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2023-2024

A special publication of the Crested Butte News

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Editor's Note

STORIES

One of my absolute favorite parts of producing this magazine each year is digging into the history of Crested Butte. The stories that unfold from researching the original buildings bring me immeasurable joy. It's a chance to look back at our founding families and an opportunity to talk with those who are connected to those families and homes.

In this issue, we introduce you to new Crested Butte families, who have built homes here with the intent to connect to the place, with family and friends. I feel joy knowing how many memories are being made inside those walls, along riverbanks and mountains.

Also featured is a modern, sustainable home in CB South, built by a local guide. It's a basecamp for Ryan Martin, who took skills he gained from working around the world and created not only a house in the valley, but a treehouse in neighboring Marble.

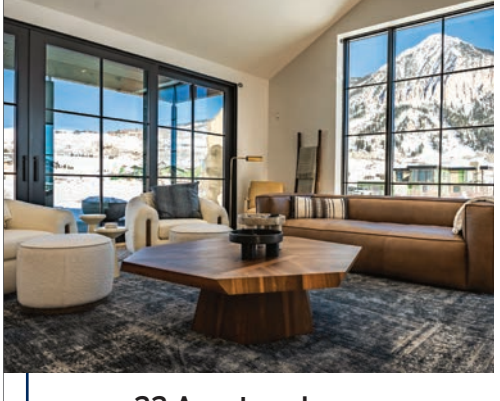
You'll hear the inside scoop of what it's really like to live through a kitchen remodel and hopefully get some good tips from writer Katherine Nettles.

And if you are missing Donita's like I am, we're sharing three of Kay and Heli Mae's recipes, including Kay's famous peach cobbler.

I hope this issue of the Peak gives you some new ideas to bring inside your home, and helps you honor this place we call home.

–Melissa Fenlon, publisher

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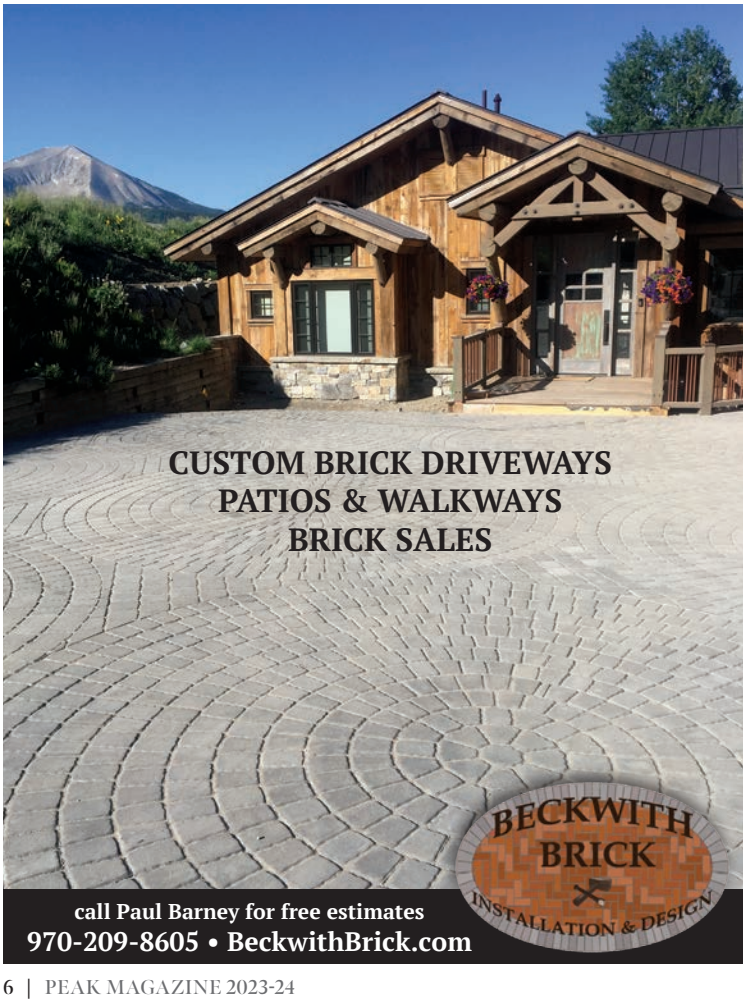
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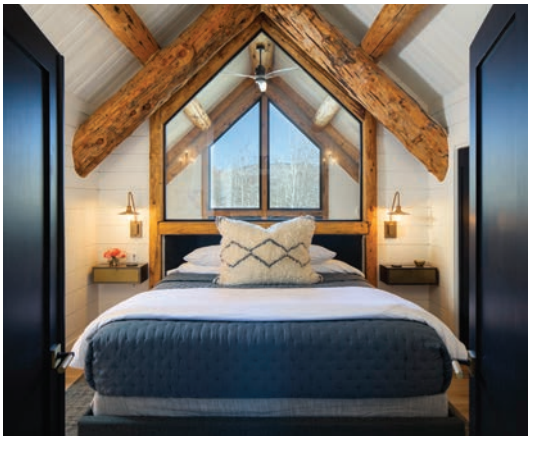


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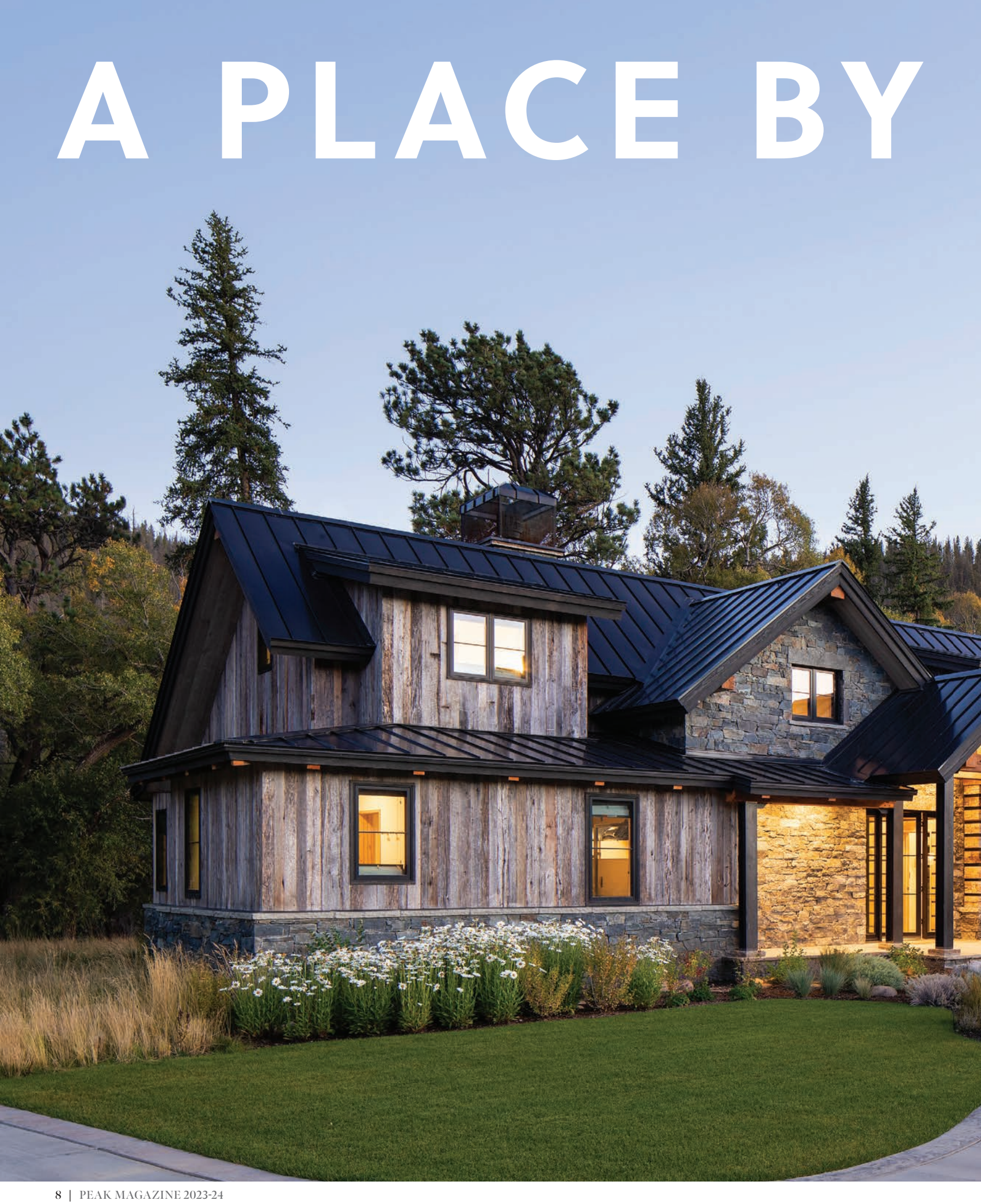
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A PLACE BY



THE RIVER

A modern fishing cabin on the Taylor brings the inside outward

BY KATHERINE NETTLES

In the Taylor Canyon southeast of Crested Butte, lined with towering pines and granite, the occasional breaks of prairie feel like welcoming pockets of expansive wilderness hugging the canyon's namesake river.

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Architect Dan Murphy, Pike Builders, Inc. and I.D. Studio came together to create an old-world style fishing retreat for a summer-loving family using reclaimed wood, steel and the home's natural surroundings

PHOTOS BY JAMES RAY SPAHN









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The Herring family retreat is tucked into one such prairie pocket, nestled against the pristine waters of the Taylor River. As part of the Wilder development, the Herring home site spreads across several acres to accommodate more nature than brick and mortar—or in this case, log, chink and stone.

The home was completed in late 2021 and designed as a guest house and fishing cabin for the Herring family of Dallas, Texas. The family has design plans for a main house and tentative plans to build it in the next few years. In the meantime, the 2,500 square foot guest house makes use of every available space and the well-planned architecture and design achieve a welcoming, spacious layout able to accommodate 14 people or more.

The home was originally designed by architect Dan Murphy as a timber-framed house. But, according to builder Paul Pike, who co-owns Pike Builders with his brother Steve, the timber frame design evolved dramatically as designer Carolina Fechino Alling of I.D. Studios was encouraged to build on her creative vision. Carolina incorporated ornate steel elements into the structure and design, inside and out that create a more modern mountain style.

"So we incorporated some steel features like steel I-beams, steel gussets and steel chinking inside and out," Paul says.

Carolina's unique steel chinking concept, perhaps the first of its kind, complements the sleek black roof, window frames and other modern elements, and had to be installed in tandem with the log stacks as opposed to traditional methods that fill in afterward.

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Pike Builders specializes in timber construction, and Paul recalls the former round-log structures of the 1980s that were standard in log home designs for a long time. In recent decades, reclaimed wood has taken off, and according to Pike, in the last few years, that look has been a mainstay in local design. "The mountain modern home has started to show its colors here, and Carolina took it to a different level with this house," he says.

Carolina used contemporary features in fine detail, from continued use of steel inside at the bar kickplate, to kitchen accents to the custom made fireplace.

The home also uses a shadow line, which is a minimalist, etched-in gap between the walls and baseboards. Dry wall plaster used on the window returns, American clay plaster applied to the walls and a concrete hearth also achieve a variety of textures and smooth modern finishes.

"There are so many details you wouldn't notice right at first," says Paul of the countless delightful discoveries to be made throughout the home. "But they make all the difference."

To introduce additional warmth, the reflective ceiling in the kitchen and hallway and all the interior doors and door jambs were made using reclaimed white oak from a nineteenth-century New Hampshire church floor. Each board is peppered with black nail holes hinting at the story of the wood's previous life.

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"There are so many details you wouldn't notice right at first... But they make all the difference."

—PAUL PIKE OF PIKE BUILDERS, INC.


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The main floor holds an open kitchen, dining room and living area with vaulted ceilings and windows that face the river just steps away, where property owners share fishing rights to the entire section of the Taylor within the Wilder Ranch area.

A main floor primary bedroom suite and bunk room with eight large bunk beds offer comfortable accomodations for the Herrings and their three middle to high-school-aged kids and plenty of friends. There is also an oversized laundry and mudroom, a powder room and a covered walkway leading to the single car garage.

Upstairs, custom made handrails and timber trusses embedded with LED lights lead the way to two more en suite guest bedrooms allowing for additional couples or families to spread out. The bedrooms have built-in bench seating and cushions that can double as trundle beds for additional sleeping quarters.

Pike Builders custom built all of the home's cabinetry and much of the furniture as well, from built-in bench seating in the kitchen and bedrooms to the dressers, wardrobes, mudroom and bathroom consoles.

Every space is well utilized, with built-in cabinets, drawers, a pantry and shelving nooks taking advantage of every available area that might otherwise have been unused space.

The interior spills out into the exterior property from every angle, with expansive flagstone patios and pathways leading to the river and a garden-lined pavilion leading to a large fire circle surrounded by Adirondack chairs. Views of the surrounding canyon can be enjoyed from every side of the home.

Even the garage is a rustic modern masterpiece, with steel framed glass doors and trim. Inside, a tidy line of fly fishing vests and rods stand ready for the next fishing trip and various lawn games are ready for the call of starlit summer evenings and the next barbeque.

"It's such a pleasure to build homes in a setting like this," says Paul. And despite the framing having started in March 2020, as COVID precautions restricted the number of workers allowed at a build site and stalled supply chains, the whole project was complete in about 18 months. "We just had to be really proactive," he says of the ordering and planning process. "Especially in this home, when there are so many specialty items, we were always looking one or two months ahead. It's a complete team involvement."

Paul put on his own tool bags alongside the crews, he says, and in cases like this one, his clients become friends after working together so closely for a time. The Pike brothers and the family now get together when the family is in town to enjoy barbeques and their combined handiwork. "It's a beautiful place up here," says Paul. "And some of the homes that have been built here over the years are in magical places."



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Views from all angles

THE MORRISON HOME



story by **Kendra Walker** | photos by **James Ray Spahn**

From the moment you enter Joyce and Jerry Morrison's house in Skyland, the view of Paradise Divide greets you in nearly every nook and cranny of the home. "The front door opens and gives way to this infinity pool feeling. Instead of walls, all you see are mountains," says Kate Somrak of Somrak Concept + Structure and Somrak Interiors. "The location of that house is so pivotal. The views from their location are unbelievable. There's really nothing else like it, it's one of the best locations in the valley."

When the Morrisons bought a lot in Skyland back in 2016, "I had never been to Crested Butte," laughs Joyce. She recalls having seen the lot for sale on a Facebook post and joked with her husband about buying it. But what started out as a joke quickly turned into reality, as the Dallas couple took a chance and bought the lot.

When the Morrisons came to town to check out the property and interview builders, their plans quickly pivoted when they learned of another Skyland lot for sale with architectural plans already in place. "It felt like a great step to get into the door, buying a lot that already had energy and plans behind it. We could save some steps and get right into building the house," says Joyce. They put the other lot back on the market and started building their five-bedroom home with Ben and Kate Somrak.

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LET THE VIEW DO THE TALKING

From the beginning, Joyce knew she wanted a contemporary, modern home aesthetic. "A lot of the homes you see here have that typical, brown mountain log decor. The original plans were that typical mountain-style brown. So, we kept the bones and made it modern mountain contemporary," says Joyce. "Usually, you see a lot of heavy woods in mountain homes, but I wanted to keep it really clean. Our vision here was to feel light and bright. I'm not very big into color and I love a smooth, natural palette, but we didn't want it to feel sterile. We went for a warm, neutral palette."

With a modern neutral palette to serve as the backbone of the design, they then incorporated more warmth and textures with stone and clay walls, cabinets, tiling, lighting accents and rugs. "Joyce has a super modern aesthetic," says Kate. "My job was to infuse a little mountain modern flair into their minimalistic and modern vibe. For example, we put in a lot of clay walls. Clay is a really great way to bring in warmth and texture into a space. The whole house pushed us out of our comfort zone to do something new, but also find ways to infuse some Crested Butte mountain feel into it."

The Morrisons also wanted to let the view speak for itself. Much of the interior focuses on maximizing the views of the North Valley. "I wanted it clear and open. I love all the big open windows," says Joyce. "There is no hood in the kitchen, so I can look at Crested Butte Mountain while I'm cooking. I didn't even want curtains." Instead of a vanity mirror above the primary bathroom sink, a glass wall overlooks the golf course and view of Paradise Divide. "I want to look at that at 7 in the morning, not at myself," laughs Joyce. I want to see these mountains at all times. And the way the house is situated, we still feel like we have privacy at all angles."

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Kate remembers triple-checking with the Morrisons that they were ok with no curtains, but admits, "The pure, unobstructed views here make this house really unique. It's stunning."

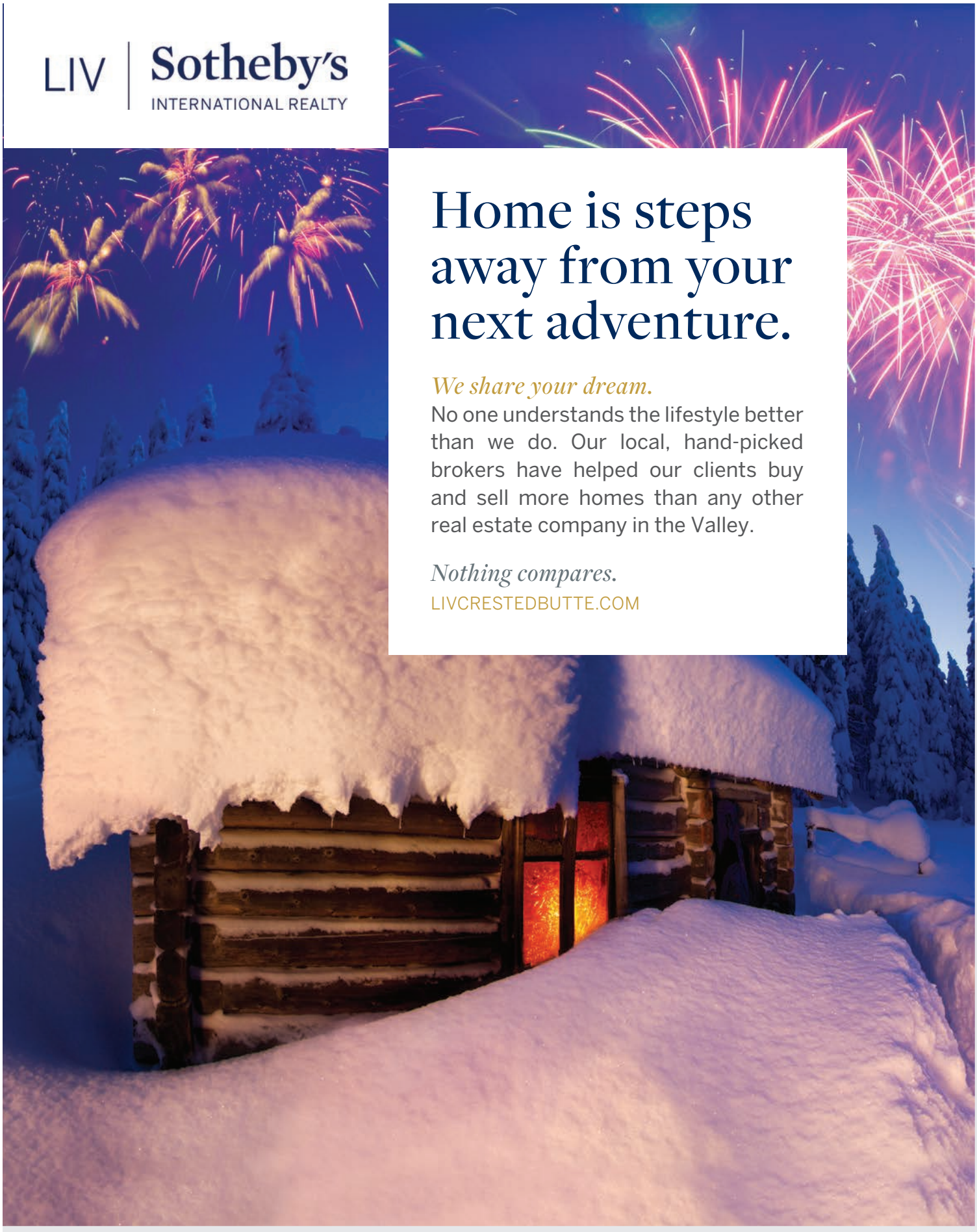
Joyce says they also wanted to keep the wall details and artwork to a minimum. "With views like this, we really felt like we didn't need much else," she says. "We love that we're constantly looking at the beauty of Crested Butte. There's no time that we're in this house that we're not looking outside. It's our art."

"The house has such a presence to it," says Kate. "We designed everything to highlight the outside. The whole house really invites the outdoors in. It feels small and cozy and inviting, but it's bigger than you think."

Another unique design element the Morrisons wanted was to have large-format tile flooring across the entire house, rather than hardwood or carpet. "We had never done a full house with tile floors before," says Ben. But the Somraks feel the tile serves the Crested Butte environment well. "As far as functionality, tile is a better material in this environment," says Kate. Ben agrees, "I was afraid of the tile at first, but we live in a wet, muddy, sloppy place. Why are we putting wood on all these floors? By the time we got all the furnishings in there, the tile remains an anchor that is durable and a smart choice for them and their activities. Function comes first and good design will always follow."

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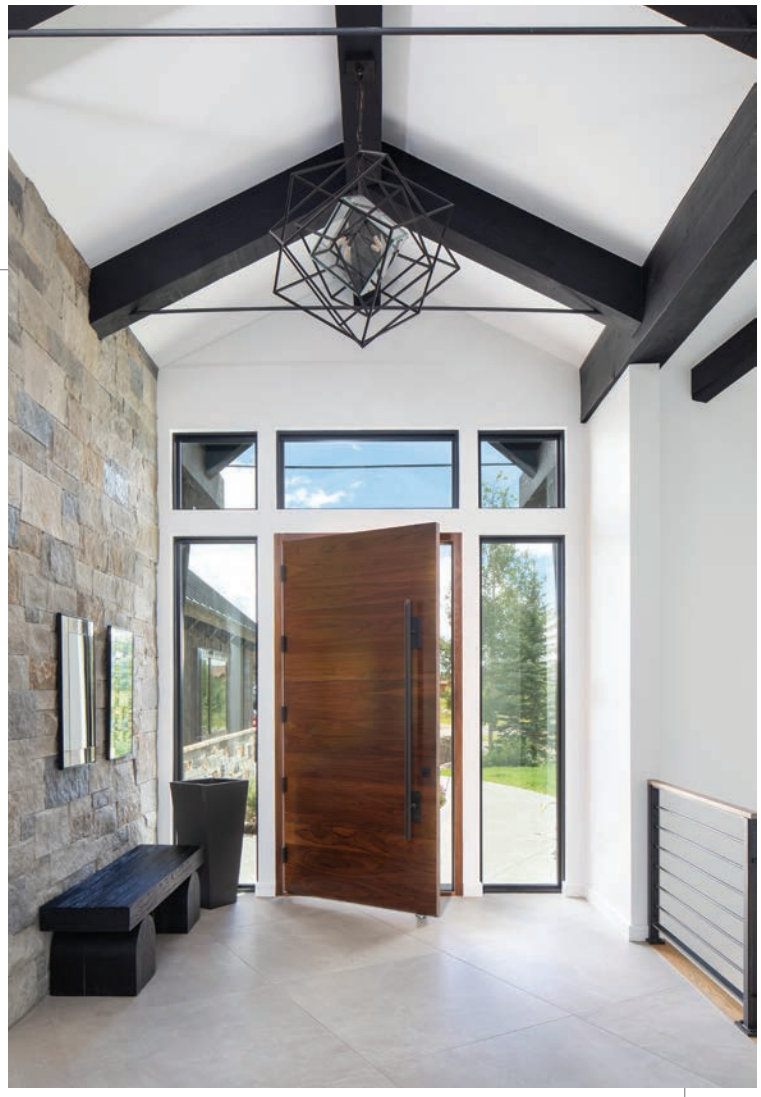
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The tile floors extend seamlessly to the outdoor deck. "We love to entertain and really wanted the inside to connect outside into one big space," says Joyce. "When you open those doors, you immediately feel like the inside and outside spaces are connected. I love that clean, open look. Our outdoor patio and inside dining table can even connect into one long dinner table. It's the best thing to have a bunch of people here on warm summer and fall evenings."

"The inside/outside tile system was totally new for us," says Ben. "That took a lot of time and effort, but it really turned out. Now from anywhere you are, the inside flows right to the outside."

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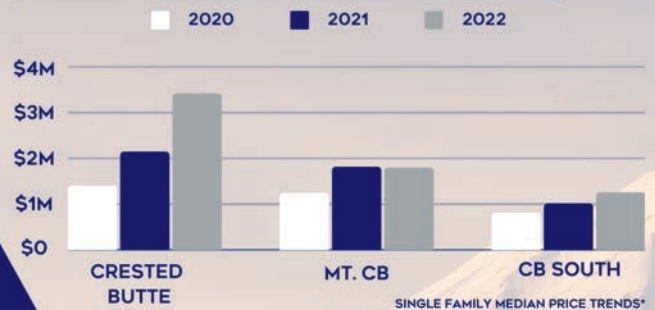
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FUNKY AND FUN TOUCHES

"We wanted there to be some fun details that would make the house special," says Joyce. "I wanted something contemporary that reflected everything we love about Crested Butte. I want people to know they are in Crested Butte."

On the lower level of the house, a mural painted by local Bramble & Bloom artist Sarah Hausdoerffer pays tribute to the colorful, outdoorsy vibes of Crested Butte, while an old Crested Butte Mountain Resort chairlift hangs from the stairway. "Coincidentally, the old Peachtree Lift chairs went to auction during the house build," says Joyce. Ben and Kate nabbed the 67th chair, in honor of our street address, refurbished it and painted it to match the mural."

Ben also sourced old boxcar treads from the Rio Grande railroad for the stairs. "When we first learned they didn't want any wood, we thought, how are we going to warm this place up?" he says. "This was my way of sneaking in a little reclaimed history and incorporating the mountain feel that we try to put in all our homes. The stairs are this cool standalone element, floating off the wall with all this asymmetrical steel. It's fun to have this beautiful, clean, crisp house and then find these old boxcar treads."

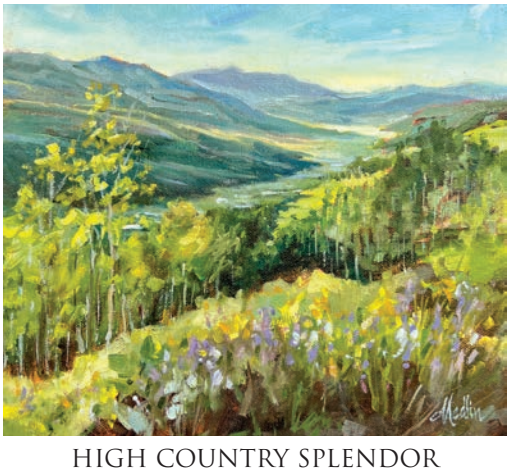
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Every few stair treads have a 1967 coin displayed in the boxcar wood, another nod to the home's address. Joyce enjoys pointing out the special 1967 coins to friends, family and guests. "It's a unique area of the house – the stairs, the mural, the chairlift. There's a lot of character here. It's these fun things that make the house special," says Joyce.

The Somraks also incorporated some Crested Butte mountain flair into the bunk beds in the downstairs bunk room. "It was important to me to use some reclaimed timber and have some wood tones, so we sourced local reclaimed timber and built those custom ourselves," says Kate. "It really ties in nicely with the boxcar treads on the stairs."

One of the most striking elements of the downstairs area is that even with the house buried against the hillside on the lower level, the bright and open mountain views still seem to follow. Natural light pours in from the downstairs patio doors and windows, offering more unobstructed views leading out to the golf course and Paradise Divide. A living room lounge room and bar area complete with games and wine cellar are separated by a floating double-sided fireplace centerpiece, inviting opportunities for playful gatherings and libations or cozy movie nights.

"The wine cellar was a really important element. We're really passionate about wine," said Joyce. "The cellar is in the part of the house that is buried into the hillside, so we're using the natural cooling effect and humidity of the earth to keep the cellar at a cooler temperature."



HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Joyce and Jerry love their new home in Crested Butte, and with their daughter Chloe, try to take a break from Dallas to come visit as often as possible for winter and summer activities. "We fell in love with Crested Butte. We love being outdoors," says Joyce. "I grew up in the country, so I feel like I'm coming back to my roots. We've skied all over Colorado and this place just has a different vibe. It's more relaxing and chill. We feel like we can get away in Crested Butte. There's no Starbucks here, I love that. It's a beautiful, quaint, quiet place."

And not only have they found a new home with Crested Butte, but they've also found friendship. "We really love the Somraks," says Joyce. "They've been wonderful to work with. They are a husband/wife team, and we are also a husband/wife team," says Joyce, noting the medical distribution company she and Jerry founded together. "We share a lot of the same values and energy. And now we are working on a couple other home projects with them."

The Somraks return the sentiment. "We have such a good relationship with them," says Ben. "It was a very fun process, and we would be friends with them whether or not they were our clients." Kate agrees, "They are such awesome people and we've had a real trusting relationship with them. We have a lot of synergy and when you have a good relationship with someone, good things can happen. They're really invested in Crested Butte and how unique it is. They want to integrate their community into their lives here."



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FROM TREEHOUSE TO DREAM HOUSE



RYAN MARTIN BUILDS ON A LIFETIME OF ADVENTURES

by Stephanie Maltarich



IMAGINE a dreamy and idyllic childhood: School lets out for the summer and your family packs up the car in the driveway of your Midwest home and heads west to Colorado. You spend months in the mountains sleeping in rustic cabins while your days are filled with adventures wading in the river and running free through the forest.

This *was* Ryan Martin's childhood. His parents were teachers, and they traveled each summer from Iowa to Marble – a tiny mountain hamlet nestled in Colorado's Elk Range just north of Crested Butte. They returned summer after summer on a quest for mountain adventures.

These annual summer trips to Colorado planted the seed of adventure for Ryan's exciting life. He spent his 20's traveling around the world building homes, captaining sailboats, and working in hospitality. Today, he lives in Crested Butte and works as the guide operations manager for Eleven Experience.

His job still takes him on adventures to places like Chile, New Zealand, Alaska, and Canada. But with a newly built home in Crested Butte South and a 21-foot tall treehouse he constructed near Marble, Ryan has set up his permanent basecamp in the Gunnison Valley.

After his youthful summers near Marble, Ryan graduated and moved to Hawaii where he spent several years learning to build homes under the tutelage of a family friend. He learned then that he loved hands-on projects where he could see results.

"Start pushing walls up or working with your hands – it's fun, and it's creating something right?" says Ryan. "And that's tangible – you can see it. I think that's very neat, and that's more my idea than working in front of a computer."

While building homes in Hawaii, Ryan also learned how to sail. He spent countless days on the water building up his experience which eventually helped him acquire a captain's license. He used the experience to work on sailboats in the South Pacific.

Eventually, Ryan was able to combine his love for sailing with his skills in building. While on a trip to visit his sister in Seattle, he purchased an old sailboat that was built in 1964. He spent a year renovating the boat for his own adventures. Once it was finished, he was off on his own sailing adventure.

"I left from Seattle and sailed down the coast of western America, and then Mexico, Central America, South America to Ecuador and the Galapagos, and then out to Hawaii, and then back to Seattle," recalls Ryan. "That was over five years."

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Ryan eventually made his way back to Colorado and started a food truck company in Fort Collins with his then-wife. He's always had a passion for cooking quality food. But after a few years of "city life," he knew it was time to get back to the mountains.

"I've always liked to live in the mountains," says Ryan. "And so I was just like, man, let's get out of here."

A month-long road trip in 2014 ended with a drive over Kebler Pass into Crested Butte. Despite spending countless summers on the other side of the pass, it was his first time to Crested Butte. A stranger at the Brick Oven recommended they camp out along the Slate River. After one evening looking out at Paradise Divide, he was sold.

He looked at his partner and said, "This place is awesome – this is it."

Ryan's life in the valley started off typically by Crested Butte standards. He worked a combination of jobs: guiding on the river, cooking food at the Ginger, and eventually managing the winter cat operation at Irwin for Eleven Experience. During the summers, he made a point to head back to his old stomping grounds near Marble where he helped with grounds work and refinishing old cabins.

It was then that he realized he had an opportunity to build a treehouse, a lifelong dream, on his friend's property.

"I've always loved them," Ryan explains. "I started looking at old mining-era architecture around Marble and I was inspired by log cabins that were made efficiently from milled wood."

Ryan found two perfectly spaced Engelmann spruce trees that he estimates were around 150 years old. During the mining era, most of the area was clear-cut, but Ryan believes these were spared because they were too small to mill at the time. The trees sit in a quiet secluded spot beside the river next to a trout breeding area.

Ryan started his treehouse project by hauling wood he bought from Lowe's. But he quickly realized that wood was expensive, and didn't look as authentic as the historic cabins nearby. Although he had never milled wood before, he took a chance by purchasing a mill, and started collecting wood around the property.

The entire project took about three summers from start to finish. And Ryan admits it required a lot of work – before and after he had to *actually* work.

"So every day after work I'd go hike in the woods and try to figure out where I could source the wood," Ryan explains. "And then the same thing in the morning, I'd get up at like six in the morning and get out there and take my car off and go start hauling wood out."

He admits that collecting the wood was very labor-intensive and it took him several tries to figure out the perfect method. He'd haul the wood out with a four-wheeler or sometimes he'd wear a harness and haul fallen trees with a winch. He managed to construct the entire treehouse with milled wood, except for the roof, which he made from purchased tin.

The end result is a treehouse built on a 12x12-foot platform. The structure is accessed by climbing a ladder about 21 feet off the ground. The livable area spans about 100 square feet and the house offers lessons in craftsmanship and efficiency coupled with some inspiring finer details. Ryan constructed a small loft for sleeping, hauled up a small woodburning stove, and installed antique glass windows and doors he recovered from nearby cabins that were constructed in the 1800s.

He finished the treehouse in 2019, and he tries to visit a few times each month during the summer – often on his dirtbike. The trip from Crested Butte over Schofield Pass past Devil's Punchbowl takes about an hour and a half.

"I can get in there after work and get there before sunset," says Ryan. "Hang out all day or sometimes I'll get up at seven in the morning and get back here at work by nine."

continued on page 32







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continued from page 31

He'll take a book, spend time fishing or mushroom hunting, climb a nearby peak, or get a meal at the local favorite barbecue restaurant Slow Groovin.

Not long after completing his treehouse, Ryan had the opportunity to build his forever home in Crested Butte South. He started the process in the midst of the pandemic, but despite the challenges of building during a supply chain shortage, he was able to make it work. He gives most of the credit to his friend Travis Hall who owns White Pine Construction. Ryan praises Travis's approach to smart and efficient building.

Travis helped build the house, but Ryan designed the home on his own. Ryan wanted to build small, which was challenging because Crested Butte South's building regulations require homes to be a minimum of 1,400 square feet.

"I just knew I wanted something super simple and cost-effective, and I like the uniqueness. I don't want to live in a cookie cutter place," says Ryan.

Working alongside Travis, he decided to construct his house from structural insulated panels (SIPS). SIPS, also referred to as sandwich construction, consists of a foam core between two structural facings. Entire panels arrive at construction sites fully built. Ryan explains that the method is like putting together Legos and is cheaper and easier while creating super airtight and efficient construction.

"So in theory, it goes up a lot quicker and the insulation is way better," Ryan explains.

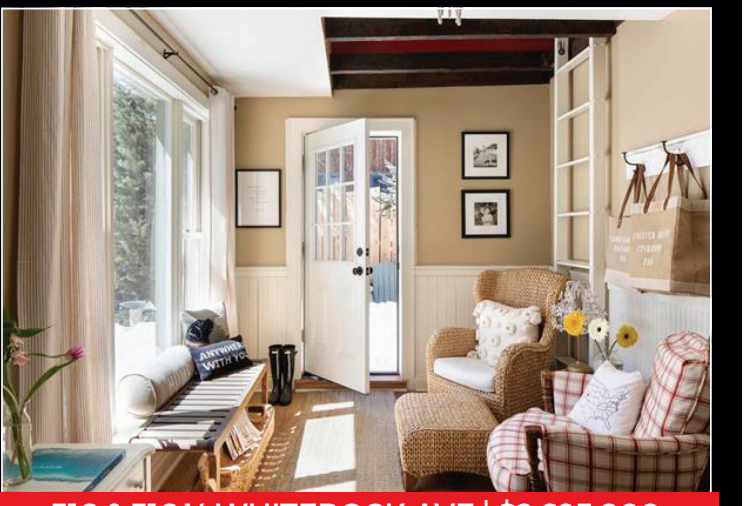
Ryan's Crested Butte South house was inspired by the years he lived in small quarters in his boat, as well as his treehouse.

"I wanted to go modern, for me, my mind works better when there's less clutter," says Ryan. "And the mountain cabins can be super cozy, but I was thinking something more clean and easy."

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Ryan completed his home in the fall of 2022. Driving up to the house, visitors can't miss the unique final touches. The first is a large sign that reads "Martini" over the front door, a nod to his family history.

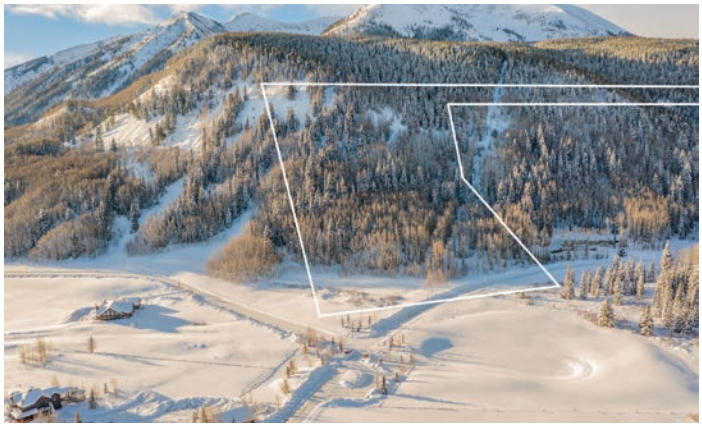
"When my great grandparents came from Italy, they got to Ellis Island and they wanted to make their last name sound more American," explains Ryan. "So they dropped the "i" and it became Martin." In addition to his lineage, Martini is a nickname Ryan acquired during his travels in South America, the nickname stuck and Ryan also likes the connection it evokes to his past.

Ryan's small modern home can sleep up to eight people between two bedrooms, a loft, and a small dwelling on the first floor. The downstairs room has a separate entrance and is equipped with a kitchenette to host friends and family. His dad recently turned 81, and he hopes to provide accessible space for his parents when they need it.

With a passion for cooking, Ryan designed an open and industrial-style kitchen. Modern cement counters and a large stainless steel backsplash provide ample room for his high-end meal prepping. The kitchen feeds into the living room where cozy bean bags and eclectic trinkets create a relaxed sitting area. In the summer, the living area can extend onto the deck where Ryan enjoys sweeping views of Whetstone and Red Lady.

continued on page 37







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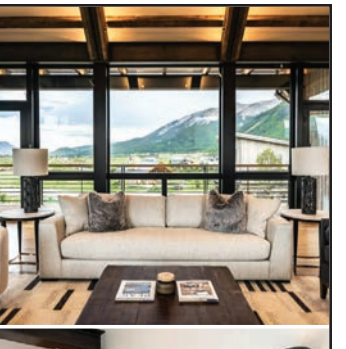
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continued from page 34

The house is equipped with some mountain-living additions: a large exposed steel beam serves as a practical workout space with exercise rings looped over the top and hung toward the floor. He has a shower with a steam room, and a garage for all of his skis, bikes, and climbing gear.

Walls and shelves are adorned with personal touches that reflect Ryan's lifetime of globe-trotting: Collectibles from Hawaii, a large tapestry from Tonga made out of coconut, paddles from Panama, photographs from India, and red clay bowls and plates from Chile. These small reminders of Ryan's traveling life were collecting dust in boxes before he built his home.

Ryan has a few final projects that will have to wait until the snow melts next summer. In the spring, he'll plant trees and build a large area for outdoor cooking and gathering. He wants to emulate the experiences he's had in Chile where they often cook outside.

"In Chile, they are very big on asados and outdoor quinchos (barbecues) and in the last four years, I've cooked over wood a ton being down there," explains Ryan. "I've got a couple of books on this guy named Francis Mallmann, who's super famous for cooking, and so I have plans to really try to build an outdoor kitchen."

After all of his work on boats, in hospitality, and with his treehouse – Ryan's life on the move helped create the vision for his comfortable home. He admits that after living on a boat and building his treehouse, designing a house was easy, and his simple way of living is reflected in the design.

"I was living on a boat for five years," Ryan says. "When you're on a 35-foot boat, that's 11 feet wide, with all of the possessions that you own, you understand space and what you need, and you can do so much more than people think."

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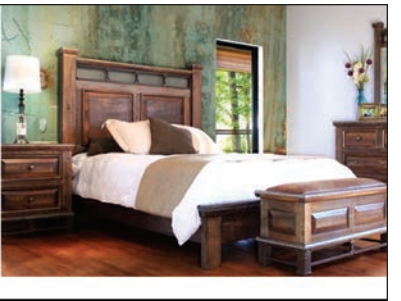


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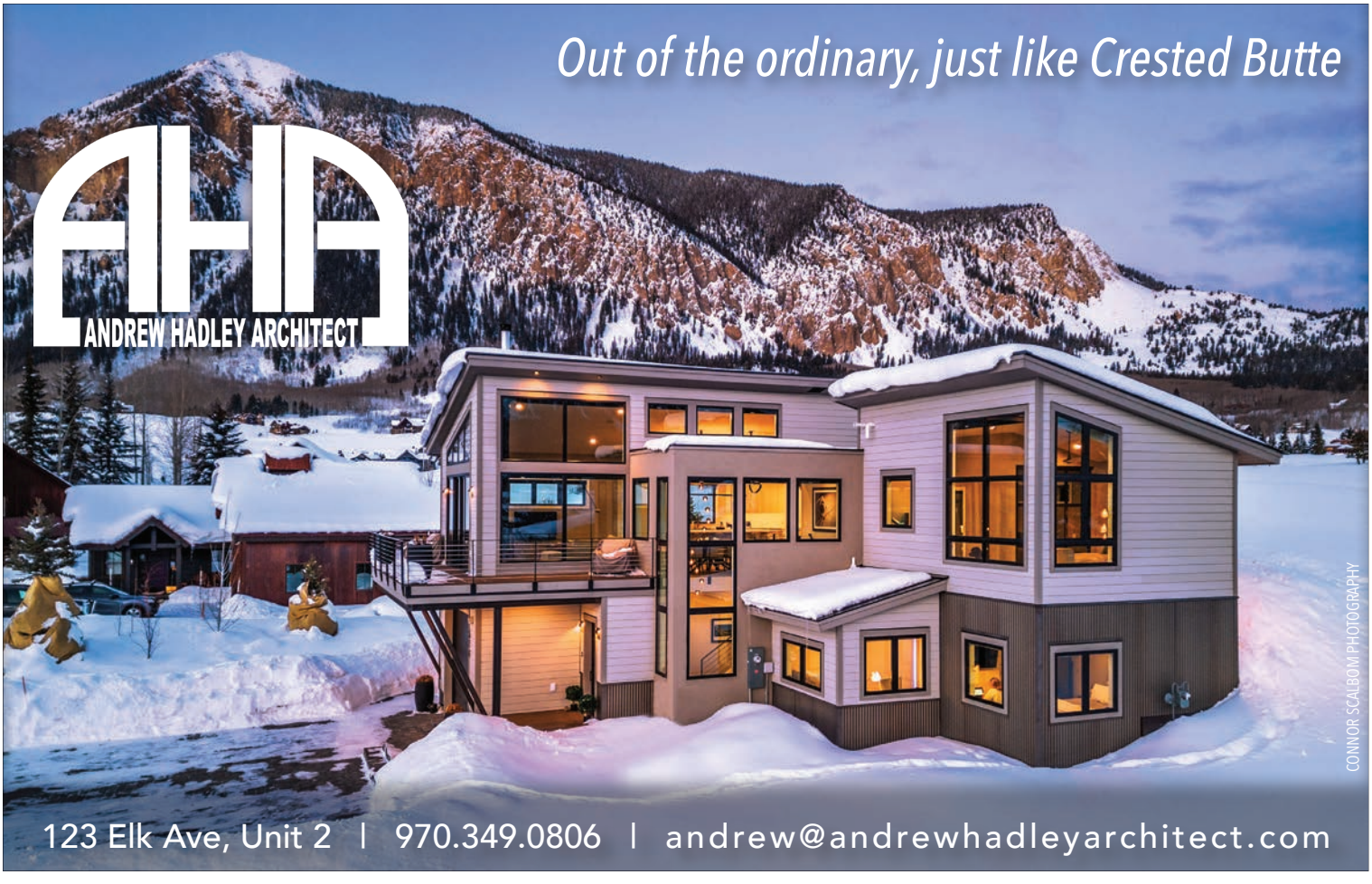
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ARTIST PROFILE: SARAH SCHMIDT

By Kendra Walker



er



While many in this community will tell you they first came to Crested Butte for the winter and ended up staying for the summer, local artist Sarah Schmidt will tell you just the opposite.

"I moved here in the summertime, but it was weird because it was so busy with tourists and I didn't know anyone," she says. "But then my first winter here was magical. I had never lived anywhere where it snowed this much. I didn't really realize how much I liked the winter."

You may have come across Sarah's paintings on display at the Redline Gallery on Elk Avenue, or her painted signs around town for the Crested Butte Creative District, Three Ladies Park and Town Park. Most recently, Sarah's work was featured at the Center for the Arts for her "What Comes After" gallery show. Her contemporary paintings capture snapshots in time, moments that Sarah describes as both unremarkable and unforgettable.

Sarah grew up in Arlington, Virginia, and as a kid always seemed to find herself painting or drawing. "I've always been a painter, it's my favorite thing to do," she says. Sarah certainly inherited the artistic touch from her family, as her mom is a photographer and her dad is an architect. "My mom is one of five sisters, and all of them paint except for her," Sarah laughs. "She's always been into photography but didn't start selling it professionally until she moved to Crested Butte."

Sarah studied at the Corcoran School of Art in Washington, D.C. during high school and received her BFA in Illustration from Savannah College of Art and Design. After school, Sarah moved to Austin, Texas and spent several years illustrating greeting cards.

Sarah found her way to Crested Butte in 2018 and started working at the Redline Gallery, which her mom Mary Schmidt owns and started in 2014. "My mom was selling some of my paintings already, and I spent that first summer working at the gallery. At first, she admits, it was much easier to sell her art than it was getting to know the town and the people here. "I'm an introvert, so that took a little more time," she recalls.

But Sarah soon landed her first Crested Butte gig, painting the Creative District sign at the Four-Way stop on Elk Avenue. "Everyone was excited to have new artists around," she says of the supportive art community here. "People were receptive to new artists applying for local projects."

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PHOTO BY NOLAN BLUNCK



"I try to paint things how I see them and then give the viewer the opportunity to draw the lines in-between."



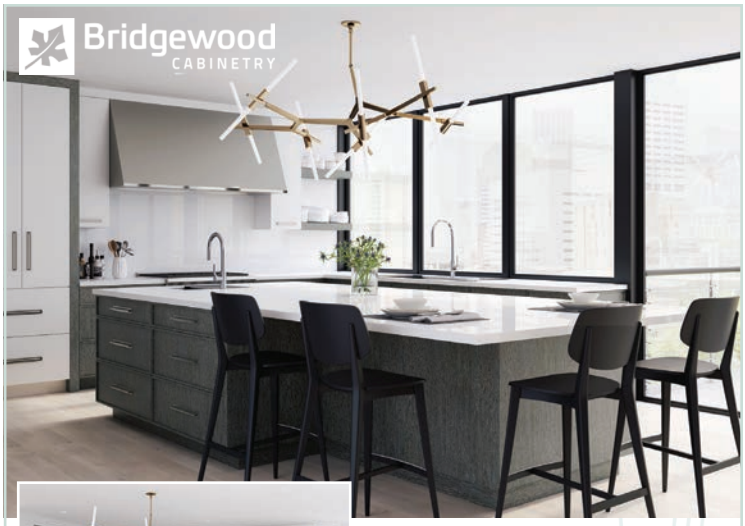
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Sarah is also responsible for painting the Three Ladies Park sign and the Town Park sign. "The Three Ladies is my favorite," she says. "It looks so great in front of the trees. And the Town Park sign was a fun one. I made that before COVID, but then with everything going on it took two years to finally go up."

While in Austin Sarah learned alla prima, which is the painting technique she focuses on most these days. Alla prima is a wet-on-wet approach where wet paint is applied to previous layers of still-wet paint, which allows everything to be painted all at once.

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"The slow process of oil painting wasn't working for me, and it can be intimidating. And then with watercolor you can't erase anything. So this was a game changer," she says. "The idea of alla prima is like paint by numbers," she explains. "I pre-mix the colors and usually work off of a photo. You can paint over things, mix colors or wipe things off if you want to. I really like it."

Sarah describes her style as contemporary realism. "It's kind of impressionist, but realistic at the same time. I like realism, but not hyper-realism. I want it to look like how we actually see things, like how you focus on one thing and everything else is blurry or out of focus. I try to paint things how I see them and then give the viewer the opportunity to draw the lines in-between."

A lot of Sarah's inspiration for her paintings draws from her time in Crested Butte, which was highlighted in her "What Comes After" show that ran earlier this year at the Center for the Arts.

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Her paintings capture not only familiar scenic vistas of the Gunnison Valley, but also dance party scenes from beloved community events. "That show was very much inspired by my time in Crested Butte, my experiences here from my point of view," she says. The dance party scenes are from blurry cell phone pics I've taken. It was really fun trying to translate that into paint."

Sarah enjoys painting people and figures, "but it's so pretty out here, you can't not paint the mountains," she says. "I like going back and forth because I learn things about each subject matter. With nature you have a lot more leeway to be really loose, and then that sort of transfers over when I start painting humans."

Not only is some of Sarah's work on display at the Redline Gallery, but she also happens to live in the upstairs apartment. And her studio space? "I paint in the living room," she laughs.

Sarah also teaches painting classes at the Center for the Arts and the Gunnison Arts Center, as well as wildflower watercolor classes in the summer. She also offers hike and paint classes through Airbnb Experiences.

Sarah loves living so close to the outdoors and nature, and spends a lot of time skiing, hiking and mountain biking – so much so that last summer she joined the "broken bone club" while mountain biking at Crested Butte Mountain Resort.

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PHOTO BY LYDIA STERN

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"I broke my hand, and I'm right-handed," she said. "That was my first broken bone as an adult." But Sarah didn't let that stop her from painting. "I did have to do some left-handed painting, but honestly, brushing my teeth left-handed was harder," she laughs. Because her broken hand limited her from her barista and gardening jobs in town, she spent a lot of time hiking and summiting mountains. "All I could do was hike and paint. So I climbed a lot of mountains last year," she says.

One of her favorite adventures was hiking Mineral Point. "That one was really cool because it's really off the beaten path. That was the huge, focal painting in my 'What Comes After' show," she says.

Now with a healed hand, Crested Butte continues to bring her new opportunities and perspectives to tap into her artistry. "I'd always lived in cities until I came here. People say there's so much more to do in the city, but for me there's so much more to do out here," she says. "I love hiking and exploring and enjoying nature, but I also love Crested Butte for the costume and dance parties. And it all gives me inspiration for my art."

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MIXING THINGS UP



Bartending, food pairing and creating alcohol-free options with local mixologist Kelly Casey-White

story by Katherine Nettles
photos by Nolan Blunck

Kelly Casey-White is the cocktail mastermind who won the 2022 Crested Butte Battle of the Bartenders last year with her cocktail "44 Fall Back." She takes her inspiration from the seasons—focusing on what is freshly available—and from her mixology beginnings with a renowned group of cocktail-forward establishments in her hometown of San Antonio, Texas. These days, when she isn't travelling as a cocktail educator or pursuing more knowledge of spirits, Kelly can often be found creating recipes and mixing drinks at the Crested Butte Center for the Arts or at the Secret Stash.

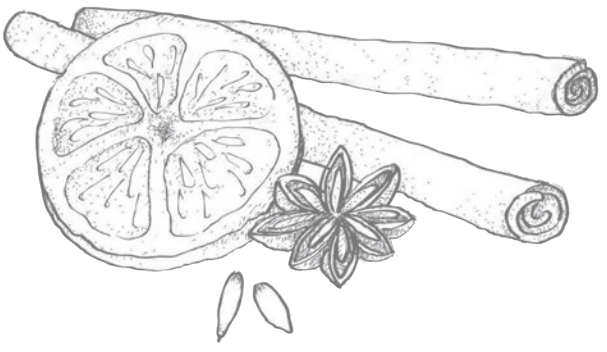
Kelly moved to the Gunnison Valley in November 2021, "kind of on a whim," and within a year she had made a name for herself in Crested Butte with her winning concoctions of sweet, hearty autumnal flavors like walnut pear syrup and roasted acorn squash butter paired with gin.

The inspiration for her winning Battle of the Bartenders cocktail last fall was from a seasonal meal she was enjoying.

"It was a stuffed acorn squash with walnuts and pears. From there I developed the concept for a gin dessert-style martini."

It was the first competition she had ever entered, although she had been bartending for about six years. That experience definitely reinforced her sense that she is in the right place, and there is valuable work ahead.

She won the award on behalf of the Secret Stash, which she credits as "my first family here." She now also works at the Center for the Arts and has been mixing drinks for their various events, which include custom craft cocktails for art show openings at the Kinder Padon Gallery, and for various other shows, productions, talks and fundraisers.





44 FALL BACK

(battle of the bartenders 2022 winning cocktail)

2.0 oz Spring 44 Gin
.75 oz lemon juice
.75 oz pear/walnut syrup*
Barspoon of acorn squash butter**

Add all ingredients to shaker, add ice and shake vigorously for 30 seconds.

Double strain into Coupe glass or Nick & Norah glass.

*Pear walnut syrup

2 cups brown sugar
1 1/2 cups water
1 cup chopped walnuts
4 diced pears (she used asiatic pears from Big B's Fruit Company)

Bring all ingredients to a boil and let reduce until thick.

**Acorn squash butter

Slice one acorn squash in half and remove seeds. Dust one half with cinnamon. Roast in 365-degree oven for one hour. Blend roasted pulp with 1 cup of brown sugar simple syrup.

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MOUNTAIN RITUALS

(and option for a zero-proof cocktail)
inspired by our friends at the Daily Dose

2.0 oz gin or Ritual Zero-Proof Gin alternative
3.0 oz juice blend*

Add all ingredients to a shaker with ice and shake vigorously for 30 seconds. Strain into a rocks glass over fresh ice and enjoy!

*Juice Blend

handful of parsley
sliver of turmeric
1/4 teaspoon of fresh grated ginger
juice of 1 lemon
1 oz pineapple juice
1 oz apple juice

Blend all ingredients thoroughly.

"My bartending background definitely comes from the bar scene in San Antonio, which is super close knit. And everyone is very into friendly competition and challenging each other," says Kelly. When she first happened into The Brooklynite, a former bar in San Antonio, she says, "I had never seen cocktails made like that before, like things set on fire, and aromatics and different garnishes." She started hanging around the bar, observing, learning, and getting to know people until they hired her—and formed lasting friendships as well.

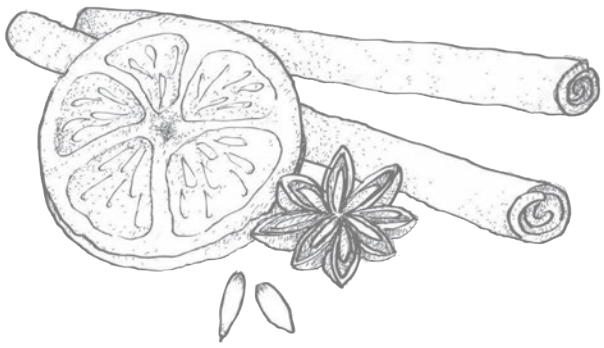
"They really encouraged me to learn new things, educate myself on why certain things get mixed together in certain ways and why you do things in certain orders of operation. I really like the science behind it."

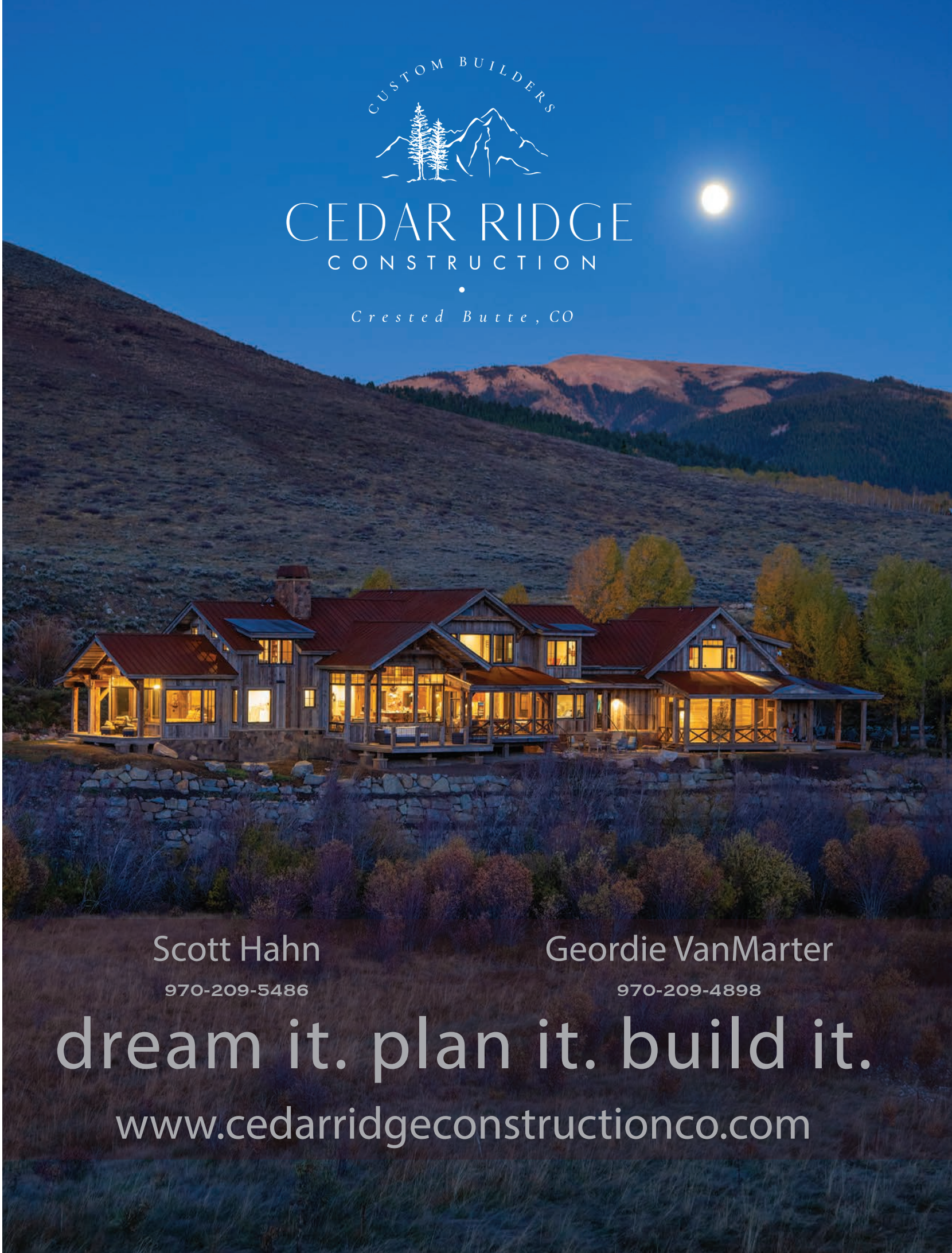
Kelly finds creative bartending an important information-sharing culture in which people "are always brainstorming and bouncing ideas off each other."

And like many connoisseurs of flavors, she says, "I love pairing food and drinks. When I can find the time, I like to plan a whole meal or spend a day meal prepping. I like working with a lot of fresh vegetables; I'm really into herbs and root vegetables and things like garlic and ginger and turmeric."

That is where Mountain Rituals, her latest parsley-based cocktail recipe, comes in. "It's inspired by something I had at the Daily Dose (a juice bar on Elk Avenue) not that long ago. I love how bright the parsley and lemon are with each other, so I thought that would work really well with gin, and I thought it would work even better with nonalcoholic gin. And adding a little turmeric for spice. It's refreshing and botanical."

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continued from page 52

HOLD THE ALCOHOL

Kelly says bringing pretty, complex flavors to people who want no or low alcohol levels (alcohol by volume, or ABV) is important to her. "That [low ABV and zero proof] program here at the Center is something I am working really hard to perfect, but we will have an entire menu available of no-ABV and low-ABV drinks. That's kind of the new trend in the industry and there's a lot of research and statistics going into the projection for that. It's really interesting, because people decide not to drink for several different reasons. I think it's nice that [nonalcoholic cocktails] are becoming a little more mainstream."

Kelly enjoyed her first winter in CB, especially the local events. She enjoys paddleboarding and road cycling in summer, and her love of hip-hop music and anime sometimes inspires her cocktails' names. She was recently featured by the advocacy group "Brown and Balanced" as part of their recognition of female bartenders. "To be featured in that network of bartenders was pretty incredible and I'm super proud of that. I definitely want to do more with that, especially being someone who's not from here and who doesn't look like a lot of people in this community. I think it's important to have that representation," she says. "This is a very inclusive space, and everyone should be coming to Crested Butte and enjoying it. I'm happy to be a part of that and be a little different than the norm."

"Crested Butte has been good to me, and it's definitely the people. I love that everyone knows everyone and people kind of look out for each other."



Her advice for the intimidated: drink what you enjoy, and don't force a diverse palette if it isn't what you want. Ask your bartender questions (if there isn't a long line of people waiting), and don't be afraid to ask how or why something is done. "There are so many resources out there. I'm just finishing up a Canadian whiskey certification right now," she says.



Retro Recipes





PHOTO BY SARA ALBERS

A few of our Donita's favorites

BY MELISSA FENLON

Kay Peterson-Cook ran the Crested Butte institution, Donita's Cantina, for four decades with her husband Don Cook and sister Heli Mae Peterson. Locals and visitors alike still miss those Donita's staples. Kay was kind enough to share some of her favorite Donita's recipes with us.

"Donita's Cantina prepared all of our meals and ingredients from scratch," she says. "This is why our food was so darn delicious."

The guacamole recipe is easy and oh so good and will bring you back to the days when you could order their famous fajitas or Suprema salad.

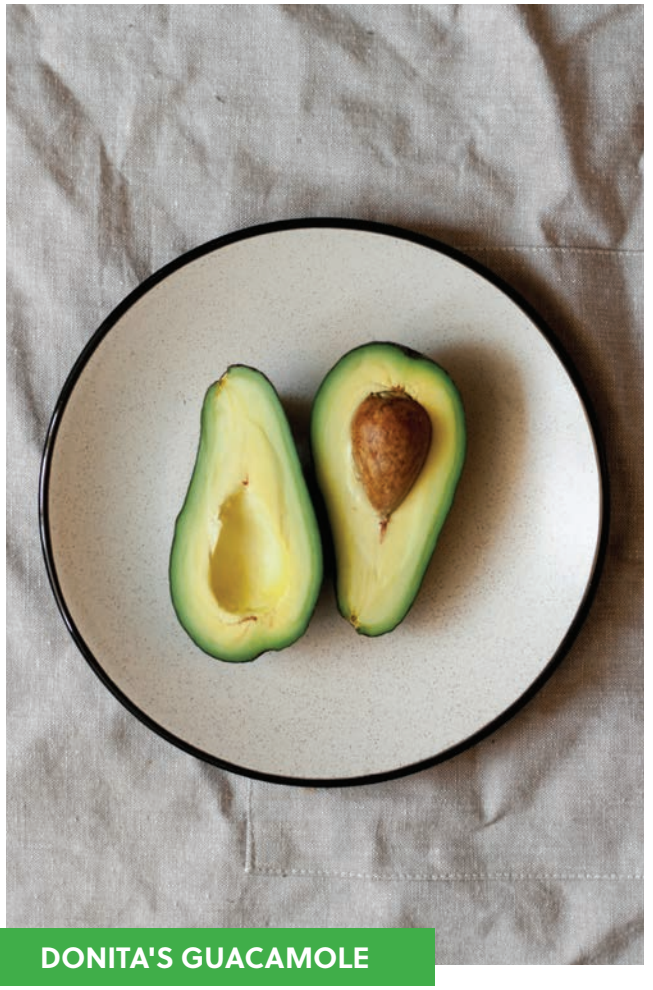
The Donita's signature salad dressing goes back to the earliest days of the restaurant, when it was in the Ek Mountain Lodge. "Many people have fond memories of that dressing," Kay says. "It was a great addition to our Suprema salads that were served in a big flour tortilla bowl— a hugely popular item on the menu."

Kay's peach cobbler was a later addition to the menu. "It was a very unique dessert that I made daily as it would sell out," Kay remembers.

The locally-sourced peaches and rhubarb made it special, says Kay, and you couldn't go wrong when you ordered the peach cobbler topped with Heli's famous homemade Honey Cinnamon ice cream. "Folks would come in and, before they ordered dinner, they would ask the servers to hold aside a piece or two for them. It was special," she says.

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COURTESY PHOTO

DONITA'S GUACAMOLE

5 avocados (cut in half, pitted and scooped out)
1-2 tablespoons of minced fresh jalapeno
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
1½ teaspoons minced fresh garlic
1½ teaspoons onion powder
1 teaspoon seasoned salt
¼ teaspoon celery salt

1. Put all of the ingredients in a mixing bowl.
2. Using a potato masher, mash mixture until smooth.

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COURTESY PHOTOS

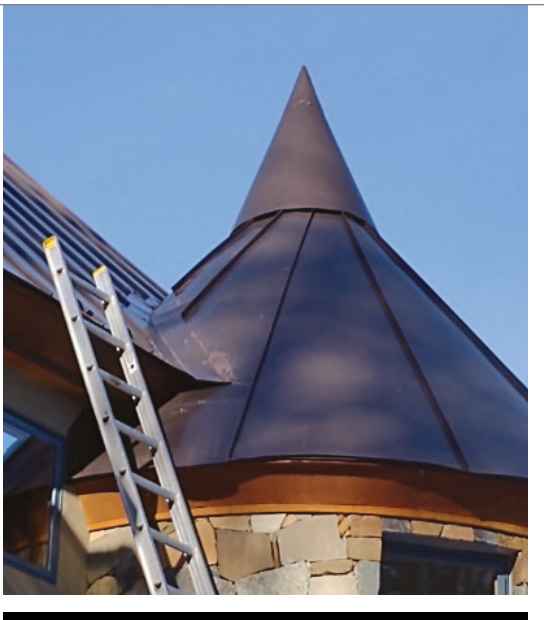
DONITA'S CANTINA was a Crested Butte institution for decades.

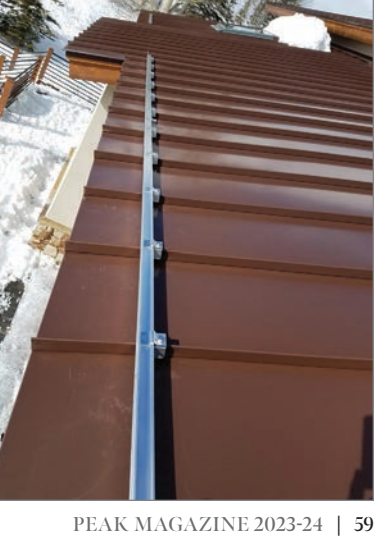
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PHOTO BY MELISSA FENLON

KAY'S PEACH COBBLER

4 oz. butter

1 cup milk

1¾ cups flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

1 teaspoon salt

2 teaspoons vanilla

5 cups sliced fresh peaches (can add frozen berries and chopped rhubarb*)

1 cup of lemon, lime, orange juice or a mix of the three

1¼ cups sugar

2 tablespoons grated lemon, lime, and/or orange zest

½ cup cornstarch dissolved in ½ cup cool water

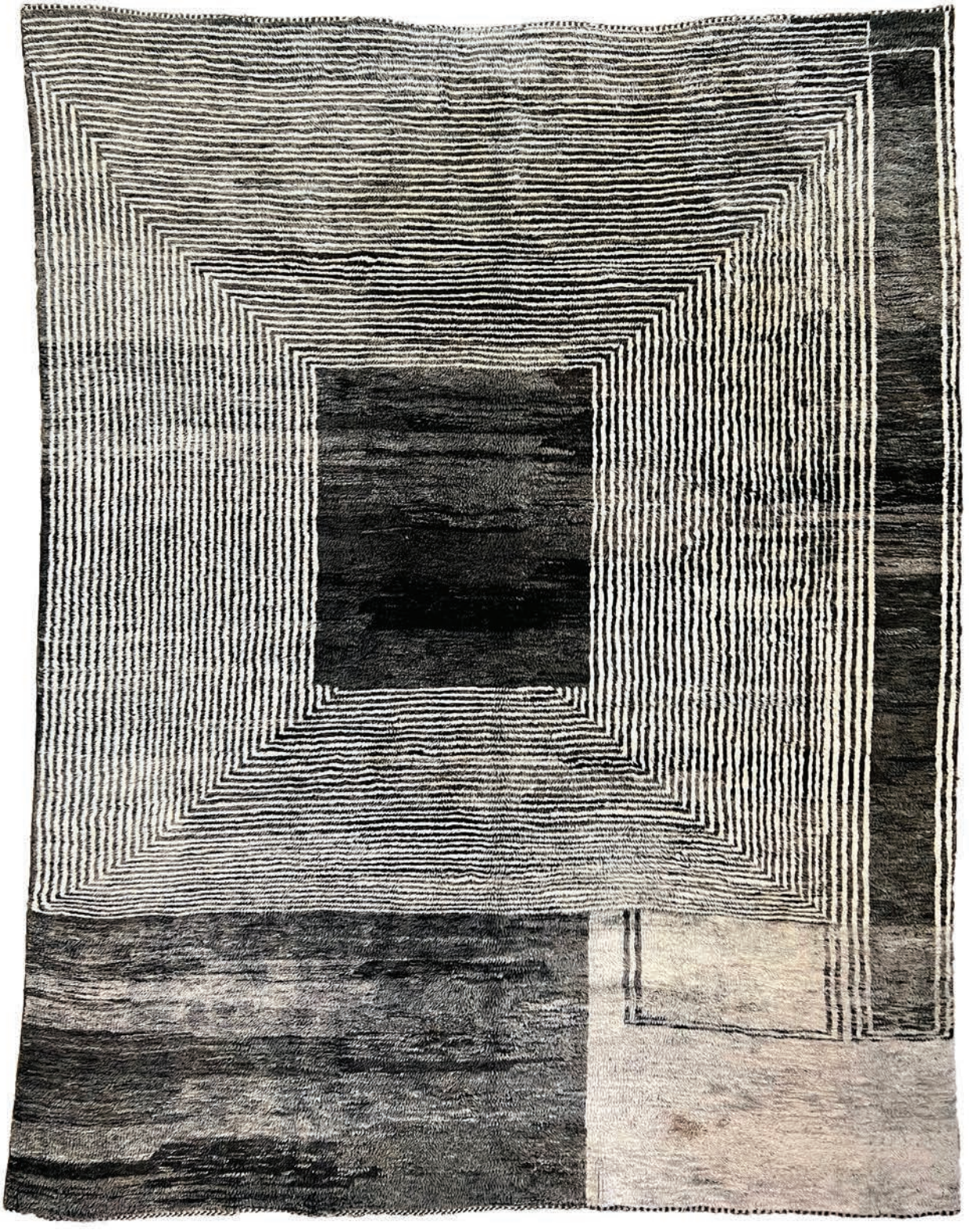
1 or 2 tablespoons each of cinnamon and cardamom

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Melt butter in a 9”x12” baking dish.
3. To make the batter, whisk milk, flour, baking powder, salt and vanilla in a bowl. Pour on top of melted butter in baking dish.
4. Mix together peaches (and frozen berries and rhubarb if using), citrus juice, sugar and zest in mixing bowl. Pour dissolved cornstarch on fruit mixture and combine. Pour fruit mixture on top of batter.
5. Shake a tablespoon or two of cinnamon and cardamom on top of the fruit.
6. Bake between 45 minutes to an hour, until the fruit is set and the crust is golden brown. Sprinkle the entire cobbler with “Sugar in the Raw” for a little crunch.

Note from Kay: I only use rhubarb with other fruit as a mix as it has a stronger flavor.

continued on page 63

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Moroccan Berber 10'10" x 14'1"

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continued from page 61



PHOTO BY MELISSA FENLON

DONITA'S HOUSE SALAD DRESSING

½ cup red wine vinegar
½ cup water
¼ cup honey
1½ teaspoons onion powder
2 teaspoons garlic powder
1 teaspoon celery seed
1 teaspoon salt
1½ teaspoons dry mustard
1¾ cups vegetable oil

1. Place all the ingredients, minus the oil, in a blender.
2. Mix for 1 minute. Slowly drizzle the oil into blender while on slow speed and combine.

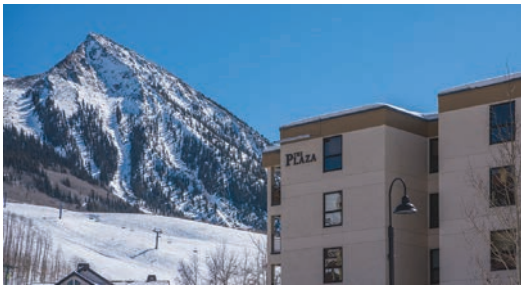
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COLOR ME HAPPY

SHOP TALK WITH SALLY HUGHES JOHNSON OF WILLOW MERCANTILE

BY KATHERINE NETTLES

Local interior designer and home goods curator Sally Hughes Johnson has seen many sides of decorating in Crested Butte. Originally from New Orleans, she brought a love of color with her when she moved to the mountains 30 years ago, and has been helping clients refresh their homes by encouraging personal touches and a vibrant palette. That approach works well in this colorful town with its mix of multi-hued Victorian homes, refurbished miners' cabins and the current trend of mountain modern style.

continued on page 66



play with color:

continued from page 65

FOLLOW SALLY'S TIPS ON CREATING A COLORFUL PALETTE FOR YOUR HOME



CANDLES are a must have for any cozy space and these blown glass candle holders in assorted candy colors are sure to make your dining table, mantle, sideboard (any flat surface, really) feel more joyful.



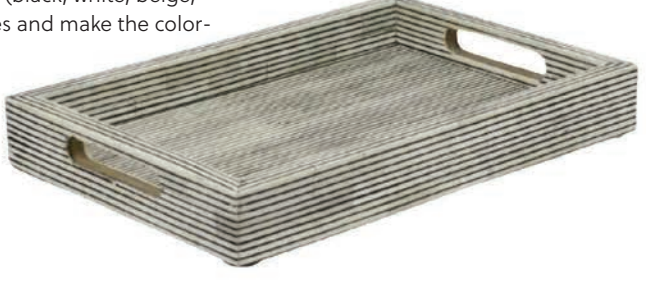
PILLOWS
Our favorite way to change the look of your room. Always choose an "anchor" color (the red-orange one here), a texture (the fur) and then a colorful one or two that make you happy. We love vintage Moroccan rug pillows, kilim, kantha, velvet and woven tapestry.





ANIMAL FIGURINES... every house needs a few! This dog sculpture is made of colorful recycled metal and each one is different.

An inlaid bone **TRAY** in a subtle black and ivory stripe will add a touch of sophistication and grounding to your coffee table. Colorful decor needs spots of neutrals (black, white, beige, brown) to settle the eyes and make the colorful pieces pop even more.





The handmade wooden **TIC-TAC-TOE GAME** and inlaid bone **DOMINO SET** are not only beautiful additions to your coffee table, but also encourage your family and friends to put down their devices and play a quick game together.



Lamps shouldn't be boring. In fact, lamps are one of the room accessories that we encourage having fun with. This gorgeous turquoise **CERAMIC LAMP** goes with almost any decor – it's more neutral than you think.

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PHOTOS BY JAMES RAY SPAHN

continued from page 66

Although Johnson offers kitchen, bath and interior design services out of her design studio/furniture showroom on Belleview Avenue and often works with clients of her husband's construction company, her favorite place to be is in Willow Mercantile, her Elk Avenue retail shop.

Johnson hand picks every item she carries, and painstakingly creates every display throughout the shop. She says she has found a way to channel her love of shopping into the space, where it can be productive instead of overflowing in her own home.

"I literally have about 50 different sources," she says of her wide collection of textiles, lamps, art and shelf-worthy collectibles, as well as clothing, accessories and party favors. "My favorite thing to do is put things together and to create the whole effect," she says.

Most of her wares are nature inspired, including popular animal figurines, artwork and textiles. She says people often wander in hoping to do an easy update to a living room, but it takes more than a couple of throw pillows to make an impact.

"A lot of people don't know how to put things together. It's not just some new pillows. It's adding a throw blanket, some candle, and a new lamp can go a long way too. The key is to add things that are personal, rather than shying away from it to have more of the catalog look of magazines," she says.

Johnson will sometimes even lend items from the shop to clients to try out, just to make sure it all fits well.

"I love to tell someone, show me a picture of your sofa and we can go from there," she explains.

To avoid the catalog or an impersonal look, she encourages people to choose things that they like and put those in their homes rather than trying to follow current trends or perceived rules.

"If you love orange, or you love animals, then decorate with those things. It's your house," she says.

She encourages people to continue using gray and white for walls, cabinetry and other hard surfaces, despite that scheme being so common. But then she encourages people to add flair.

While she has seen a lot of the heavy-handed mountain motifs of previous decades get toned down in favor of more modern finishes, she emphasizes the eclectic to add coziness and soften things a bit.

"People are craving color," she says. "I think color is happy. And it's already gray and white enough around here—especially in the winter."

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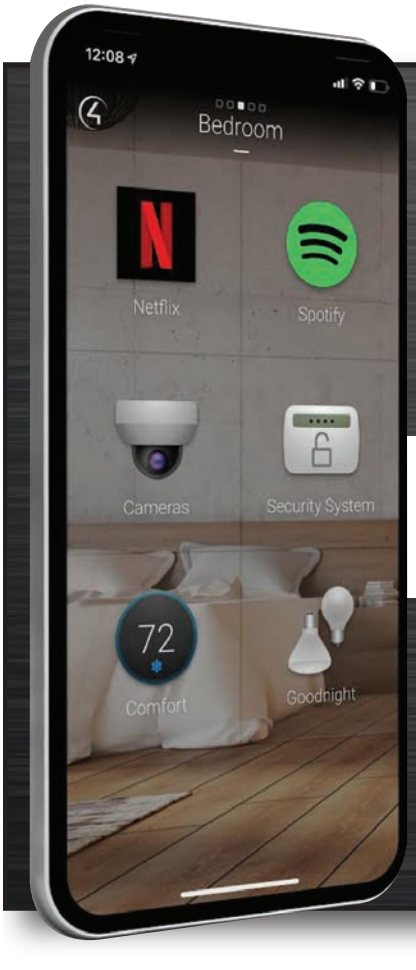
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It's *all* about the light bulb.



Local pro shares tips on lighting — it's more complicated than you think

STORY AND PHOTOS BY KIM RAINES

You can buy the most gorgeous light fixture ever, install it, and in the end, you might hate it. But why? The finish is perfect, the scale is great, it slopes on your ceiling like it should, but it's just not right. Chances are, you hate it because the bulbs are wrong. Even with LED technology, many fixtures are still sold without light bulbs, so you get to choose the shape, color temperature, and brightness. If you didn't know there were choices, then you might get it wrong. Buying light bulbs isn't like it used to be – with so much competition, you might blindly buy what's on sale on an end cap at a big box store or your local hardware store without even knowing what you are buying.

One of my favorite parts of selling lighting is making sure you get the right light bulb. Matching the perfect fixture with the right light bulbs has become a passion for me. After you choose the right fixture, it's time to decide: How bright do you want this? Do you like warmer light or cooler? This can not only affect your eyes but your paint colors. And then the shape – there are so many cool shapes these days you really can change the look of the fixture simply by changing the shape of the bulb.

So now to the nitty gritty. How do you select the perfect light bulb?

1. Learn about Kelvin Temperature

I think the Kelvin temperature of a light bulb is the most important part. The wrong color temperature and an inconsistent color temp throughout a property can be really distracting and uncomfortable. In most residential situations, you want 2700K for a warmer touch and 3000K for a fresher, more contemporary feel. If you have ever had a bad experience with a light bulb, chances are they were too high of a Kelvin temp and therefore too blue/white.

2. Determine your lumen output need

The lighting industry is changing and becoming more energy efficient. This means the bulbs are still as bright but use less energy. In the past, we used the term wattage to determine how bright a bulb is. But now, bulbs have a lower wattage but still emit the same brightness. So, you want to focus on how many lumens you need in each space. Bathrooms will need more, kitchen pendants over an island where you have a lot of task-oriented cans can have a lower output to be softer on the eyes. This info will be listed on the box – it will note the lumen output and then the wattage comparison so you know how bright your bulb will be.



3. Determine the shape of bulb you like

The days of your normal shaped A19 bulb that you have always seen are gone. Bulb shape to me is almost as important as the two above. The shape of the bulb can totally change the look of your fixture. The candle shape is more traditional, but you can make a fixture more industrial or Mid Century looking by using a round or tube shape. Once you figure out the color temp you want, the output you need, then we get to talk about the pretty stuff!

continued on page 72

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4. Do you want a frosted bulb or to see the filaments?

Similar to above, the color of the glass can totally change the look of your fixture! Frosted bulbs give a more Mid Century vibe but are softer on the eyes, which sometimes is important if a light bulb is at eye level like a kitchen pendant over your island. Filament bulbs give you the sparkle and are a little more industrial looking. Also, if you have an open fixture with a pattern, a filament bulb can enhance the shadows on the walls + ceilings! So, if you don't like that, frosted is the way to go!

Kim Raines owns and operates both Mountain Colors Paint Store in town and the new Showroom in Riverland.

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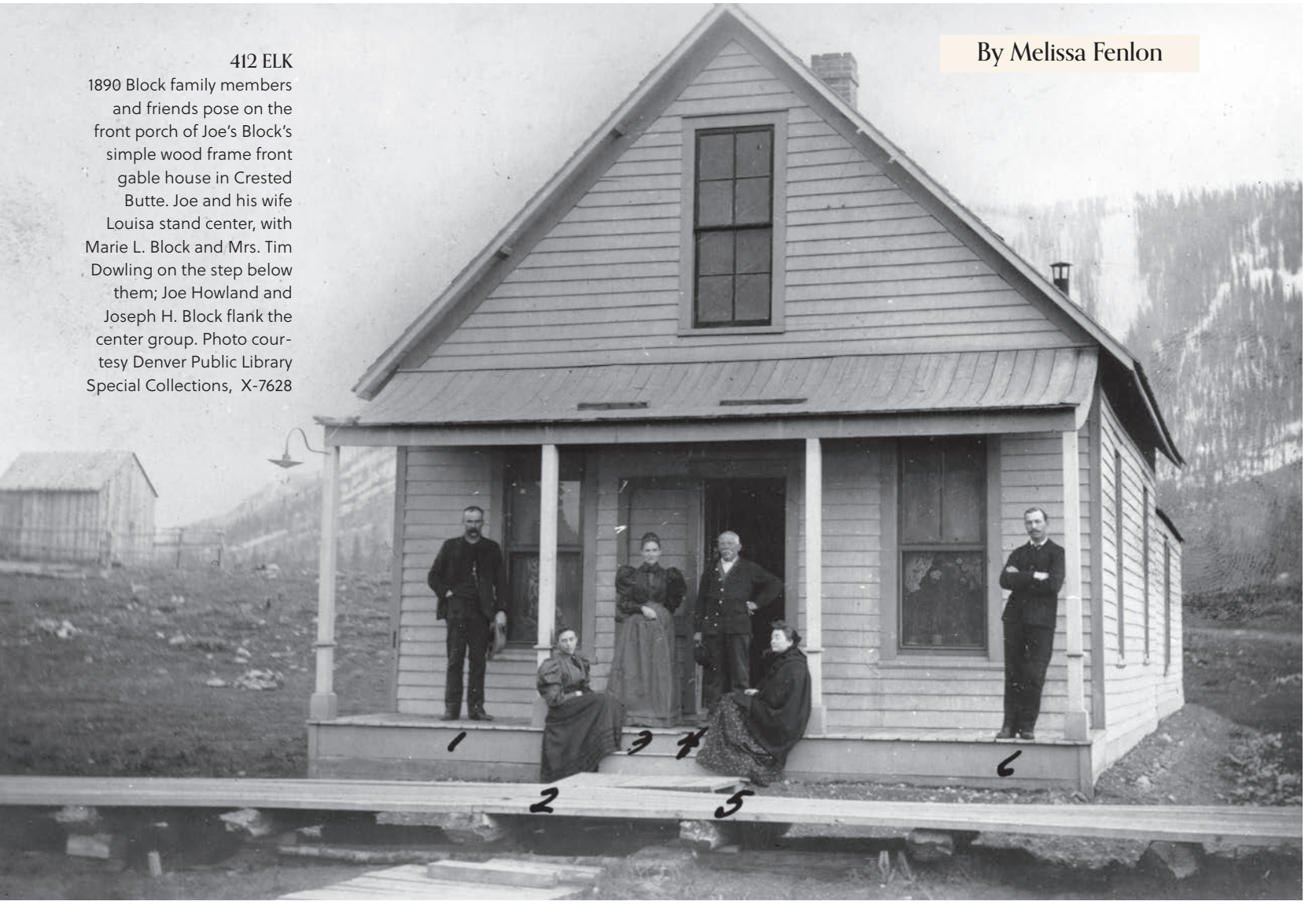
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A CB ORIGINAL

412 Elk Avenue: The Joe Block house

By Melissa Fenlon



412 ELK
1890 Block family members and friends pose on the front porch of Joe's Block's simple wood frame front gable house in Crested Butte. Joe and his wife Louisa stand center, with Marie L. Block and Mrs. Tim Dowling on the step below them; Joe Howland and Joseph H. Block flank the center group. Photo courtesy Denver Public Library Special Collections, X-7628



MEAT MARKET
In 1885, Joseph Block wears a white apron and poses in front of his store on the boardwalk with Edward Block, Vic Anderson, Bill Carroll, Mike Connors, and a group of children. Photo courtesy Denver Public Library Special Collections, X-7643

Each one of the historic buildings on Elk Avenue has a story to tell.

The structures were built by Crested Butte's founding families who came to the new supply town in the 1880s. One of those families, the Joseph Block family, came to town after the silver boom in Irwin dwindled. In the early 1890s, the town was becoming a coal mining town – it was a time of regrowth.

Joe Block was an important sole proprietor in those early mining days. Many in town were employed by the mining company, thus shopped at the Company Store, as they were paid in scrip. But Joe Block had a successful meat market on Elk Avenue, serving the whole community.

When he and his wife, Louisa moved to town from Irwin, they built a house at 412 Elk Avenue, that still stands today.

"These houses brought a sense of place, a sense of purpose," says Molly Minneman, who served as the Town of Crested Butte's principal planner for 28 years. She oversaw the town's historic preservation efforts. "These homes were where families were birthed and died in a way we don't experience today. These houses exude our history."

The Joe Block house represents a sense of place and belonging, Minneman says. "It speaks to the coal mining era that sustained this town and it's culture," she says.

The house represents the vernacular architecture of the time in Crested Butte – the frame construction, gable roof with overhanding eaves, double-hung sash windows and a projecting front porch.

continued on page 76

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continued from page 75

"I have always loved this house," Minneman says. "I love the quintessential proportions, the simplicity of how people lived."

It was a house that was most likely not too difficult to build, but had special elements that stood out at the time like the curved shed roof and the little decoration on the front porch posts.

Minneman points out that the early families of Crested Butte's mining era brought architectural elements from their home countries, which created a vernacular style, special to Crested Butte. "They were building homes for a place for their families to live. There was not a lot of money for resources, so they brought patterns from the old country."

Minneman remembers in the 1970s when she was a student at Western State (now Western Colorado University), she would walk along Elk Avenue and marvel at the gorgeous columbines in the garden at 412 Elk Avenue. Dave Oberosler remembers those columbines well. His mother, Angelina Oberosler owned the Block house for several decades, beginning in the late 1950s. His middle and high school years were spent in the house on Elk Avenue.

Dave's mom bought the house after her husband passed away. A sign of how close the community was at that time, Dave explains that his mom did not have the money to purchase the home, or get a loan from the bank. So, Tony Mihelich, from Tony's Conoco, financed the home, so she and her kids had a place to call their own.

"You have to realize Crested Butte was in the toilet then," Dave continues. The mine had closed, and the majority of families left town looking for work. But many families stayed, like the Oberoslers. "Her community was here," Dave says.

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JOE AND ERNESTINE
1890s Joseph holds granddaughter Ernestine on top of a dark horse in front of the Elk Mountain House. Photo courtesy Denver Public Library Special Collections, X-7637

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Dave remembers fondly how much his mother loved to cook, especially for friends. "If you wanted to be on the good side of mom, you got all of your chores done and then you'd bring a friend or two over for dinner. She loved to cook for people," he says. Baking was her favorite and Dave says she made countless fruit cakes in the coal-fired stove in her kitchen at 412 Elk.

"Her passion was gardening and she enjoyed wildflowers more than anything," Dave recalls. She especially loved columbines, the native pale yellow and white, along with pink ones. "She had them all and they were all from the wild, you didn't buy seeds then," he says.

Dave is happy that his family home at 412 Elk Avenue still stands. Even though those were hard times in Crested Butte, Dave has many fond memories of the place.

"One of the greatest things about living there was it was only one block to school," he laughs. "Never had to go very far! At that time, there were not buses, no hot lunches, so school shut down at 12 o'clock and the kids had to go home for lunch, then be back to school by 1."

A notable feature Dave remembers about the house was an etched sketch they found on one of the four panel window panes. "Somebody had drawn a picture, etched on it, of an Irish setter," he explains. "That was special," he says.

Dave and his wife Polly still live in the area.

In most recent history, the house has been home to a gallery, real estate office and a dental office.

Today, when Minneman goes past the Joe Block house and others in town, she gets a feeling that is hard to put into words. "It feels as though these houses have welcomed so many people into this community. They were built by the people who created this community."

Meet Joe Block

Joseph Block was born in France in 1830, close to the German border. He made his way to the United States alone via ship when he was only 15. Arriving in Philadelphia, he was turned over to the mayor because of his age. This is when Block began his career as a butcher, apprenticing with a Quaker butcher.

"In 1859, caught up in the gold fever, Joseph headed west via rail to Nebraska," according to *Colorado Families: A territorial Heritage.* He befriended other speculators, and finally acquired some claims in Black Hawk and Central City. He invested in real estate in Denver and Central City. A series of unfortunate events cost him his wealth, so he and his wife Louisa moved to Irwin, where a silver camp was booming. "In 1885, when silver prices plummeted and people began to leave Irwin, Joseph moved his family and business nine miles east to the new coal mining town of Crested Butte. He retired in 1900 and lived there until his death," according to *Colorado Families.*

His son, Joseph H. Block became an important figure in early Crested Butte. He first sorted ore in the Forest Queen Mine and studied geology and mineralogy with the company geologist there. His interest in mining grew, and he located a number of claims in the Ruby districts, which he eventually patented. He became an expert skier, and for two years carried the mail between Irwin and Crested Butte. He served as Gunnison County Commissioner for 10 years, beginning in 1896, was on the Crested Butte town council and was fire chief.

Marie Block, a daughter of Joseph Block Sr. was a skilled musician and for her 16th birthday, her father gave her the first baby grand piano in Crested Butte.



JOESEPH AND LOUISA
1890 Joseph and Louisa Block sit in the corner of a room in their home. Framed portraits, a painting and The Divine House Blessing in German, all hang on the wall above them. Photo courtesy Denver Public Library Special Collections, X-7639



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Tales from a kitchen remodel

STORY AND PHOTOS BY KATHERINE NETTLES



Remodeling your kitchen is a daunting task, to say the least. It's the sort of upheaval that's best done before you move into a place, or at least while you are temporarily living somewhere else. But when you start with a sink the size of a dinner plate and you want to say goodbye to marbled brown Formica countertops and a broken gas cooktop, sometimes you have to take the plunge.

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before



after



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And by taking the plunge, I mean having your kitchen ripped out and then slowly reassembled while you are living there. In my case, with two cats, two kids on summer break and a husband who works from home. And coincidentally, a garage being relocated to our property at the exact same time, with excavators and work crews pouring a foundation, which meant mud taking over most of the yard. And house.

Still, we took the plunge during the summer of 2022, and I am so happy we did. We learned a lot from our first-ever remodeling project that will be useful for any future plans we make, and most importantly I got a kitchen I am happy with.

We knew we wanted to make a few changes to the kitchen for functionality, and started planning (and saving) as soon as we bought the house a few years prior. But remodeling our kitchen was a gradual decision we came to. It started with us just wanting the bigger sink, but a bigger sink meant a bigger cabinet base. And that's how we came to realize, as contractor after contractor informed us, how unrealistic our hopes for a minor "tweak" really were.

So, we settled on some new cabinets. At least new bases, if not uppers. But then we started thinking about a new layout, with more room to work. The old kitchen did not meet modern codes, for example, and we had to bump elbows to share the space at all. A new, more open layout and a bigger, more usable island sounded swell.

In my naivete I didn't realize how many little decisions were about to become months of research, since we were not using the full-service plan from our contractor in the interest of stretching the budget further. In hindsight I am glad, but I wish I had been prepared for how each item would send me into a rabbit hole of hours upon hours of website browsing, cost comparisons, agonizing over colors, styles, sizes and materials to choose. Who knew a faucet could take me five weeks of research? Or that tile can either cost $2.50 per square foot, or $250?



And then when we were ready to order cabinetry, we learned that first we needed to have every single appliance ordered. That set us back another month, as supply chains changed our options and I found more rabbit holes.

When we finally had everything ordered though, we had a tentative start date.

So, I planned to move into my parent's place for a few weeks, and then we added on a family vacation. But of course that is not quite enough time for a full remodel, especially since we got complicated by capping an old gas line in favor of an electric induction stove, and we were moving plumbing and electrical around.

When we returned from our other stays, the kitchen had been gutted and a lot of the behind-the-walls work was in process.

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Photo by James Kay Splain

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We've got this, I said. We promptly created an "outdoor kitchen" with a plastic table and our camping gear set up by the hose and the grill.

We've got this, I figured, as I stepped through plastic tarps and carried dishwater across the house and refilled cooler ice and recalled how lucky we are to live with running water and electricity and shelter in the first place. We've got this. I even salvaged an electric griddle from a free pile in town and plugged it in on my desk.

But within a week, a tile saw for the contractors had to be moved into that "outdoor kitchen" space, along with a large, clay-caked tarp and boxes of screws and buckets of tile and shards of leftover lumber pieces.

And the tile saw stayed until October.

After a few weeks I abandoned my outdoor kitchen efforts, and used a couple Tupperware bins to store our essentials by my husband's desk, moving them in and out of the kitchen cabinet frames in between contractor shifts. We set up a pair of sawhorses with two-by-fours and a bit of plywood as a rickety countertop. The routine became: get up, set up a cutting board station, rummage in the cooler and snack bins, bring in the microwave, make breakfast and lunch before contractors arrive, and move it all back out before they get there. At the end of the day, clean up the dust and tarps, move back in for dinner. Wash dishes in the bathroom sink. Repeat.





> "The first plan we didn't know we needed was humor, but it was essential to survival.

After a few more weeks, I caved in and bought paper plates and compostable flatware. My resolve to avoid disposables had vaporized with 100 tiny betrayals of time and space. And I missed riding my bike.

By September my resolve to avoid processed, prepackaged foods had also reduced itself to appreciation for modern processing technology. And when the backordered oven arrived seven months after purchase, it didn't work. Then one particularly cold and windy week, the burners in our grill kept blowing out and the open lid caught a current and the whole operation blew off the deck.

We started eating out as much as possible.

But we learned some things. We learned that these things take time – more time than you want them to. We learned about how to navigate miscommunications, add-ons, occasional re-dos and be nice to the people doing the work. Sometimes they are working late and you've grilled a bunch of salmon burgers and yes, they would love for you to make them one too. But they won't ask, so just offer. Remember they are solving your problem.

Factor in Plan A, Plan B, Plan C, and the plans you won't know about needing until they happen. The first plan we didn't know we needed was humor, but it was essential to survival, and it helped our kids to deal with the mayhem to see us all joking about it.

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Factor in the very real costs of dining out more.

Realize you will probably not eat the healthiest. So maybe have a goal in mind that helps you get back in shape again after you reclaim your cooking space.

And when the kitchen project was finished and I had moved my dishes back in and tested out my new triangles of efficiency (it's a thing), it was all worthwhile. We gradually gained a space that we can all use more easily, a space that makes me smile when I take it in, and a large, open sink to wash the largest pot I own. We had a fully functional kitchen by Christmas (who's counting), and I was giddy baking and cooking everything I could on Christmas weekend in my new, fully functional kitchen.

The last thing I learned more about was what to do with our old stuff. We are total scavengers, so we knew we didn't want to send this stuff to the landfill. The old kitchen's beautiful, custom made cabinets I had loved but couldn't use with a larger sink now sit in our newly placed garage, where we hope to install them someday. We saved a large wooden slab countertop for some future project. And the appliances that couldn't be donated were recycled. This felt important. According to Visual Capitalist, home renovations can generate 60 pounds of waste per square foot on average. And construction and demolition debris make up almost a quarter of all waste the U.S generates each year. So I think it's worth scrapping the old stuff to sell, donate or reuse instead of putting it all in a roll-off dumpster if possible.

My sense of environmental responsibility took me in some noble directions, even if they were not successful. Lessons learned: you will not be able to cook very easily when the contractors are putting in a new kitchen. You might break down and use disposable stuff (and it goes so quickly!). But you may be able to use an electric griddle teetering on a two-by-four. And it will all be worth it.



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COUNTERTOP CONFIDENTIAL

Go-to surfaces from local designers.



photo by James Ray Spahn

Basalt Countertop

We asked some of Crested Butte's designers to share their favorite surfaces for kitchen countertops. From neutral marble-like whites to textural tones that highlight color and depth, **Jenny Jeffery** and **Heidi Sherratt Bogart** give their top countertops.

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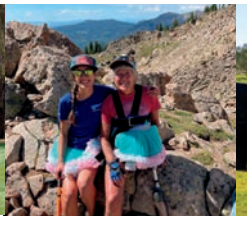
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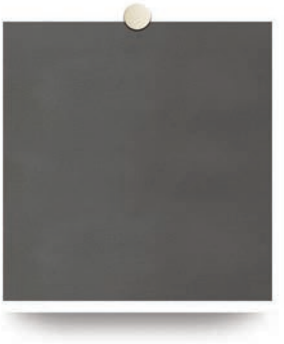




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Heidi's picks:

Heidi Sherratt Bogart is the owner and designer of Interior Visions in downtown Crested Butte.



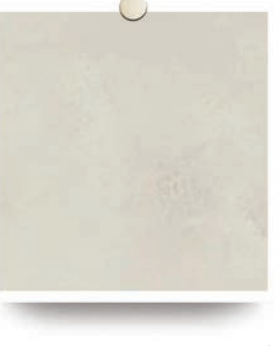
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QUARTZITE: MONT BLANC SATIN

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QUARTZ: CLOUDBURST CONCRETE

Quartz is a manmade engineered solid surface that can create a modern look with its monochromatic options, like one of our favorites, Cloudburst Concrete.

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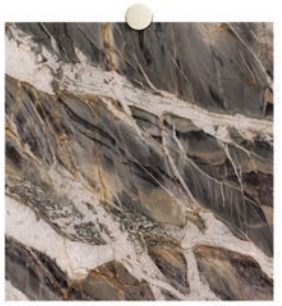
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Marie-Dominique Verdier (mdvphoto.com)

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Jenny's picks:

Jenny Jeffery is the co-owner and lead designer at ABRIT Construction in Crested Butte.



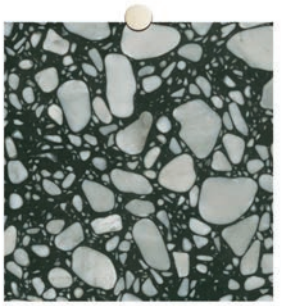
QUARTZITE: PARAMOUNT

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THE BRAWNER FAMILY

Each year, we feature a Crested Butte local and their story... Meet Scott and Katie Brawner.

Scott is the general manager and co-owner of Bonez tequila bar and grill on Elk Avenue, and is working on more Crested Butte restaurant projects to come. Katie is a dental assistant at Crested Butte Dental and, as a former D-1 hockey player at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota, now coaches youth hockey for the West Elk Hockey Association.

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beckwithbrick.com

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BigCBuilders.com
AJ@BigCBuilders.com

Cedar Ridge Construction
Scott Hahn | 970.209.5486
Geordie VanMarter | 970.209.4898
Crested Butte
cedarridgeconstructionco.com

Copper Creek Homes, LLC
Roger Cesario
970.349.5462
116 Sixth Street Suite 203, Crested Butte
info@coppercreekhomes.net
coppercreekhomes.net

David Gross General Contractor
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davidgrossgc.com

Hargrove-Kidd Builders
970.349.5816
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PO Box 3331, Crested Butte
julia@hargrovekidd.com
Hargrovekidd.com

Jim Thomas Construction
970.349.5271 / 970.209.4993
307 Elk Avenue, Crested Butte
jimthomasconstruction@gmail.com

Majestic Peaks Custom Homes
Lindal Cedar Homes
Brent Hughes
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970.596.7375 Mobile
720.945.9250 Denver
info@majesticpeaks.com
majesticpeaks.com

Miller Custom Homes, LLC
970.209.4392
427 Belleview Avenue Suite 101
PO Box 1944, Crested Butte
millercustomhomescb.com

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Somrak Concept + Structure, Inc.
970.275.2849
427 Belleview Avenue Suite 103
PO Box 394, Crested Butte
somrak.net

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Sterling White
970.209.2918
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970.642.4110
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bill@troutcreekengineering.com
troutcreekengineering.com

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benchmarkcolorado.com

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gunnisonbank.com

Erin Fabbre
Loan Originator
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efabbre@artisanhomeloans.com
treelinelendingteam.com

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Gunnison
502 Whiterock Avenue Suite 202, Crested Butte
shondeckfinancial.com

Sarah Baskfield
970.596.4949 / 303-484-7574 Fax
Sarah@CBLoanz.com

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OC Frames
Nicky O'Connor (OC)
970.275.8910
Crested Butte

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greg@blackjackgaragedoor.com
blackjackgaragedoor.com

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811 North Main Street
Gunnison, Colorado 81230
info@koolergaragedoors.com
KoolerGarageDoors.com

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acehardware.com

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butterfieldfs@gmail.com
butterfieldfireplace.com

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970.641.6882
515 West Tomichi Avenue, Gunnison
thefpco.com
office@thefpco.com

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cbcustomclosets.com

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Millerfurniture-gunnison.com

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970.349.9200
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244 Buckley Drive Unit 3, Riverland
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kim@cbshowroom.com
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Boomarang221@gmail.com

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diamondbluespa@yahoo.com
diamondbluespa.com

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thurstonkitchenandbath.com

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970.349.2428
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design@willowcb.com
willowcb.com

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sprout-studio.net

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electricallogic.com

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solarisfilm.com

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