

Style

country fresh

Designer Ellen Sosnow turns her ranch-style home into a summery cottage





Bright light fills the 19 x 20-foot living room. Sosnow picks it up with white-washed walls, creamy upholstery fabrics and sheer gauze window swags. "You get so much strong sun here, it's nice to have soft colors that blend in," she says.

across the street from the beach in Bridgehampton, New York, Ellen Sosnow's ranch-style house is open to all the sea breezes. That's because Sosnow, a Manhattan interior designer, recently redid the place. She knocked down walls and raised ceilings; she

punched out windows, doors and skylights. "I wanted to bring the outside in," says the designer, an enthusiastic gardener who enjoys tending her blooming plot out back. To play up the casual feel, she went country, layering with elegant touches that make the space her own.

By Holly Gates Russell
Photography by Richard Felber

An awkward hallway is transformed by lining it with bookshelves



"I like to use formal treatments in a light, informal way," says Sosnow, explaining her overall design scheme. Witness the living room's sheer swag-and-rosette drapes and the barely-there checkerboard "rug." Antiques are juxtaposed with some battered pieces—the peeling painted rocker and barn-red coffee table, for example, next to the heirloom American wing chair. "You've got to mix the junky stuff with the good stuff," she says. "It makes the good stuff look better, yet takes away the formality."

The kitchen was anything but fancy. Sosnow's tongue-in-cheek response? To dress it up with oil portraits, an eclectic chandelier and plaid slipcovers over the Queen Anne dining chairs. She says, "I'm a decorator, so I wanted it to be pretty as well as functional." Now she loves spending time here—the kitchen's ideal for hanging out with her twenty-something children and their gang of friends. "It holds at least 30 people," she says. Pre-makeover, the space was half that size, so Sosnow combined it with the adjacent dining room. Now, cathedral ceilings soar nearly 19 feet—they were a mere 8 feet high before—and sunlight streams through new skylights. Anchoring the room's airiness are earthy, terra-cotta tile floors and cool, dark green marble countertops.

Left: The entry and living room show how architectural detail adds character: namely moldings, bookcases, and a tray ceiling, which adds one foot to the living room's otherwise 8-foot ceilings.

Right: Exposed rafters and a wood dining table make the 18 x 22-foot kitchen homey. So does the mix of chairs.

Checkerboard floor pattern

The maple living-room floor is patterned with 24-inch squares—some painted a washed-out, sea-foam green, the rest left bare. To do it, Sosnow used an oil-based paint topped with four polyurethane coats.



Curl up with a book or take a midday nap in these soothing bedroom retreats



Above: Red-stripe chintz trimmed in red cording (detail, below) wraps guest-room windows; dark wood blinds and give shade. The heavier treatment creates intimacy.



Two inviting bedrooms, two distinct personalities: In the airy, master bedroom, gauze sheers float at the window and around the four-poster bed. The hangings echo living room window swags, but take on their own, faintly tropical character. Sosnow says she was inspired by the look of draped mosquito netting. On the steel bed, by Carol Gratale of New York City, a tiny cat perches atop each post, adding a bit of whimsy. Color—the blue-check duvet, green-painted trunk, fresh flowers on the bedside table—enliven the room's muted scheme, established by pale walls and an oatmeal-hued wool sisal rug.

By contrast, the reds and yellows in the guest bedroom are quite cozy. "For some rea-

son, I'm reminded of an English cottage," the designer muses. "This room is the least 'American' of my rooms." Perhaps it's because the bedding is Belgian linen. The plaid's faded reds are picked up by the tufted slipper chair. And sunny yellow walls are cheery: It's just the place for a rainy day.

Sewing bed curtains & canopy

For the bed curtains, Sosnow cut eight gauze panels, each one measuring the bed's height by half the width, and sewed on a 3-inch border of plaid fabric; Velcro tabs attach the panels to the bed frame. The canopy is the same plaid fabric, tied to the bed frame with bows.





In the 14 x 18-foot master bedroom, details are gracious enhancers. The bedside table is draped in white duck; a gilt-edge mirror props on top—now you have a casual dressing table.

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