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BOCADELRAY LIFE

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HGTV's *Designers' Challenge*
Comes to Boca's Oaks

photography by samantha stubbman / text by elizabeth giglio

When Judd and Micaela Malin from Stamford, Connecticut decided to take a casual look at some homes in Boca while visiting Judd's grandmother, they had no idea that they'd fall in love with the first one they saw. Plans to build in The Oaks were quickly put into place. As time passed and the couple got involved in the building process, this so-called "vacation house" just kept feeling more and more like home.

Judd and Micaela met 6 years ago in Stamford, where they were both attending school. Judd is a Connecticut native, while Micaela is originally from the Philippines. Only 5 weeks after a chance encounter at a club in Stamford, the couple married. Talk about whirlwind! About a year and a half later, their daughter Marina was born. In February of 2003, Judd treated Micaela to a Valentine's Day vacation in Miami. There, a friend of the family showed them a model home in the Oaks and it was love at first sight and the start of a dream.

Judd, a commercial developer, is an avid boater who wants to be any place where there is plenty of water and good weather for boating. So it makes sense that the couple spends their winters in Boca and their summers in Stamford so that Judd can get the best of both boating worlds!

Fast forward three years, the couple had decorated the majority of the 5 bedroom house by themselves. It wasn't easy though. Judd tends to like contemporary styles, while Micaela prefers a more traditional look. But like any couple, they learned to compromise. *A little give, a little take.* "Judd gave me full run of the kitchen," Micaela laughs, "so that's

my favorite room because I got to pick the cabinets, the appliances, everything!" But they both felt kind of stuck when it came to the formal living room. This two-story room greets guests as they enter the house and features walls that soar up to 25 feet in height with stark white walls that just seemed too tall to tackle! The couple yearned for a place to entertain that felt "warm and inviting."

Micaela, like most women, loves to watch decorating shows to get ideas and see what other people have done with their homes. One night while watching the HGTV show *Designers' Challenge*, she saw a couple who had a large room similar to theirs. Jokingly, she mentioned to Judd that they should go on that show. Judd took her seriously and signed them up on the HGTV website. Only days later, they received a request to make a video of their home and family. Once that was sent off, it was only about another week before they were notified that HGTV wanted to use their home in the show! "It all happened so quickly," says Micaela, "we couldn't even believe it!"

Meanwhile, Brooke Friedman of Brook J Design Group in Boca received an e-mail from the American Society of Interior Designers that announced that an HGTV show was being filmed in Boca. She sent in her portfolio and was chosen to be one of the three designers to create a possible décor for the room and give a presentation to Judd and Micaela. How's that for a home-spun coincidence? From there, it was up to the couple to choose. "Out of the three designers, Brooke took the time to meet with us, call us multiple times, and really take our input. Because



of that, her design reflected our personalities more so than the other designers," explains Micaela. The choice was clear. Brooke would get the money to do a much needed design makeover on the Malin's massive living room.

The style? An Asian/European fusion that somehow mixed Judd's love of clean contemporary lines with Micaela's traditional style. "The room has an earthy, Zen, kind of feel. It's very warm," said Brooke. "Incredibly, Brooke was able to come up with a design that we both loved. We were like WOW! That has never happened before," gushed Micaela. The white walls were the first to go. A soft gray-green brought the room more coziness. Floor to ceiling silk curtains in a bright copper framed the story-high windows that afford a gorgeous view of a sky-blue lake. The previously white ceiling was painted a brick red to coordinate with the window treatments, with the inset featuring a faux finish in a metallic silver and gold wash. The existing sofa and slipper chairs were kept with their original upholstery but were updated by switching out the neutral-colored pillows with ones that added a pop of color with reds and greens.

One wall features framed grass cloth that lends an Asian feel while the adjacent wall was broken up into three sections by a stripe of yellow and the addition of two columns that feature a Venetian marble finish that frame a Wenge buffet table with smoked glass doors. Mirrors framed with iron detailing reflect the opposite wall and catch the sunlight streaming in from the windows.

The seating area is centered around a Macassar Ebony wood finish that highlights reds and browns with black streaking throughout. "We really love how the custom pieces [the bar stools, ottomans, coffee table, and side tables] all feature a European style with Asian colors. The mixture works very well," Micaela explains. A wool area rug in neutral beige was also custom made, with an animal print edging (Micaela's request) and a brownish black border to outline the coffee table and draw attention to the center of the room.

"We really wanted the room to reflect both of our backgrounds and traditions, so that people could really get a sense of who we are when they first enter the home," Micaela explained. The décor is accented with traditional pieces from the Philippines while European style artwork that Judd's mother, grandmother, and great-grandfather painted adorns the walls.

One major change was the addition of a bar. Previously a linen closet, Brooke transformed this little niche into a fully functional bar, complete with wine cooler, wine rack, and cutaway sink. Amazingly clever and beautifully functional! Dark cherry cabinets were custom made to the couple's request so that the bar would fit everything just right. Green granite tops and glass mosaic tiles on the back wall of the bar make this area a unique and awesome addition to their entertainment area.

To hear more about the Malin's beautiful home, check out *Designers' Challenge* airing on August 4 on HGTV. ♦

