



Fresh Catch

A post-hurricane redo of a home in the Bahamas creates a welcoming retreat for a fishing-loving family

*By Stephanie Hunt
Photographs by Tria Giovan*



Making the Round

Thanks to the spaciousness and open fluidity of the living/dining room, granting her clients' wish for a round dining table was an easy yes for designer Carly Ahlman. "Round works great in such an open space, creating more of a sense of intimacy than a rectangular table," she says. The custom wood table by Petersen Antiques "has a lovely lived-in, rustic feel," with its heft and is balanced by whimsical, islandy rattan chairs from Sika Design. The chandelier from Circa Lighting "provides the perfect focal point without stealing the show," says Ahlman.

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ometimes people lure fish, and other times, fish lure people. Such was the case for this Alabama family hooked by the turquoise waters of the Bahamas and the avid sport fishing community of The Abacos in particular. Which is why they reeled in designer Carly Ahlman to help create a family-friendly

angling outpost in the community of Baker's Bay. "They're a super fun, outdoorsy family, with three boys ages 10 to 16 who love deep-sea fishing, so they were immediately drawn to Baker's Bay," says Ahlman, a New York-based interior designer with eight years' experience working with homeowners in Baker's Bay. The five-bedroom (plus dreamy sleeping porch) home, conveniently located near the marina and backing up to a beach on the Atlantic, was one of many on the island nearly

destroyed in 2019 by Hurricane Dorian, but to its new owners, the damage was an invitation to start fresh.

Overseeing the gut renovation, Ahlman created a breezy retreat designed for easy island living and entertaining, with kid-friendly durability top of mind. "They wanted the house to feel layered and lived-in, with a more organic mix of found and vintage pieces alongside the new," says Ahlman, who appreciates the richness of a collected vibe. Plus, it allowed her to cast around for key pieces to set the tone, like the 1970s-era marine lights Ahlman turned into sconces framing the bar. "Right off a boat, solid brass and heavy as can be. They're amazing, and became my starting point for the main living space," she says. The bunkroom, sleeping porch, and foyer similarly reflect Ahlman's knack for functional-meets-fabulous; she designed custom built-ins for each space. "I love that this family was open to warming things up, embracing an updated sense of classic and timeless," she says. In fishing speak, that's a keeper.



Celebrate Symmetry

"I love a white kitchen, but we wanted a more unique touch, so staining the wood on the island a tad darker than the floor gave a nice cohesion while adding depth," says Ahlman. She broke up the heaviness of the oven hood wall by framing it with glass front cabinets styled with pretty dishware. The symmetry gives a sense of order and balance to the open kitchen, including The Urban Electric Company pendants "that line up perfectly with the glass cabinets and windows," she adds. Unlacquered brass accents on the lighting and counter stools carry over the gleam from the bar and dining room, but Ahlman introduced polished nickel on the faucets and hardware: "Mixing metals adds richness," she says. "I'm not a fan of matchy-matchy."



Trunks and Textures

Ahlman balances the neutral off-white walls and dual white sofas with fabrics and finishes big on texture. The wood floors, for example, have knotty dimension beneath the Stark jute rug with braided border. An oversized trunk-turned-coffee table, a 1st Dibs find, anchors the room, while the tone-on-tone blue Serena Dugan fabric on Bernhardt swivel chairs and sofa pillows from Christopher Farr and Peter Dunham add a hint of pattern. "Sectionals are often the default these days, especially for big families, but opting for traditional sofas and chairs gives flexibility. You can enter the space from multiple locations," says Ahlman, who chose the stained teak root side table from Blaxsand for its one-of-a-kind feel. Similarly, the media console, though not custom, gives a sense of "one-off detail" with its woven panels, she says.

Make It Practical, but Pretty

"Usually I like a more decorative foyer, but with all these boys, and all their fishing and beach stuff, we opted for super practical," says Ahlman. Given that this is how the family enters when returning from outings to the marina, golf course, or clubhouse, a well-organized stashing station was her solution, with elevated touches like shiplap wood paneling to infuse warmth. And because the entryway looks out to the ocean and opens directly to the dining area beyond it, Ahlman wanted an airy hit of elegance, courtesy of a beaded pendant from Currey & Company. "It's showy, but doesn't detract from the view or flow," she says.



Taking the Long View

Extended vistas off the second floor balcony are easy to take in, thanks to Summer Classics rattan swivel chairs. "You can enjoy conversation with others, or swirl around and just marvel at the endless horizon," says Ahlman. A multipurpose ottoman/coffee table made of durable rope adds a pop of blue.



Soft and Serene

Creating a fluid harmony between inside and out inspired Ahlman's medley of soft sea blues for the primary bedroom, where sliding glass doors open to a private patio overlooking the sea. Grass cloth wallpaper warms up the starkness of lots of white, creating a textured backdrop for the tone-on-tone sailfish over the bed—a clear nod to the shared family passion. "The husband suggested we hang a real sailfish that they had caught, but I said, 'I'm not so sure about that.' This feels more like a piece of art," says Ahlman, who admits she had to Google "deep sea fishing" to confirm which species she should be on the lookout for. Other art includes an aerial photograph of the island, inspiring sweet dreams about future fishing spots.

Three in One

Though there are ample bedrooms, the boys all pile in one, because who could resist this bunk bonanza? In lieu of a typical ladder, Ahlman designed stairs for top bunk access: "The space allowed for it, so why not," she says. "Stairs are easier to navigate, and bonus: They give us extra drawers!" Accents of navy and blue add kid-friendly tones, including on the Serena and Lily chairs with ropey handles, while Ahlman put a personal twist on the maritime flags: "Each stands for a letter corresponding to the boys' names."



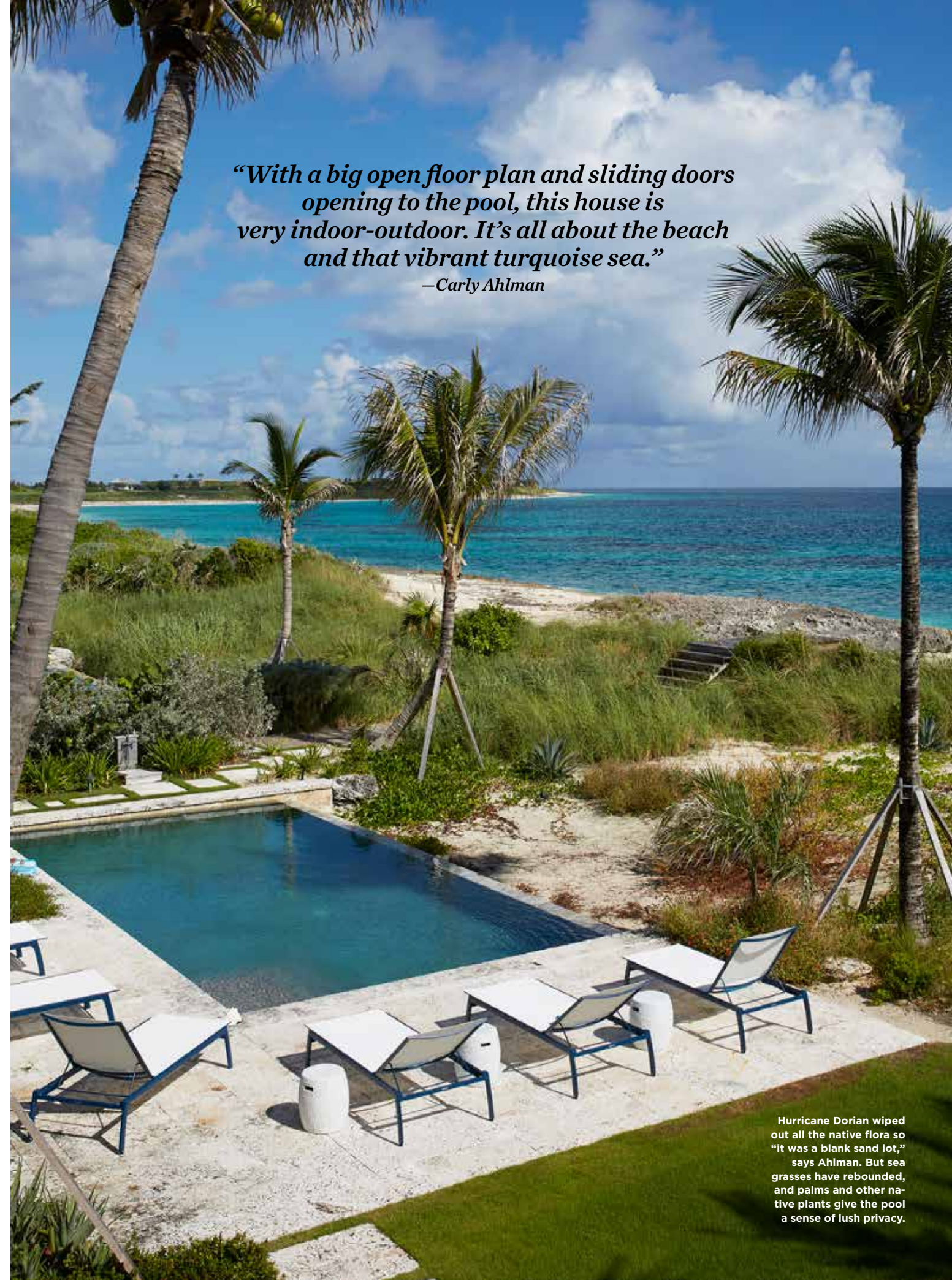
All Tucked In

For the previous owners pre-hurricane, this enclosed space overlooking the street-side garden served as an office, but Ahlman seized the opportunity to transform it into an old-school sleeping porch. "It's a great use of space, reminiscent of a cozy attic," she says. "We loved that it reinforces my clients' desire for the house to feel lived-in, not brand new." A pair of identical custom beds with built-in storage bookend the porch, and in between, a desk offers a quiet work perch or idyllic journaling spot.



"With a big open floor plan and sliding doors opening to the pool, this house is very indoor-outdoor. It's all about the beach and that vibrant turquoise sea."

—Carly Ahlman



Hurricane Dorian wiped out all the native flora so "it was a blank sand lot," says Ahlman. But sea grasses have rebounded, and palms and other native plants give the pool a sense of lush privacy.