

Living

MARTHA STEWART

THE
FOOD
ISSUE

the tastiest
summer ever

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THE GREAT ESCAPE

A four-hour flight and a three-hour drive might seem a long way to go just to get to your family's second home. But for San Franciscans Sam Hamilton and Jennifer Chaiken, a house on the Texas plains is just the retreat they need to cook, relax, and revel in the thrill of doing nothing.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATTHEW WILLIAMS TEXT BY CATHERINE HONG



If you visit Sam Hamilton and Jennifer Chaiken at their vacation home in Texas, get ready to relax—seriously.

There will probably be some pool time; perhaps a bike ride along the very flat roads; and, if motivation is high enough, a round of bocce with the couple's 9-year-old twin daughters, Addie and Olivia. In the evenings, you might find yourself listening to vinyl records in the living room while putting together a thousand-piece puzzle of cat faces. Call it languorous, call it slightly lazy, but for the couple—who bought the house in Marfa as an escape from their business-meeting-and-kids'-soccer-game-crammed lives in San Francisco—this is exactly how they like it.

"We schedule as little as possible," says Hamilton, the owner of March, a highly curated kitchen-and-tabletop store in San Francisco. She and Chaiken, a film producer, got married in Marfa more than a decade ago and bought

KICKED-BACK KITCHEN

From left, Hamilton, Espinoza, Serdar, and Chaiken gather around the kitchen table for lunch while their kids play outside.

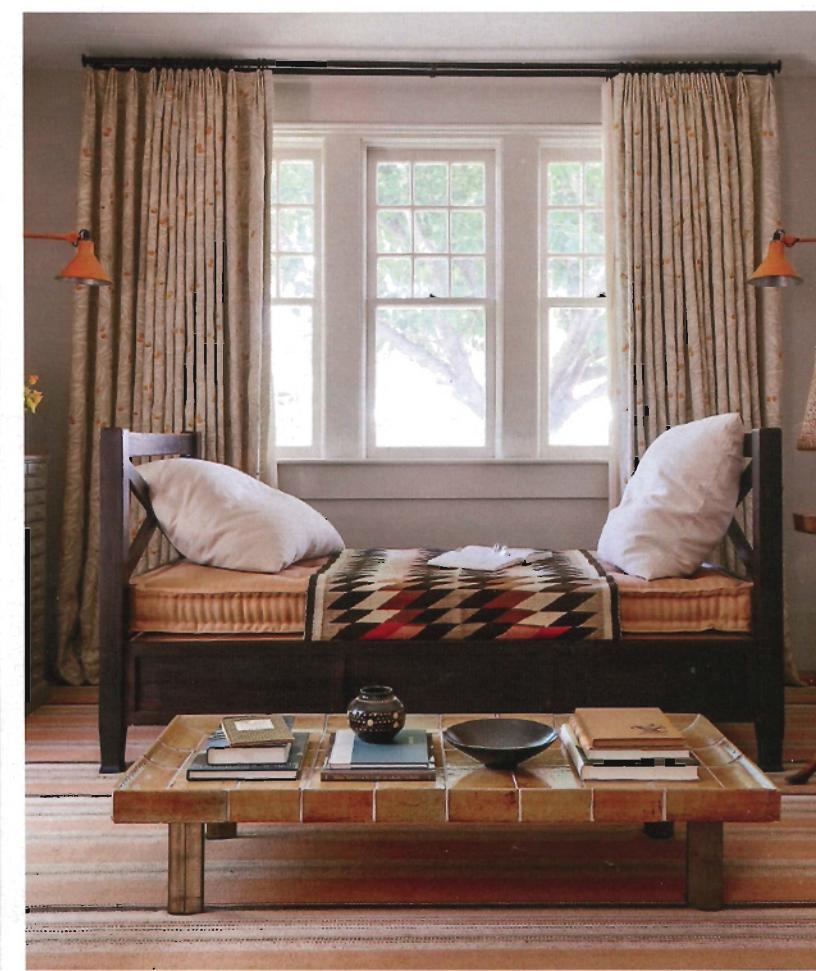
the 1911 arts-and-crafts-style adobe house not long afterward. They make the trip a few times a year, usually blocking out three consecutive weeks every August. "I love how time feels slower here," Hamilton says. "I liken it to the feeling of summer vacation when I was a kid." With its eclectic mix of European antiques, New England baskets, and Navajo textiles, the home has a layered, lived-in feeling, conducive to whiling away an afternoon—or several. Each room has objects that tell a story, whether it's the antique Spanish cabinet, where the couple stash their vintage LPs, or the Lone Star-spangled tin-plated pantry door, inspired by a traditional pie safe. There isn't a formal dining room—that space was long ago converted to a family room, where the twins like to bounce on the oversize sofa. "We eat all our meals in the kitchen or outside in the backyard," says Chaiken.

Back in the Pacific Heights neighborhood of San Francisco, Hamilton regularly throws rather elaborate cocktail parties for 50 or more at her airy, open-plan store, March (marchsf.com). But here, she and Chaiken are more apt to host casual hangouts with just a few friends, often centered around a homey slow-cooked meal. More often than not, their guests include the family of Bay Area best friends Brian Espinoza and Ivan Serdar—who, after repeatedly staying with Hamilton and Chaiken, decided to get their own house in Marfa. Espinoza, a former line cook at Chez Panisse, tends to do all the meal prep. "I love to cook," says Hamilton with a laugh (she went to culinary school, after all), "but when we're with Brian and Ivan, why should I?"

"We are big fans of simple food," says Espinoza of the couples' vacation-time preferences. "So that's how we usually eat down here." Being in Texas, they eat a lot of meat, usually hearty fare like roasts and chili (which cooks slowly over the course of the day in Hamilton's prized Aga). But the group also enjoys a lot of shrimp, which Espinoza brings frozen in his carry-on, in an insulated bag. ("It's the best option if you want seafood in the desert," he explains.) Many of their meals involve a hit of pasilla or chile de árbol—"I hate the term Tex-Mex, but 60 miles east of the border, it does feel appropriate," Espinoza says. The house cocktails continue the southwestern theme. After a hard day on the bocce court, nothing hits the spot like "ranch water"—Hamilton's refreshing concoction of lime juice, silver tequila, and Topo Chico, the Mexican mineral water, which she swears is "extra-bubbly." Sip one of those, kick your feet up, and enjoy a deeply relaxing afternoon—you won't feel like you're missing out on anything.



HOME ON THE RANGE Clockwise from top left: The two-story house—partially built from a 1920s Montgomery Ward kit—is a bit of an anomaly in Marfa, where the majority of the houses are ranch-style. Espinoza's salsa de árbol is used on grilled shrimp (both the small, red chiles de árbol and the larger, darker pasilla chiles are locally grown). In the master bedroom's sitting area, an arts-and-crafts daybed with a Navajo blanket sits behind a French midcentury coffee table. Hamilton and Chaiken use an antique Spanish cabinet in the office as a media cabinet, which sits beneath a painting by Tom Judd and a basket by Jonathan Kline, whose work Hamilton sells at March.



**TRUE GRITS**

A favorite meal during vacation week: grilled shrimp with chorizo over hominy grits, served alongside a simple salad of grapefruit, avocado, and dandelion greens. Hamilton sets the table in Marfa with some of her favorites from March: Brickett Davda and Victoria Morris ceramics, John Corcoran hand-forged flatware, and Oaxaca glasses.

>> For recipes,
see page 141.

Produced by Greg Lofts
and Jessica Romm



A PLACE IN THE SUN Clockwise from top left: In the morning, Hamilton and Chaiken drink their coffee on their sun-drenched front porch. They rim the glasses of their "ranch water"—tequila cocktails with sea salt and Aleppo-pepper flakes. In the afternoon, the couples and their kids—from left, Addie; Olivia; Chaiken; Serdar; his son, Sammy, on shoulders; his daughter, Amelia; Hamilton; and Espinoza—play bocce and snack in the backyard. They make slushy frappés from blueberries or from peaches (plucked from the trees right in the front yard).

