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TASTE LIVES

# VERANDA

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## DESIGNERS *Living With Passion & Panache* AT HOME

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# *Alfresco* EXUBERANCE



For California vintner and kitchen designer  
**CAREN RIDEAU**, open-air fetes call for relaxed  
joie de vivre and globe-trotting color.





#### WEST COAST RADIANCE

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Urns become a garden water feature. ♦ An Otomi tablecloth in sunflower yellow creates a happy landing for Gorky Gonzalez's festive plates. ♦ Despite owning a wine label, Rideau still loves tequila, which she serves in antique crystal stemware—"the ideal size for bringing out the spirit's notes," she says. ♦ Rideau and her trusty sous-chef, Lola, savor the California sun. ♦ Menu and table inspiration comes from the garden or the farmers' market, with produce rinsed in her farm sink, where a brass faucet oxidizes into an artful patina.



## *In the kitchen of her 1920s Spanish bungalow,*

Caren Rideau revels in the Los Angeles sunshine, her half-open Dutch door being the cook's equivalent of driving a convertible. The fresh air and dazzling light mirror the kitchen designer's breezy approach to entertaining—plus, they make the petite cook space feel a tad larger. Size, however, matters not; in her work and gatherings alike, Rideau is less concerned with the amount of space than an abundance of spirit. Uplifting yellows and bright oranges and blues—the

cheerful palette of the Mexican, Moroccan, and Portuguese pottery she collects on her travels—make her tables as radiant as she is. Besides, who needs a big dining room in Southern California, where outside entertaining beckons year-round? "Guests always feel more at ease outdoors," says the author of *Caren Rideau: Kitchen Designer, Vintner; Entertaining at Home*, her new book full of kitchen design wisdom and entertaining inspiration.



“If you set a table based on *beauty and joy*, the dishes will all go together. The purpose of gathering isn’t perfection but *friendship, love, and family.*” —DESIGNER CAREN RIDEAU



Thanks to her Mexican and Louisiana Creole heritage, Rideau’s *bons temps* approach and penchant for bold flavor and color come naturally. Making tamales with her mother and gumbo with her dad as a child shaped her love of all things culinary. “Our humble kitchen—always smelling of delicious, spicy aromas—was the true heartbeat of home,” she says. Her life and work, it seems, are vibrant extensions of those traditions, even leading to the launch of wine label *Tierra y Vino* a decade ago with her husband, a winemaker.

#### INTO THE VINES

Towering candles and grenache-hued florals allow the vineyard and Santa Ynez Mountains backdrop to take center stage. For servingware Rideau chooses platters and bowls not according to a color scheme but “based on what each of the recipes looks most beautiful in,” she says.

Whether hosting guests at home or at the winery, Rideau juxtaposes the distinction of craft with the simple bounty of nature: Arrangements of fresh herbs and cuttings from her garden mingle with a *mélange* of vibrant flatware and dishes, including pieces from Gorky Gonzalez, a Mexican ceramic artist known for his singular brushstrokes, with whom she’s collaborating on her own line—“a dream!” she says. Sunflowers and cacti will be Rideau’s signature themes for Gonzalez’s strokes of whimsy, an embrace of nature as vivid and joyful as every table she sets. ◆



▲ Rideau’s recently released book celebrates her joyous approach to design, food, wine, and entertaining (Pointed Leaf Press, 2022).