



BAND OF INSIDERS

Within a well-dressed Nashville barn, a cross-section of enterprising women in music, design, and food finds community around a Southern-slanted feast.

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“**I**

call it my man cave,” Jen Auerbach says with a sly smile, “but that probably doesn’t do it justice.” The British expat is referring to the sprawling, wood-beamed barn on her family’s five and a half acres outside Nashville, where the leaf green walls, velvet upholstery, and faded antique rugs reveal something

of a woman’s touch—to use an old-fashioned phrase with the same time stamp as Auerbach’s yellow mid-century chaise. Only the Harley-Davidson sign hints at the place’s origins. Three years ago, when she and her husband, musician and record producer Dan Auerbach, moved into the property’s 1905 stone house, they built the barn as a glorified garage for his collection of rare vintage motorcycles. But it wasn’t long before she envisioned her own use for the space: as a sunlit production facility for Clary Collection, the botanical skin-care line that she founded with her friend, Adriel Denae. Out went the Harleys for long-term display at a local museum; in came the century-old apothecary cabinets and jars of dried calendula flowers.

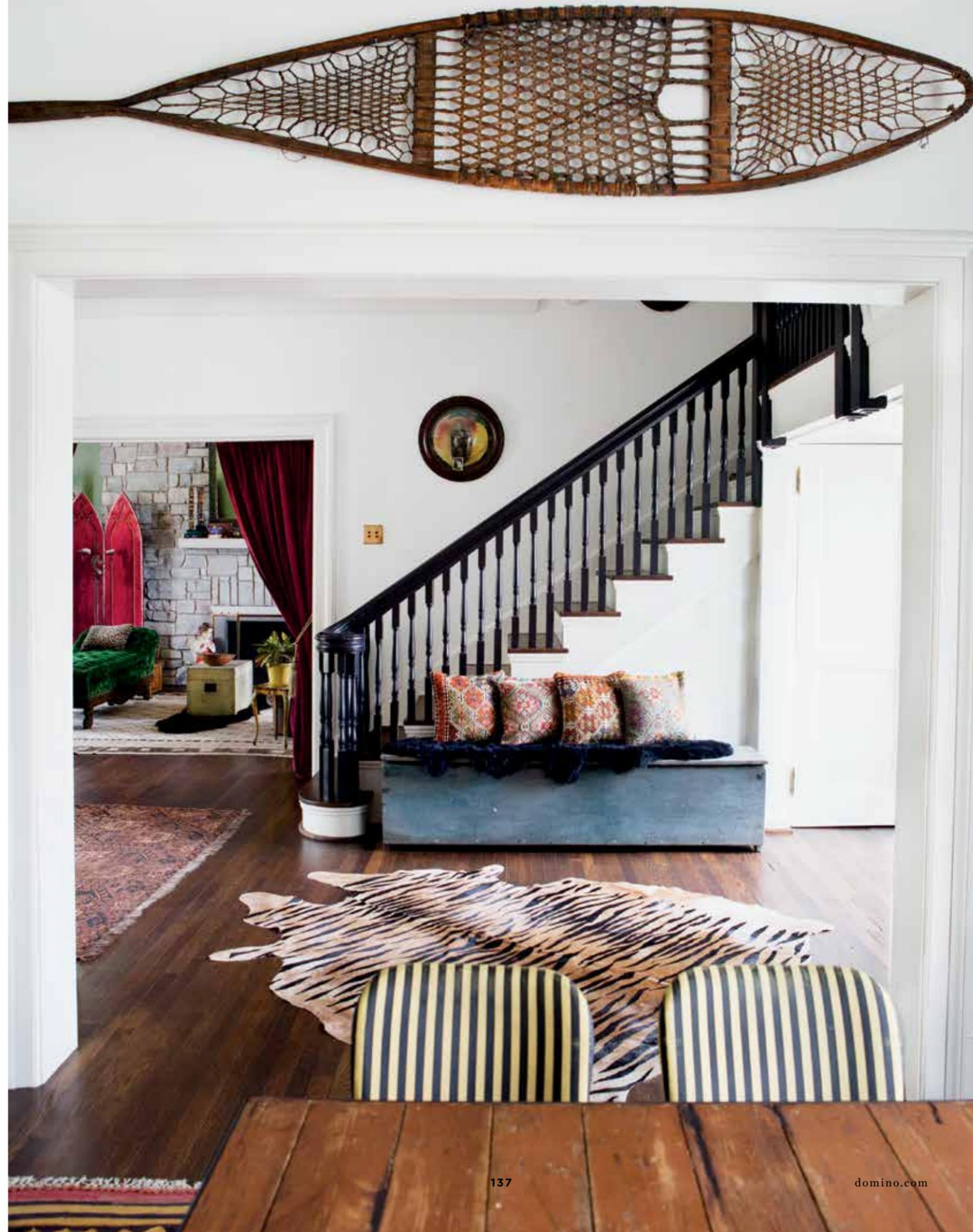
“Our name comes from the herb clary sage, which means clarity and calm, and that’s what the barn brings to me and all my girlfriends who seek solace there,” says Auerbach, describing how the plush sofas serve as a momentary pit stop from the go-go of work and family life. (She has a nearly 3-year-old son, Early, with Dan, in addition to a 10-year-old stepdaughter, Sadie.) And every month or so Auerbach hosts a laid-back dinner with a group of “badass working women in Nashville.”



Clockwise from left: Auerbach in a 1940s skirtsuit; the stone-lined entryway shows off the home’s original foundation, while the dining room opens up to display a rich variety of patterns, including Navajo pillows circa 1900s and a Turkish kilim runner rug.

This page: On Auerbach: Jewelry [arrowandanchorantiques.com](#). Floor Tiles [werthangranite.com](#). Opposite: Industrial Chairs by Verkstads Aktiebolaget Lindqvist \$184 [1stdibs.com](#).

That’s what happened on a recent evening, the weather balmy enough to open the barn’s garage-style doors to the nearby lilac trees. Julia Sullivan, the chef behind nearby restaurant and oyster bar Henrietta Red, had organized a panel the previous day featuring women in food. She and Julia Sherman—whose Brooklyn-based website, Salad for President, spawned a recent cookbook—conspired to join forces for a Southern-themed dinner party at Auerbach’s. “To collaborate on a menu from afar and then to jump into the kitchen is a nerve-racking thing,” says Sherman, with all due respect for serious kitchen chops (Sullivan is an alum of Per Se in Manhattan and Blue Hill at Stone Barns). “What I found was a shocking amount of space for my ideas.” Not to mention room for her inspired flavor hacks. Fresh from running a pop-up café in Mexico, Sherman arrived with a suitcase full of dried chiles—just what you need to dial up an arugula-chicken salad in a city fluent in hot sauce.





“Nashville is very community based: You show up for people; they show up for you.”

RUBY STEWART

The meal was a mash note to tradition with outlier twists. Sullivan, known for her flair with seafood, topped deviled eggs with smoked trout and a ribbon of the flash-fried skin; the vegan chilled corn soup revealed her innate hospitality (“You never know who is going to show up and have restrictions”). A riff on potato salad featured a creamy miso dressing from Sherman’s book, along with frilly mustard greens, nigella seeds, and Henrietta Red’s house-made kimchi. And for finger food, the Julias finessed a local classic—tomato and mayo on white bread—using herbed aioli on sourdough, with roasted yellow tomatoes and heirlooms (a trick for concentrating flavor before peak season).

If the kitchen brimmed with a spirit of cross-pollination, so did the dinner table, where the mix of guests included an ER doctor, antiques dealer, photographer, and boutique owner. Artist Vadis Turner—a Nashville native who, like Sullivan, spent years in New York, only to return to find a thriving creative scene at home—swapped stories with Ruby Stewart, a more recent transplant by way of Los Angeles (a musician like her father, Rod Stewart, she’s at work on a forthcoming album). For both of them, the Tennessee city’s opportunities go beyond the artistic. “It’s very community based: You show up for people; they show up for you,” says Stewart, recalling how neighbors showered her doorstep with welcome gifts—“something I never experienced when I moved into my apartment on La Brea and Sunset.”

Some of the strongest bonds, though, have emerged in circles like this one, blossoming through work liaisons or conversations around motherhood. “It’s an energy that feels really good to me,” says Sherman, who sees the Nashville dinner akin to the ladies’ nights at her own brownstone: humming, wine-fueled gatherings with writers, curators, and chefs.

“It’s very instinctual,” she notes of the urge to bring everyone together. “Great things always come of it.” This evening was no different, with new friends and old getting into the groove—complete with impromptu dancing. “Basically the night started with Dan’s playlist,” Auerbach says, citing local favorites like soul singer Robert Finley, “and ended with mine: En Vogue and TLC.”

In the sunroom, century-old rockers and custom-made chartreuse drapes complement a mid-century sofa.



SOUNDS OF THE SOUTH

Black Keys frontman Dan Auerbach put together the playlist, with hometown picks (Katie Schecter) alongside callbacks to his wife's London days (The Pretenders).

"WET COLD CHAIN"
Katie Schecter

"NEVER BE TOGETHER"
The Pretenders

"GOODBYE SUMMER"
Shannon Shaw

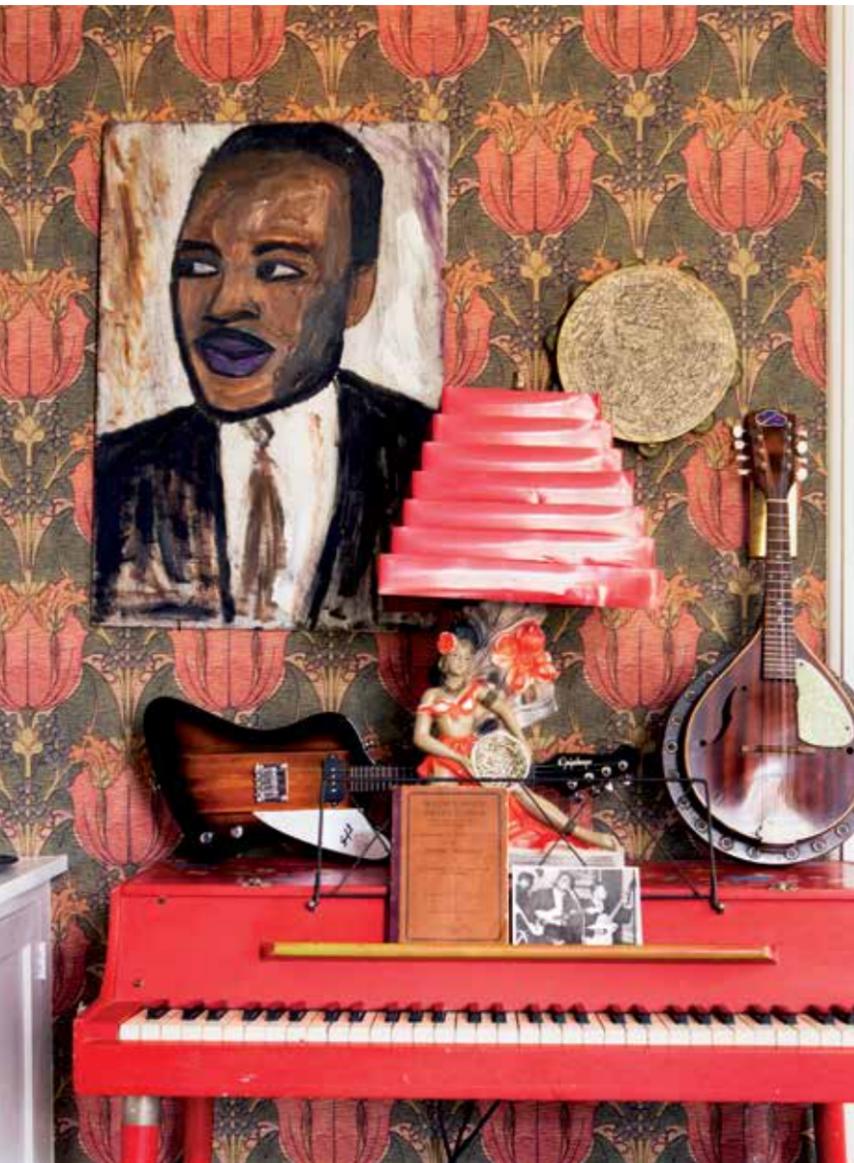
"MEDICINE WOMAN"
Robert Finley

"PICTURES OF YOU"
Sonny Smith

"SAFARI STRUT"
The Whitefield Brothers

"AIN'T GOTTA WORRY CHILD"
Charley Crockett

"100 DAYS, 100 NIGHTS"
Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings



THE PINK DRAGON COCKTAIL

Serves 1

2 sprigs tarragon
1 oz grapefruit juice
 $\frac{3}{4}$ oz lemon juice
 $\frac{3}{4}$ oz simple syrup
2 oz gin or vodka (optional)

Muddle tarragon (just enough to break up the leaves) with the rest of the ingredients.

To make simple syrup: Mix $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar in a pot over low heat. Stir until sugar has dissolved without bringing to a boil. Let cool.

Shake all ingredients together, strain into a Collins glass with ice, and top with soda water.



This page: In the barn, a Woodard chaise longue joins a 1950s pink sofa that was still wrapped in its original plastic when Auerbach bought it. Opposite: Wallpaper inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement adorns the color-coded music nook; Julia Sullivan (left) and Julia Sherman prep ingredients in the kitchen.

Rug relichomefurnishings.com; Pillow by Sonya Rothwell wolfandbadger.com.

Auerbach asked her friends to dress as if for “a first date—a bit of color, but don’t try too hard.” The simple dinner table floral arrangements by Avon Lyons of Violetta echoed the sentiment.



CHILE PULLED-CHICKEN SALAD WITH BITTER GREENS, PEANUTS & CHARRED ONION

Serves 4

In a hot, dry skillet, toast red onion, garlic clove with the skin, star anise, and dried chiles, removing the chiles and anise when they are fragrant but not burned. Allow the onion and garlic to blacken.

Add water and vinegar to a small saucepan with peeled garlic, brown sugar, salt, star anise, and bay leaf, and bring to a boil. Add chiles, reduce to a simmer, and cook, uncovered, for 15 minutes.

Transfer the chiles and vinegar mixture to a blender, and puree until smooth. Pour the puree into a jar, and add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of it back to the blender with the juice of 2 limes. With the blender running, add the oil in a steady stream, until emulsified and creamy.

Dress the chicken with the oil-less chile mixture to your taste, about $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup for half a chicken will suffice (save the extra for use in soups, dips, or as a marinade for meat). Stir to evenly coat, adding minced Thai chile if you want extra heat.

In a hot, dry skillet, char sliced spring onion on both sides, 3 minutes each side. It should be nice and blackened.

Toss greens with half the prepared dressing, season with a pinch of flaky sea salt, and toss to coat (use your hands; it would be gentler on the greens). Tuck dressed chicken in and around the greens, as opposed to piling it on top. Add charred onion, avocado, peanuts, and pickled watermelon rind (recipe below), and garnish with nasturtium and cilantro. Serve extra dressing on the side.

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| For the salad | For the dressing |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ chicken, pulled (approximately 14 oz) | 1 small red onion |
| 1 Thai bird chile, deseeded and minced (optional) | 1 large garlic clove (skin on) |
| 1 spring onion, quartered, root end intact | 1 star anise |
| 12 oz arugula-and-chicory mix | 2 dried Pasilla Negro, New Mexican, or guajillo chiles |
| 3 breakfast radishes, sliced lengthwise paper thin on mandoline | $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dry-roasted peanuts | $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cider vinegar |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ cup pickled watermelon rind | 1 tsp brown sugar |
| Avocado (optional) | 1 tsp salt |
| Nasturtium petals (optional) | 1 bay leaf |
| Cilantro (optional) | 2 limes |
| | $\frac{1}{2}$ cup olive oil |

PICKLED WATERMELON RIND

Yields 3 cups

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| 3 cups watermelon rind, cleaned of green skin and pink flesh and cut into 1-inch rectangles | Place cut watermelon in a nonreactive bowl. Combine all ingredients except watermelon rind in a nonreactive saucepot and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and stir until sugar is fully dissolved. Pour over watermelon rind and cover with plastic wrap, so the wrap has contact with the surface of the liquid. Cool to room temperature before refrigerating. |
| $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups good-quality apple cider vinegar | |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water | |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar | |
| $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp kosher salt | |
| $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp coriander seed | |
| $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp fennel seed | |
| $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp black peppercorn | |



CHILLED CORN SOUP

Serves 6

4 tbsp grape-seed oil
 1 white onion, medium dice
 1 fennel bulb, medium dice
 1 carrot, peeled and sliced
 2 garlic cloves, rough chopped
 1 serrano pepper, seeded and rough chopped
 4 cups sweet corn kernels
 16 oz coconut milk
 16 oz vegetable stock
 1 star anise
 2 sprigs tarragon
 3 tbsp lime juice
 Salt, to taste
 Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

For garnish
 6 oz jumbo lump crabmeat, picked
 1 tbsp shallots, minced
 1 tsp serrano pepper, minced
 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
 Lime juice, to taste
 Salt, to taste

Heat grape-seed oil over medium-high heat. Sweat onion until translucent, add fennel and carrot, and continue sweating until they begin to soften. Add garlic and serrano pepper, and sweat until fragrant. Add corn kernels and cook, stirring occasionally, until they begin to caramelize. Add coconut milk and vegetable stock, whisk together, and bring to a simmer. Add star anise and tarragon. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until corn is tender (about 20 to 30 minutes).

Transfer soup to a blender, not filling more than halfway at a time. Cover top with a kitchen towel and start blending slowly, gradually increasing to high speed. Puree until smooth, adjusting seasoning to taste. Continue to puree soup in batches. Strain through a fine sieve into a clean pot or bowl, using the back of a ladle to help push it through. Discard solids. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper.

Chill soup for 6 hours to overnight. Stir in lime juice.

Make garnish: Toss crab, shallot, and serrano pepper with olive oil, lime juice, and salt. Divide soup into six bowls. Garnish each serving with crab salad and serve immediately.



This page: Bright floral-print dresses and a strawberry-rosewater compote with meringue bring the summer vibes inside. Ruby Stewart (left) and James Kicinski-McCoy (opposite) of the popular Nashville-based blogs Mother Mag and Bleubird kick back and drink in the scene.

