



From far left: simple open shelving and metro tiles in the kitchen; Cayne's dressing room; the library, with chairs found at a Paris flea market and a Serge Mouille pendant light
REPORT Emma J Page
PHOTOGRAPHS Bénédicte Drummond

A DOWNTOWN DREAM HOUSE

A move from uptown Manhattan to Greenwich Village gave cookery school owner Alison Cayne the room to carve out space for all five of her children. Plus a sauna in the back garden

For cook Alison Cayne, the perfect dish involves a considered combination of colour, texture and ingredients. It's a philosophy that just as aptly sums up her attitude to design. She bought her Greenwich Village townhouse in New York soon after she opened her cookery school and café, Haven's Kitchen, in 2012, and decorated it with a "less is more" approach in tune with her style of cooking. "There's a sweet spot where flavours, styles or designs meet," believes Cayne. "Too rough and it looks messy. Too pristine and it looks uncomfortable."

When she came across the house, Cayne was newly single after a long marriage. A mother to five children, now aged between 12 and 20, her priority was to find a home that would allow for sociable spaces for the whole family as well as privacy. She had lived uptown for years, but the opening of her cookery school downtown, near Union Square, prompted a move. "It was the first time that I had free rein to design a house on my own and I pretty much tore up the rule book," she says.

Typical of most period townhouses, the entrance is on a raised level, with a ground floor beneath and three further storeys above. A second staircase that had been added in the sitting room was removed, freeing up the entire raised ground floor to accommodate a large kitchen, sitting room and dining area. On the first floor, Cayne reworked the main bedroom and added a dressing room, bathroom and library, while the second floor houses two bedrooms and a bathroom. Another large room on the third floor was divided to create bedrooms for her two sons. Her eldest daughter has the run of the ground floor, where a family room and ping-pong table are a natural magnet for all.

Despite the chaos of family life, Cayne's home has a serene feel, with its largely monochrome palette, punctuated by splashes of colour, treasured artworks and books, as well as warming brass and wood. "I have a fantasy of a pink or a red room, or a beautiful deep emerald scheme, but this is my go-to look," she says. "There is something comforting about it. You can appreciate an object better when it has space to breathe."

Unsurprisingly, the kitchen is the backbone, with its generous brass-trimmed Lacanche stove and marble-topped island, open shelving and metro tiles framed by dark grouting. "I love the utility of the shelving at Haven's Kitchen, so I wanted to replicate that, but in a less industrial way," says Cayne. "I played with warmer, more textured versions."

"I love that all my kids can sit at the island and enjoy evening meals. In summer, I open the windows and the breeze blows through."

The library, with its sleek glass desk, Serge



The sitting room

On the deck is a wooden barrel sauna from Canada. 'It's our family meeting space. We all sweat it out – no fighting allowed'



The sauna, on the second-floor deck

Mouille pendant light and drawing by Karen Kilimnik, is her sanctuary and writing space. "Virginia Woolf knew what she was talking about when she advocated a room of one's own," she says. "The pinboard holds photos and inspiration from my entire life."

In such a tightly packed city, this house has the luxury of a courtyard garden, terrace and a roof garden that provides lettuce, aubergines, strawberries and herbs. On the second-floor



Cayne with Ivy, the mini goldendoodle

deck is a wooden barrel sauna from Canada. "It's our family meeting space," says Cayne. "We all sweat it out – no fighting allowed."

Mostly, she is content with a simple palette. "I still love the mustard couches after five years – I thought I might grow sick of them. I also enjoy the fact that this home holds a lot of people, yet feels intimate." ■

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