

NOVEMBER 19, 2013 | PRODUCT

# Before and After: A Julia Child-Inspired Slipcovered Kitchen

by PETER DOLKAS



When asked to design the kitchen of the Greystone Mansion for the *Titans of Business* and the *Best Design Show House* in Beverly Hills this month, designer Laura Schwartz-Muller says the image of a little French kitchen inspired by Julia Child immediately popped it into her mind. As it turns out, Schwartz-Muller, founder and principal of *Four Point Design + Construction*, had a personal connection to the chef.

### MASTERING THE ART OF FRENCH COOKING

"When I was a little girl, my mom and I cooked all the way through Julia Child's book, and that time spent with my mom was when we talked," she says, "We probably did 90 percent of the recipes in the book together. I was really empowered by her." Years later, Child mentored the designer's mother's class at the Culinary Institute and attended her graduation (she graduated at the age of 78, after 12 years of study). "My mom actually cooked boeuf bourgignon for Julia Child," she says. "I don't know how she made it through the lobster class, let alone cook for Julia Child." Naturally, being asked to design the kitchen sparked an a-ha moment for the designer.

### UNIFORM DISTRIBUTION

"My inspiration for the color palette was Julia's famous uniform when she was on TV; she had a dove gray top, that dark gray linen apron, and her beautiful cream curls," she says. "It's pretty simple and it drove the whole design." It took five or six tries to get the color of the kitchen cabinetry right, and the designer eventually settled on Benjamin Moore's *Rocky Coast*.













### THE SLIPCOVERED KITCHEN

Because the Greystone Mansion is a historic estate, Schwartz-Muller couldn't make any real renovations to the kitchen, so -- quite magically -- she actually floated all of the cabinetry, countertops, and flooring over the existing (and quite dated) furnishings. When the show house ends, it can all be removed, with no damage to the original design. The temporary cabinetry was designed "to embrace the beautiful architecture of the '20s and '30s, which would have been right when Julia was living in Paris," Schwartz-Muller says. "I wanted to make it state-of-the-art, yet bring in elements that make the kitchen look like it had always been there, because, to us, that's good built design."

### RANGE ROVER

The pièce de résistance of the room is a charcoal gray *La Cornue* stove, a purchase that runs around \$40,000. Schwartz-Muller actually fell in love with it before discovering that it's an exact replica of the range Child used in Paris while writing her book. "All these little miracles came along, and it was just meant to be." Wanting the extraordinary stove to be the focal point of the space, the designer kept the space otherwise minimal. "We framed our space around the graphic visual aesthetic that the *La Cornue* provides and then framed it with two new cabinets and a soft gray countertop," she says. "It's really the *It* factor."

### SHOP the LOOK

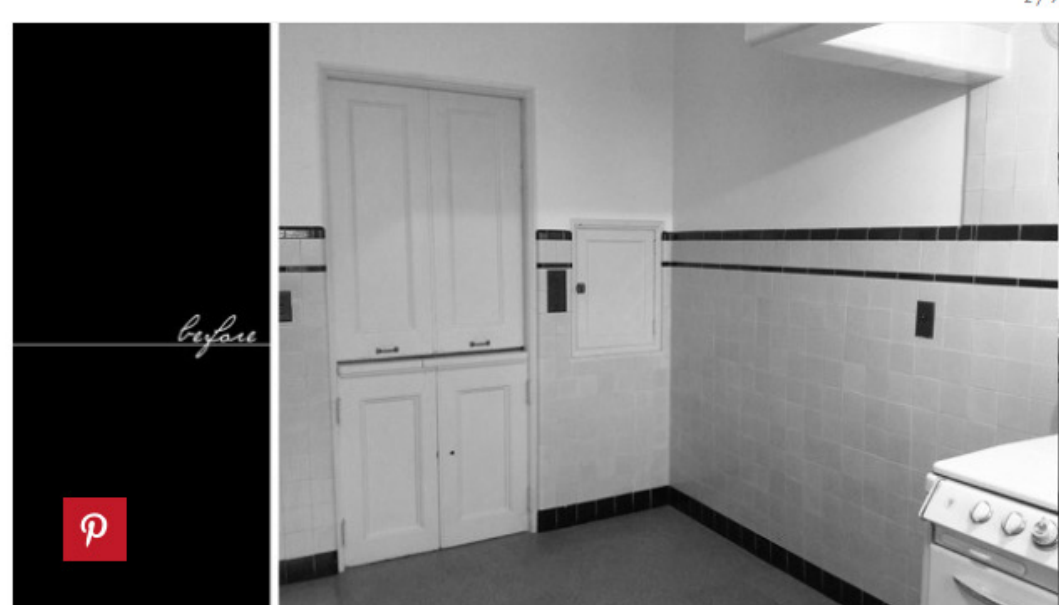
-  Flytta Kitchen Cart, \$179, Ikea
-  Gilbert Armchair, \$389, Ethan Allen
-  French Oven, \$270, Le Creuset
-  Rosemary Topiary, \$68, Terrain
-  Spencer China Cabinet, \$4499, Ethan Allen
-  Chapelle Woven-Seat Armchair, \$389, Ethan Allen
-  La Cornue CornuFè Stove, \$8600, Williams-Sonoma
-  Vintage Green Cabbage Leaf Bowl, \$10, Comforte
-  24" French Whip, \$12, Cook's Direct
-  Rocky Coast #1595, From \$37, Benjamin Moore
-  Wall Mount Gooseneck Faucet, \$280, Van Dyke's Restorers
-  Blue de Savoie, Price Upon Request, Stone Source

Photographs: Chris Patey

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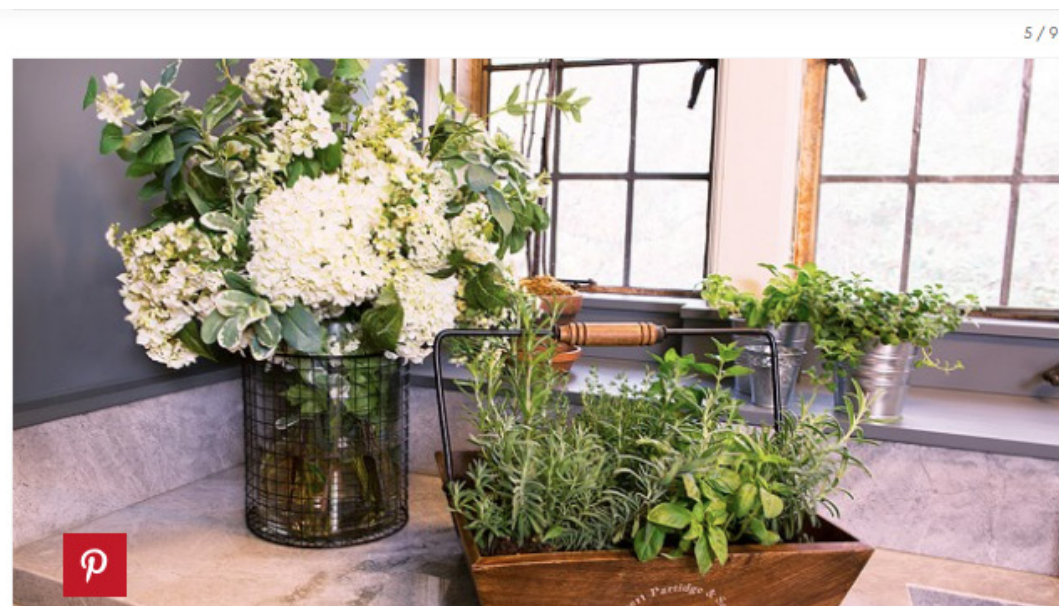
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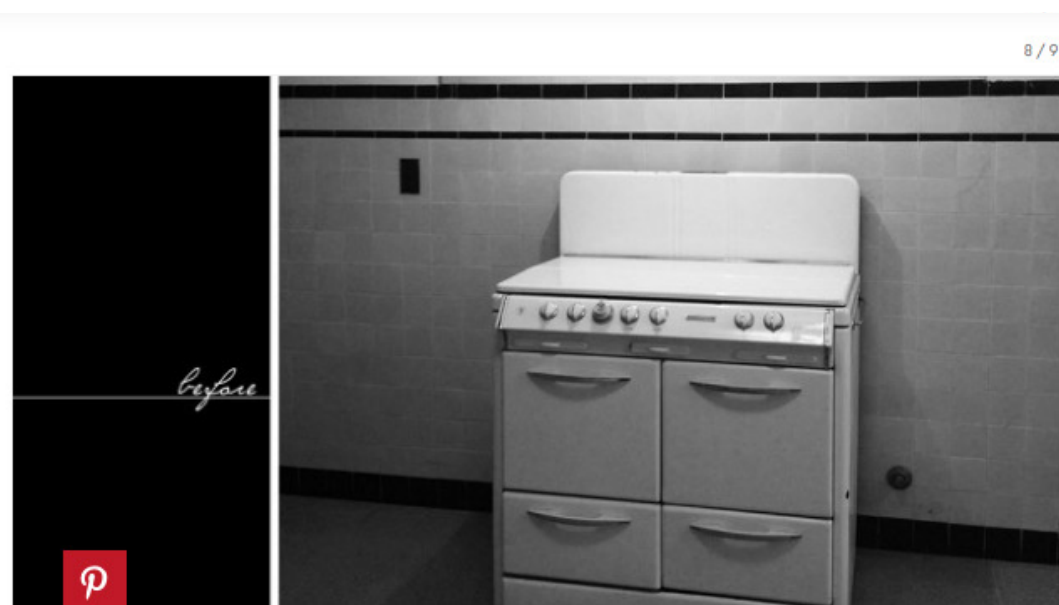
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