



CASABELLA INTERIORS PUTS THEIR ANNUAL FRESH SPIN ON WINTER DECORATING



WINTER *wonderland*

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It is common this time of year to see local businesses punctuate their regular environs with pops of holiday décor. What is not common is what happens at a small yet distinctive shop on Route 6A in East Sandwich. Casabella Interiors is an exquisite home furnishings and accessories shop that also includes a full-service design studio. Every year owner Michele Chagnon-Holbrook, and her hardworking team of six, clears out the entire 2,600-square-foot space and reimagines the six rooms as a winter wonderland. “We empty the entire store, and then we bring in all new items, we hang new

artwork, mirrors, and transform the space into what I call our ‘winter look,” Holbrook explains. “I steer away from a style that shouts ‘holiday.’ Instead, our clients are able to update their homes for the season, and the winter look is a different vibe from what gets conveyed in the warmer months.”

This unique philosophy is really what sets Casabella apart from other home shops. Holbrook helps her clients identify versatile foundation pieces that they love, but always have the flexibility to become transformational elements



in their décor. “For example,” she notes, “you could take a beautiful urn and fill it with mercury glass balls. Then for Thanksgiving, you might accent it with rustic touches and then swap those out for ornaments as you roll into Christmas. Finally, after the New Year, fill it with a lush, green topiary, add a simple neutral bow, and it balances against the starkness of the winter months. It’s just all about reimagining your space.” And that is exactly what Holbrook does each year as she reopens the shop for winter with her annual open house in early November.

Upon walking through the front door of the charming shop—that truly feels like a home, as the quest for design keeps visitors wandering from room to room—the signature Casabella color, Spa Blue, is found throughout. “We don’t do red here, even for the holidays,” Holbrook says with a twinkle in her eye. “We say our Casabella red is blush.” The soft blue is paired with ivory, silver and taupe accents throughout, making for a very soothing palette. Emphasizing again the ability to freshen the look with the introduction of a few simple elements, Holbrook cites a new deep purple-blue jewel tone found in the designer showrooms she and her crew visited last January as they



scouted items for this year’s winter theme. Holbrook explains that with just a pop of that color in a pillow or a throw, suddenly a sofa or chair seems to take command of everyone’s attention. “We were so excited to see that color,” she says. “We just all looked at each other and had the collective thought, ‘We’re going to have a BLUE room!’” It’s that kind of inspiration that starts the momentum of what ultimately becomes the magical destination of Casabella.

“Whatever project we approach, whether it is a full house project for an interior design client or transforming our showroom here, we are continually thinking, ‘What can a room be?’ And almost always it starts with color,” Holbrook explains. “People like to shop by color—it is how they shop for clothing. So we tend to create vignettes that are grounded in a few simple shades. That is what pulls a look together. The same principles we apply to the rooms in the store, homeowners can employ in their own homes if they want that sophisticated, thoughtful look.”

That process of inspiration is communicated and shared with the customers that come to the store, and thus the excitement as well. A simple ornament might catch the eye of a shopper and trigger an emotional response, and Casabella’s innovative team will then suggest new and different ways to incorporate those elements into any homeowner’s décor. The team will often organize a layout of certain items—for a client’s mantle, for example—and then take a photo



Details within details like the Christmas tree ornament nestled in the flocked grapevine wreath and hung on the back of a chair above, are one way in which Casabella creates a unique look for the holidays. Snowy stags and evergreens are a perfect pairing for an instant winter look throughout the season.



Simple color palettes accented by the juxtaposition of sparkle and greenery, keep the design clean and sophisticated. Pops of Casabella's signature color, Spa Blue, is unexpectedly cool and icy and doesn't scream holiday.

with the customer's phone so that when they get home, they have the image to refer to as they set up the look themselves.

Often it is a far more simple and subtle application of Casabella's unique look that goes home with the shoppers in search of a different accent during the holidays. A selection of miniature faux boxwood wreaths might seem to be charming but not right for a homeowner's décor, until someone at the store suggests hanging it on each of the dining chairs, or on the lampshades in the living room. A variety of charming ornaments might catch the eye of a holiday shopper who may hesitate because their tree is already full of nostalgic memories. Why not place one on the plate for each of your dinner guests, the creative team will suggest.

Last year's dining vignette featured a Christmas tree as the centerpiece—perhaps not the first choice for most hostesses, but Casabella's display showed how at the right scale, with the right tree, it is as delightful as any other choice and might actually initiate some interesting conversation. One idea sure to spark discussion is the upside-down Christmas tree often found somewhere at the shop. "We try to do the unusual here," Holbrook says. As fantastic as it may sound, an upside-down Christmas tree is actually far more practical than one might imagine. First, it resolves any issues involving a lack of floor space; second, it virtually functions as a chandelier, providing whimsical light and ambiance to the space. This year, the team has interpreted

the windows of the shop in a whole new way that will surely inspire additional creative interpretations in homes across the Cape.

Holbrook confesses that she and her team are actually their own worst enemies because they are continually trying to come up with something that is brand new. "We are always looking for something that no one has ever seen before," she explains. "In our home design projects, you will never find the same fabric, lamp, artwork or any other major element repeated. We encourage clients to consider neutral backgrounds for upholstery, et cetera so that they have the flexibility to flip a look whenever they want, but other than that, it is always a fresh canvas so that the client's space becomes uniquely their own."

Holbrook talks about the wide range of shopping options available under one roof. "We certainly offer full design services with hundreds of fabric and rug samples on-site so clients can choose what they like, but we also see a steady stream of people who come in for gifts, not only during the holiday, but throughout the year."

It may be the eighth year that Holbrook and her creative elves completely reimagine their little shop in Sandwich, but visitors can rest assured it won't be anything they have seen before or anywhere else. And best of all, it can help you transform your own home as well.

Julie Craven Wagner is the editor of Cape Cod HOME.

"WE TRY TO DO THE UNUSUAL HERE."

*-Michele Chagnon-Holbrook,
Casabella Interiors*

