

# *Your* LIFE

## COOKING & COUTURE

*Designer Rami Al Ali opens the doors to his Marina apartment, a modern musée where he indulges his passion for fashion and food*

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Rami's long-time fashion friend Dalia Dogmoch Soubra whips up a culinary storm



**S**ave for the warm laughter of his good friend Dalia Dogmoch Soubra emanating from the kitchen and the scattering of tell-tale personal accoutrements (racks of dusty jazz mix tapes and a stack of well-thumbed fashion books), it would be easy to mistake Rami Ali's Dubai Marina apartment for a modern metropolitan musée.

With pristine shades of neutral, fused with rapier-clean lines and stunning original artwork, the only nod to clutter is the fascinating collection of vintage artifacts on display: an eclectic mix of antiques picked up from trips abroad and sentimental gifts from fashion friends (like the vintage look gramophone, given to him by Jelena Jakovljevic Bin Draï). It's a deliberate and satisfying juxtaposition of old and new.

"I like modern, clean-cut, funky stuff, but I like to have a contrast. I want to see both: I want to see something very old and something very modern next to each other," says the fashion designer. The result is an overall aesthetic which is minimalist and pure, with pockets of colour, surprise and intrigue provided by carefully-selected, well-loved accessories. "I like neutral colours, comfort and a smart use of space," he says. "But I also love things that are old that tell a story; handcrafted vintage stuff to contrast the clean and very neat and very polite."

It's an inviting place, often packed with Rami's friends whose pictures adorn the walls of his home (today Dalia, founder of Kitsch Cupcakes, is preparing flavoursome lamb lions and a pea and mint risotto in the kitchen). "Food is all about love and sharing precious moments. So cooking up a storm in the kitchen with a dear friend is priceless," says Dalia. "Rami loves food and so it makes it that much more fun."



A painting by Jordanian artist Fadi Daoud towers above Ali's prized collections of fashion books



An antique zippo lighter and calendar on display



With Dalia wearing a stunning kaftan from Rami's collection, it's seems they've found the perfect partnership. "I love the timeless elegance of this beautiful kaftan," says Dalia, presenting a tantalising dessert of creamy vanilla mascarpone with strawberries. She adds, "Fashion and food are all about passion at the end of the day, and that is why they go so well together. If you truly love what you do, you will create fabulous things, like beautiful dresses and scrumptious dishes!"

Much of the charm of Rami's city space lies in the fact that he adheres to a strict code when it comes to flooring and furniture (he admits he is border-line 'OCD' on the correct positioning and shape of such dominate items), but rips up the rule book when it comes to accessories. "I'm very much into geometric lines at home. The couch, the curtains, the flooring... everything needs to come in line. I use colour to bring light, but not to be the main focus. I don't put strong colours on furniture but I put it in accessories. From small, kitsch souvenirs from my travels to prints... they add quiriness," he muses. ➤

Rami's old-look gramophone (above) has a tape deck so he can play his collection of classical and jazz mix tapes (right), while a set of black and white ballet images speaks to his love of photography



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RAMI AL ALI



The neutral décor is accented with a gold map of Dubai by Abbas Akhavan and other works by Syrian painter Fateh Moudarres

Rami accents his neutral dining area with a small posy of beautiful blooms

“Fashion and food are all about passion at the end of the day, and that is why they go so well together.”

DALIA DOGMACH SOUBRA



Unsurprisingly then, it's a home saturated in contrast: an antique rug lies playfully on an impeccable white floor; kitsch Japanese dolls sit proudly on a sleek, contemporary black cabinet; a colourful posy of blooms pops from a simple metal vase... "I got that vase in Germany. I love the line, and I love to have flowers in metal. I like the contrast of that delicacy with something very strong and cool."



Above: Rami's treasure trove of trinkets includes several Buddhas and a music box from Prague

This play on contrast is echoed in Rami's designs. With innovative fabrics sourced from famed Swiss textile house Jakob Schlaepfer, his S/S13 gowns are an easy mix of strong and masculine with the soft and feminine. "What attracted me was the contrast. When you see the fabric it looks very metal, very strong, but when you touch it, it's really light. I love that trick," says Rami.

His collections have graced the runways of Paris Couture Fashion Week, and have been paraded by the A-list on the red carpet at this year's Golden Globes and at the Oscars. But even on the international stage, Rami continues to be inspired by his Middle Eastern roots. At his first Parisian couture show, models walked the runway in traditional Syrian sandals, decorated in mother of pearl (the shoes are now on display in his home).

Perhaps because it was his father's profession, Rami's couture collection is also intrinsically linked with architecture – and his shelves are lined with books on the subject. "It's very graphic, the structure of the gown. I would say it is very architectural."

It makes sense then that Rami chose the Marina as his base three years ago, so he could watch the new city rise up from the desert around him. "I love how modern it is and how new it all was three years ago. I love modern cities like Tokyo or New York, the big buildings. And I like the contrast in Dubai between buildings, beach, cafés and entertainment. It's the perfect scene here." We couldn't agree more. ■



Above: Rami relaxes in traditional Syrian male dress. Right: One of his stunning S/S13 haute couture gowns on display

