



GAME CHANGERS

GRAZIA USA AIMS TO BE A CULTURAL AUTHORITY THAT INSPIRES, EDUCATES, AND CELEBRATES INDIVIDUALITY, BEAUTY, AND STYLE. WE HAVE IDENTIFIED 1 CHANGE AGENTS BLAZING PATHS TO A NEW AND BETTER FUTURE.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PETER OUMANSKI



Athena Calderone

The interior design guru, author, culinary queen, and *Eyeswoon* mastermind prioritizes her passion first and foremost.

My work saddles food and design, both working in tandem. I was a young mom in my early twenties and while I was always a very creative being, I found myself at home a lot and in need of creative expression. I used the kitchen and food to exercise creativity and to take risks.

Food and design not only gave me passion and purpose, but a social outlet as well. Gathering people in my home unified my love for setting the table, creating a mood, lighting, and flowers; but also, creating a beautiful meal.

I'm the founder and CEO of *Eyeswoon*, a digital platform that surrounds both design and food. Everything I'm doing today has to do with the home and creating a beautiful experience. My cookbook *Cook Beautiful* and my design book *Live Beautiful* came out after both of my homes were featured in *Architectural Digest*. The cookbook won a James Beard Award, while the design book remains a top seller on Amazon. It's been this incredible unraveling of different ways to create through the lens of home and design.

I love to distill a breakdown of my design process, especially on social media. Rather than

having an unattainable, beautiful space, I explain why it works. I like to be generous with whatever I've learned over the years and share that wealth of knowledge.

I really love making design intimate and personal. Think of your home as an expression of the person you've been, and the things that you've collected. You should walk into a home, see who someone is, and have some visual intrigue while looking at their space. I want to teach people to shop around their homes and see what they've collected over time. I want to encourage people to try new ways to style them and create little vignettes, breeding more appreciation for things that maybe they didn't realize they loved or appreciated as much until seeing them through a new lens.

Over these challenging past few years, I've leaned into my home life even more, sharing my creativity, recipes, and styling tips. All of us found ourselves cooking more, and in our home more. I wanted to give people confidence about what they're creating in their homes, the items they surround themselves with, and the meals they make. As I continue to share and create, it brings me joy to know that somebody might appreciate their space more, or that somebody

feels better about creating a meal for themselves, because of a simple trick I taught them. I create for myself, but I also love to share with others.

There's been a recalibration of what's important. There's been a resurgence of appreciation for being at home, redefining your friendships and who you surround yourself with, and the integrity of how you enjoy your space and life. Taking care of yourself, surrounding yourself with positivity and people that you love and love you back brings more hope into your life.

Just do what you love. It's always worth it. Figure out what brings you joy, something you can do every day that's exclusively for you. Find something that lights you up and fires you up. So many of us feel trapped into doing things we don't love. I felt lost for a long time because I thought I didn't have a "quote/unquote" "career," but I ended up creating a career through my passion unknowingly. I believe that if you work hard at something, even if it seems impossible, you can make it a reality.

Anything is possible if you have the perseverance, the passion, and the will to make it happen. Hope itself is never giving up.

— As told to Hannah Militano.