

What is the Coastal Grandmother trend? Designers explain the origins of this viral sensation

A trend for timeless, elevated coastal interiors inspired by romantic movies is being embraced under a new name, Coastal Grandmother, and by a new audience



Coastal Grandmother is the latest addition to our interior design lexicon, courtesy of social media. Like some of its viral sensation predecessors (think Cottagecore, Cluttercore, even Goblincore), it's more than just an interiors idea - it's a vibe, an aesthetic and an aspirational lifestyle.

While it's perhaps natural to be suspicious of an [interior design trend](#) that stems from Tik Tok if you're over a certain age, it's not so much that Coastal Grandmother is a wild new style to get your head around, rather just a new-found appreciation of a very specific look by a younger generation.

To get to the bottom of what Coastal Grandmother means, and whether it's a trend we want to get on board with, we asked interior designers who already specialize in the sort of interiors the trend is championing, to explain the phenomenon.

WHAT IS THE COASTAL GRANDMOTHER TREND?

For the social media star who coined the term, Lex Nicoleta, the main reference for interiors style are the homes featured in Nancy Meyers movies. Think the coastal home of a film featuring your favorite older starlet - Diane Keaton in *Something's Gotta Give*, Meryl Streep in *It's Complicated* - grown-up and refined spaces that are now finding broader appeal.

'Some of Nancy Meyers' greatest hits, where the Coastal Grandmother trend was best put on blast, are 10 to 20 years old at this point,' explains interior designer [Marshall Erb](#). 'But it's definitely been receiving more mainstream love by the younger generations all of a sudden. Honestly, I think pop culture was in need of a vibe shift, and if that equates to cashmere sweaters and posh interiors, then sign me up.'



(Image credit: Matt Kisiday. Design: Alison Babcock)

And as [Allison Babcock](#), an interior designer from Sag Harbor, New York, explains, demand for Nancy Meyers' inspired interiors isn't a new thing. 'I can attest that I have had many clients ask for the house from *Something's Gotta Give*. It was and still is a huge design movement because it still stands the test of time today.'

More broadly, the lifestyle quality of the Coastal Grandmother trend speaks to a certain sort of resident of a coastal town. 'We find it charming to have given this timeless design style a clever name hearkening to the classic snowbird grandparents, that is those who migrate to the coast during the winter, who own oceanfront homes,' says interior designer [Lisa Kahn-Allen](#)

'Let's be honest. The aesthetic that Nancy Meyers has built her name upon, while casually elegant in appearance, isn't casual at all.'

MARSHALL ERB, INTERIOR DESIGNER

WHAT DOES THE COASTAL GRANDMOTHER TREND LOOK LIKE?

'You still find the palette from Nancy Meyers movies in a ton of coastal homes,' says Allison Babcock, 'because of the use of sisal rugs and a blue, white, cream and grey color palette that is in perfect harmony with the natural colors of the sand, ocean and sky surrounding the home.'

And while you're likely to see many of the classics of beach and [lake house decor](#), including that blue and white color scheme, shiplap wall paneling, plenty of throws, cushions and linens, the Coastal Grandmother trend is about more than just . There's an elevated quality to it. It is effortless yet also, for lack of a better word, boujie too.

'The aesthetic that Meyers has built her name upon, while casually elegant in appearance, isn't casual at all,' says Marshall Erb. 'That blanket thrown over the back of the chair is cashmere from Loro Piana, the crumpled linen sheets are from Frette, and the Colonial antiques are from Sotheby's. These are \$30 million homes that have been made to look effortless and inviting by a professional interior designer.'



(Image credit: Peter Aaron. Design: Ike Kligerman Barkley)

'I still get clients asking for the all-white Nancy Meyers kitchen complete with marble countertops, a massive island, Shaker cabinets, oversized industrial appliances,' Marshall adds.

To those who just hear the term in passing, it's easy to get the wrong impression of what this trend is about, where a term like [Cottagecore](#) gives a sense there's more than meets the eye to the trend. 'I don't think I would have ever coined the term "Coastal Grandmother," because when I hear "Grandma" in design I conjure up visions of layers of ruffles, chintz window treatments, doilies,' says Allison Babcock. 'Instead, I'd call it Timeless Transitional or Tailored Transitional.. There are ways to add in heirloom items without having them overtake the aesthetic of a crisp beach vibe.'

'The 'grandmother' bit, that's another aspirational piece,' adds Marshall, 'the affable matriarch who has it all: dream job security, a robust nuclear family, a bottomless nest egg, good taste and plenty of free time to bake chocolate croissants on a whim. Honestly, Coastal Grandmother is more of a mindset than a rigid classification.'

'When I hear "Grandma" in design I conjure up visions of layers of ruffles, chintz window treatments... I'd call this Timeless Transitional.'

ALLISON BABCOCK, INTERIOR DESIGNER

HOW TO CREATE AN ELEVATED COASTAL GRANDMOTHER LOOK

Some elements of the Nancy Meyers look have evolved with current interior trends, including flooring. 'One of the main departures from the classic *Something's Gotta Give* look is the ebonized floors,' says Allison Babcock. 'Instead, people are opting for a lighter floor finish - such as bleached white oak that is still attractive and timeless but draws less attention to every inevitable speck of dust and any scratches that are highlighted on an ebonized floor in a sunlit beach house entrance.'

The nature of the Coastal Grandmother character is that there's an innate, effortless style, so avoid the most cliched coastal tropes. 'Coastal decor to us means adding natural woods with casual cotton fabrics,' says designer Raili Clasen of Raili CA. 'You'll never see a bowl of shells from us.'



Texture is also key. 'Having different textures in fabrics, rugs and pottery adds layers of interest and richness for mostly simple furniture,' says Mia Jung, director of interiors at [Ike Kligerman Barkley](#). 'To make it a little more special, I mix in antique textiles.'

'To achieve the modern coastal look at switching out your curtains for wispy, lightweight linens, adding a slipcover to your sofa for that all-white look (without dropping big bucks on the RH Cloud Couch) and using jute rugs to achieve a beachy, coastal vibe,' suggests Marshall Erb.