

# HOME GOALS

WHAT STARTED OUT AS A SIMPLE COSMETIC RENOVATION QUICKLY SNOWBALLED INTO A FULL HOME MAKEOVER FOR ZOE AND BENJI MARSHALL

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OUTFITS SUPPLIED BY THE ICONIC



**ACCIDENTAL RENOVATORS** In their revamped Sydney home, Benji Marshall, an NRL coach and former rugby star, and his wife Zoe, a podcast creator and media personality, love having several entertaining spaces, kids' zones and a cinema room for family and friends. "The kids can go off and the adults can talk. Benji and I didn't grow up with big homes, so to have enough space now to have everyone over is quite revolutionary," says Zoe. Their formal living area (below) "feels adult," she says. "It's curved, it's sexy. Benji and I can sit in this room with a glass of wine, play the piano and leave all the chaos of the rest of the house." **ENTRANCE** An Urban Road boucle chair (opposite) offers a moment to pause. Atop the James Lane mango wood table is a *Moab* framed art print from Urban Road. >

## Beautiful HOMES

**W**hen Zoe and Benji Marshall purchased their new home in March 2022, they only intended to replace the kitchen's glossy red splashback and beige cupboard doors. Maybe they'd treat themselves to some new furniture and carpet. The couple figured a full renovation was at least five years away. After all, Zoe, a podcast creator and media personality, and Benji, an NRL coach and former rugby player, had a nine-month-old daughter, Ever, and a four-year-old son, Fox – not to mention their two beloved dogs, Mila and Lucky. Their hands were well and truly and blissfully full.

However, after soliciting her social media followers for recommendations, Zoe found interior designer Evalyn Nicolas of Design Studio 407, and things snowballed in the best possible way. "She had such incredible ideas," says Zoe. "We knew the moment we spoke; there was a connection there. We really wanted to do this together." Because the five-bedroom, tri-level house in a harbourside suburb on Sydney's North Shore was so "impressive in scale," explains Evalyn – bigger than the Marshalls' previous home in Sydney's Inner West – she envisioned cosmetic updates that would do it justice. The existing floor plan would cater perfectly to the Marshalls' needs, especially as the kids grew older (doting dad Benji wanted a larger home so they would never move out). The addition of a butler's pantry would be the only structural change.

Zoe admits she naively believed the family could live in the house during the renovation. They started small, adding chevron parquet flooring and beautiful billowy curtains. And they evacuated only once, for a holiday. "I gave the builders two weeks to do four bathrooms and a kitchen, just like on *The Block*," jokes Zoe. While the tradies "moved mountains," the family came home to a not-quite-finished reno. Then, newly pregnant Evalyn became "violently ill" with morning sickness and was hospitalised briefly. "She ghosted me!" teases Zoe, who now counts the interior designer as a friend.

Of course, nothing worth doing is ever easy. By Christmas last year, the house was primed to host the family's loved ones and in February this year, Zoe and Benji renewed their vows in their backyard after 10 years of marriage. "We wanted that memory cemented here, with our children. I can't express how special the day was."

The celebrations haven't stopped since, and Zoe continues to tinker with her luxe but functional home. A pool may be on the cards, and the exterior will be rendered and repainted. Zoe makes her own pottery, including platters and olive bowls, and is creating large artworks for their home, which is a challenge she has embraced. "I've realised that your home is like a family member," she explains. "It needs as much love and attention as everybody else, so I don't feel like this project will ever really end. And I'm at peace with that."



**FAMILY ROOM** The Grace sofa by Crafted Furniture marries comfort and style. The curtains are by Window Furnishings and the walls are painted in Dulux White on White. The *Brick and Mortar* canvas art print is from Urban Road, while the vase is from Kas. **DINING** Beneath a Z Two Lights pendant, the Amsterdam dining table, Adriana chairs and Ivy console by Living In Style make easy work of family feasts. The artwork is by Oli O. >



**“EVERYTHING’S  
SUPER-DURABLE,  
BUT IT ALL *feels*  
quite luxurious”**

**EVALYN, INTERIOR DESIGNER**

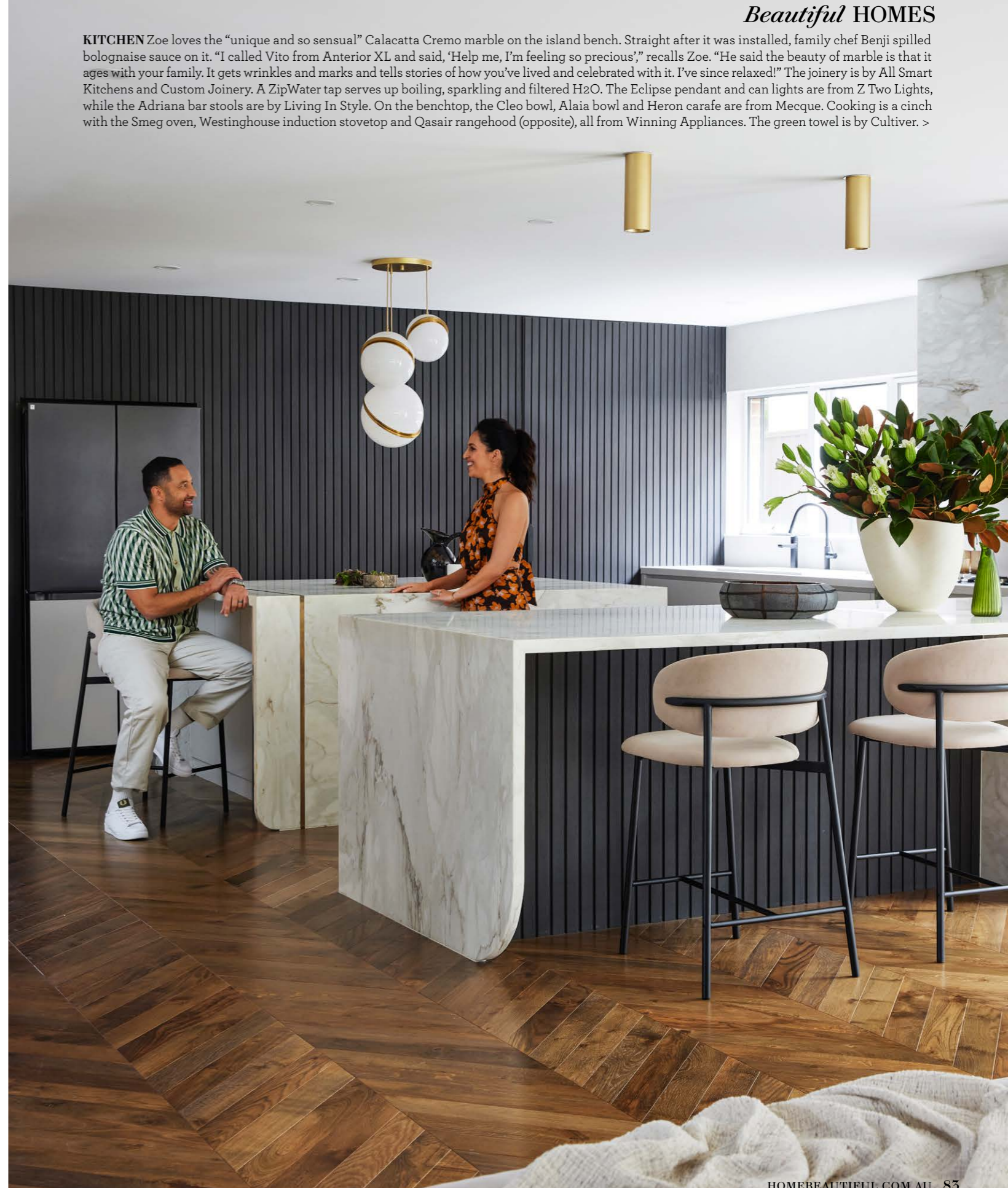
ACTUAL PAINT COLOUR MAY VARY ON APPLICATION

**FORMAL LIVING** Dated floor tiles were swapped out for Italian timber parquet by Ultimate Flooring Australia throughout the living areas. An Escea fireplace is made grand with Xlastra Onyx White Porcelain by Anterior XL and is flanked by New Age Veneers joinery by All Smart Kitchens and Custom Joinery. An Urban Road velvet chair and custom sofa by Crafted Furniture call for cocktails. Adding texture is a chubby coffee table from James Lane and a durable Miss Amara rug. Various decor and cushions were sourced from Mecque, Saardé, Urban Road, Lounge Lovers, James Lane, Kas, Papaya and David Jones. >



**KITCHEN** Zoe loves the “unique and so sensual” Calacatta Cremo marble on the island bench. Straight after it was installed, family chef Benji spilled bolognese sauce on it. “I called Vito from Anterior XL and said, ‘Help me, I’m feeling so precious,’” recalls Zoe. “He said the beauty of marble is that it ages with your family. It gets wrinkles and marks and tells stories of how you’ve lived and celebrated with it. I’ve since relaxed!” The joinery is by All Smart Kitchens and Custom Joinery. A ZipWater tap serves up boiling, sparkling and filtered H<sub>2</sub>O. The Eclipse pendant and can lights are from Z Two Lights, while the Adriana bar stools are by Living In Style. On the benchtop, the Cleo bowl, Alaia bowl and Heron carafe are from Mecque. Cooking is a cinch with the Smeg oven, Westinghouse induction stovetop and Qasair rangehood (opposite), all from Winning Appliances. The green towel is by Cultiver. >

“WE fell in love WITH THE MARBLE, WITH THE *cream, greens and greys* RUNNING THROUGH IT” ZOE, HOMEOWNER



**ZOE'S BEDROOM** "I have my own wing of the house, which sounds very ridiculous and abundant," says Zoe with a laugh. "My bedroom - Benji and I don't sleep in the same room - is the size of my first studio apartment! It's attached to my podcast studio, as well as a shoe and accessory closet, then a regular closet and an ensuite." Living In Style provided custom furniture, including the bedhead, to make Zoe's luxe hotel-style boudoir feel less like "a monster" and more of a cosy retreat. The 'Shagreen' wallpaper is by Catherine Martin of *The Great Gatsby* and *Moulin Rouge* fame. >



**WE LOVE...**  
*the jungle theme*

Revered party planner Mary Ronis designed the children's bedrooms. "Mary's a miracle worker who brings childlike magic to spaces," says Zoe. "I said, 'jungle theme', and she went bananas, quite literally. It's like a kid's wonderland in Fox's bedroom." A Hide & Seek Kids bed with a slide, dreamy wallpaper by Kingdom Home Design and a washable leopard-print rug from Miss Amara completed the brief.



ACTUAL PAINT COLOUR MAY VARY ON APPLICATION

**FOX'S BEDROOM** In Fox's room (top right & opposite), a sculptural monkey by Design Casa and a Hunter & Nomad pendant light pump up the playfulness. The bedlinen is Adairs, the cabinet is Mustard Made and the artwork is from Ikea. **EVER'S BEDROOM** Zoe wanted her daughter's space (top left & above) to feel like "a secret garden". The wallpaper is by Edge House Design and Jo's Signs by Design. The ceiling light was sourced from Poeme Lifestyle and the walls are painted in Dulux White Beach Half. Cowrie & Conch supplied the pint-sized table and chair, with a rocking chair and floor lamp by Love Baby Cot. Picasso's Parlour crafted the green shelf, and little Ever loves napping in her Babyhood Australia cot. >



**Source book**

**Interior design:** Design Studio 407, (02) 9558 8944, ds407.com.  
**Children's rooms:** Mary Ronis, picassoparlour.com.au.  
**Kitchen and joinery:** All Smart Kitchens and Custom Joinery, (02) 9564 6606, allsmartkitchens.com.au.  
**Builder:** JP Building & Renovations, info@jpbuildingrenovations.com.au.

**ZOE'S BATHROOM** Imbuing Zoe's luxurious bathroom with warmth are walls and tiles by Venetian Plaster Gallery. The Blue Space supplied all the bathroom ware, including the stunning Cassa Design fluted freestanding bath and the Telbix Bally pendant lights in Antique Gold. A Freya candle snuffer from Mecque, a Diptyque candle from Mecca and a Thea vase from Papaya set the scene for long soaks in the tub.



**INSIDE STORY**  
**Zoe & Benji's home**

**Who lives here?**  
 Zoe, a media personality and creator of podcast 'The Deep'; her husband Benji, an NRL coach; their children Fox, five, and Ever, two; plus dogs, Mila and Lucky.

**What is your favourite space?**  
 Zoe: "My bedroom, because it's just for me. Benji has a gym and man cave, so no one needs to feel sorry for him!"

**What are your house rules?**  
 "Shoes off at the front door and kids eat at the table, but that's more of a behavioural thing. I don't want us to get super lazy. Apart from that, relax and do what you want"

**Any renovation lessons learnt?**  
 "We pulled our old kitchen up after we laid the floors, so we had to get the flooring back in, which cost extra and was finicky. I'd also get a project manager."



ARTWORK: ARTIST UNKNOWN. ACTUAL PAINT COLOUR MAY VARY ON APPLICATION

1. Its matte finish keeps the Samsung Bespoke French-door fridge pristine.
2. An Oli O artwork shines above the custom Living In Style dresser. The tactile flooring is from Carpet Court.
3. The bedsides were named after Zoe and added to the Living In Style range.
4. The kids' bathroom vanities, sinks, taps, mirrors and pendant light were all sourced from The Blue Space. The hand towel is from Oliver Thom.
5. A 'Surrey' canvas art print from Urban Road enhances this living room vignette.
6. Benji's ensuite is masculine, thanks to Amber floor and wall tiles. Towels are by Saardé, with products from Oliver Thom.
7. Living In Style furnished Zoe's room.