjamin Moore’s “Silent Night” gently contrasts white perimeter cabinets, subway tile, Calacatta marble countertops, and Fritz Hansen “Caravaggio” pendants. Island barstools are from Wesley Hall. A Dornbracht pull-down faucet makes cleanup a breeze at a sink overlooking peaceful views.





Breakfast room Midcentury-style dining chairs in blush velvet pair prettily with a vintage Murano light fixture and floral art from Natural Curiosities. **Tinsel tree** A 1960s icon, this aluminum Christmas tree brings sparkle to the dining room sideboard. **Portrait** Michelle wraps presents in her signature pastel style.



“When we first moved to New Canaan, I was asked to have our house on the annual Christmas tour,” she says. “That’s how I really got into the whole holiday thing. Now I’ve been doing Christmas 15 years and love to continue the holiday traditions we’ve forged for our family.”

On Christmas Eve, that means caroling on the town square followed by tantalizing bowls of homemade gumbo. Michelle and Marc’s sons—one a junior in college, the other a sophomore in high school—can’t wait to dig in, under the watchful eyes of the family’s two wheaten terriers, Huck and Finn.

Then there’s dessert. “I’m a baker,” Michelle says. “My mother always covered our dining room table with cookies, fudge, divinity. Now I bake all the cookies—including my grandmother’s signature cherry-tops—and we make plates to deliver to friends.”

Green wreaths in each window and fragrant boughs of pine cascading down the entry staircase warmly welcome guests to the home’s gathering area—seemingly made for entertaining. The comfy-cozy living room spills into a light-filled dining

Family room Wheaten terrier Finn keeps an eye out for holiday visitors from his perch on the gray velvet sectional in the family room. Michelle went deeper with her palette for the room, incorporating charcoals and pops of black along with generous hits of sultry brass.



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—Michelle Morgan Harrison



spot. Fresh greens and stockings decorate the mantel while pretty pink 'Spotlight' amaryllis layers the windowsill with seasonal cheer.

The main Christmas tree in the living room celebrates Michelle's soft palette with beads of glittery mercury glass and pastel balls while a vintage tinsel tree shimmers in silver in the dining room. Even the side porch makes merry with a fresh tree that embraces organic style with burlap accoutrements.

"We've grown so many family traditions with decorating and things we do every holiday season," Michelle says. "My Southern heritage has blended with New Canaan's New England charm. It makes Christmas really special."

Designer: Michelle Morgan Harrison

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Master bedroom Touches of pale pink blend with sophisticated champagne hues in Michelle and Marc's private retreat. The black interior of the secretary desk grounds the ethereal scheme.

Mudroom The tile-floored mudroom with cubbies for coats and scarves heads off potential messes at the door. Paneled walls wear a coat of white high-gloss enamel from Fine Paints of Europe, giving them a glorious sheen. **Side porch** For Michelle, just one Christmas tree won't do. "I always do an outdoor tree too," she says. "I go more organic there with pinecone ornaments and burlap garland."

