



Scott Sanders's dachshund, Bailey, awaits guests at his poolside cabana at the Reef.

VIEW WITH A ROOM

This Old Thing?

In Palm Beach, the retro beach cabana is now the height of fashion



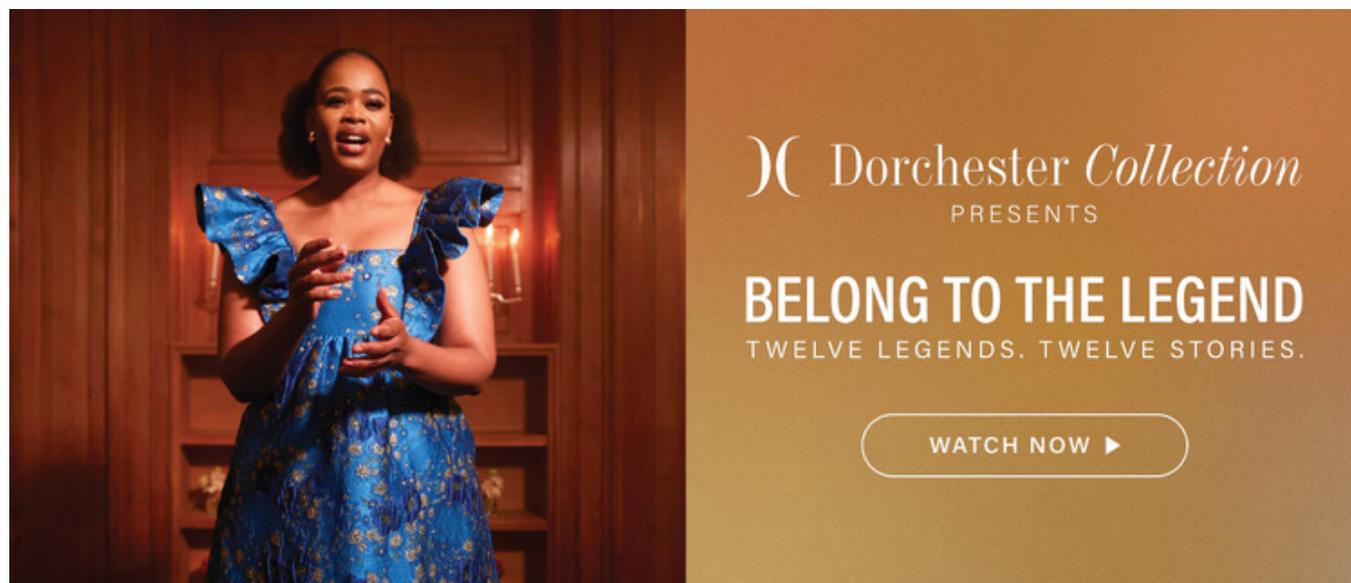
BY HOLLY PETERSON

MARCH 19, 2022

READING TIME: 3 MINUTES



As a newcomer to Palm Beach this season, I've roamed incognito on the rarefied patios trying to find my crowd. At most gatherings, women covered in A-frame pink-magnolia fabric and grown men in lime-green pants smile at me as if they'd just sucked on a lemon. My gut reaction: *These people have got to be kidding*. But they are not.



Palm Beach social life is very regimented and rule oriented, but this contrarian rule breaker decided to keep an open mind. *Everything* is taken seriously here. Matching the yarn of the alligator on an Everglades Club needlepoint belt with the stitching on one's Stubbs & Wootton velvet slippers is de rigueur.

After digging into the party scene further, I discovered that, sometimes, earnest effort can be a *good thing*. Nowhere is Palm Beach camp more fun than in the poolside- and oceanfront-cabana scene.





Cabanas surround a pool (with a view) at the Bath & Tennis Club.

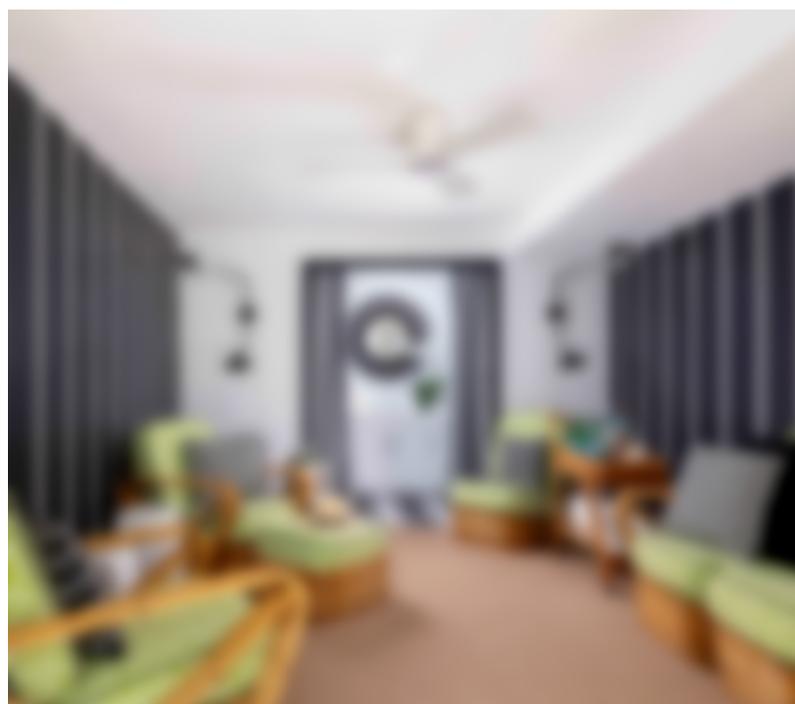
Inside these three-walled structures, I discovered a Palm Beach social scene transformed and transfused with new people and new vivacity. Forget those ossified old-guard types; their money ran out a generation ago and they are just grumpy.

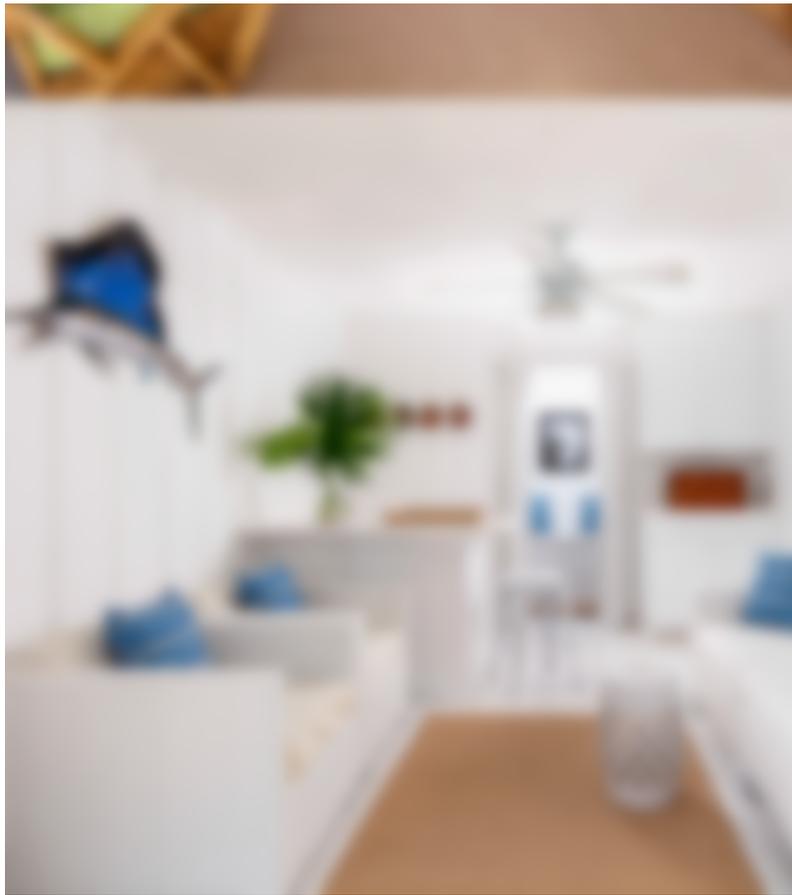
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“If you want to find out what’s going on, go down to the cabanas at wine time, when you see the Florida sky turn rose in the west,” advises Tom Shaffer, Palm Beach director of the interior-design firm Rinfret, Ltd. “People are in a good mood.” Smaller and more European than a pool house, the good cabanas here are often styled for vigorous entertaining.



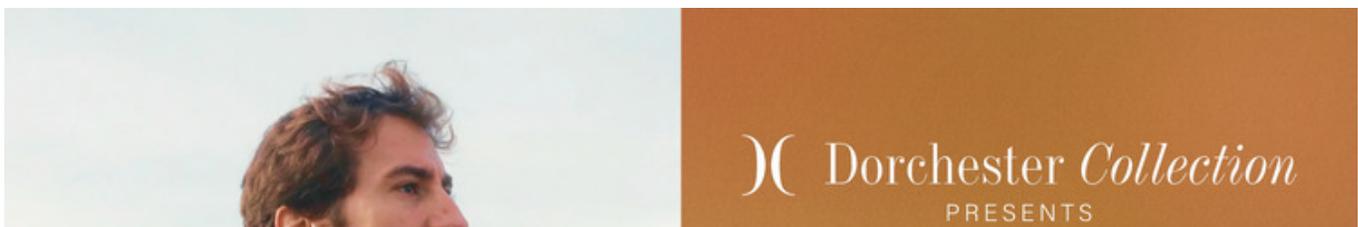
“Cabanas are a sign of status, because there are always more members than cabanas,” explains Ryan Williams, executive vice president of the Targeted Victory marketing agency (and my Florida anthropological guru). “If you have a cabana at your country club or by your apartment-building pool, you’ve gotten into the club within the club.”





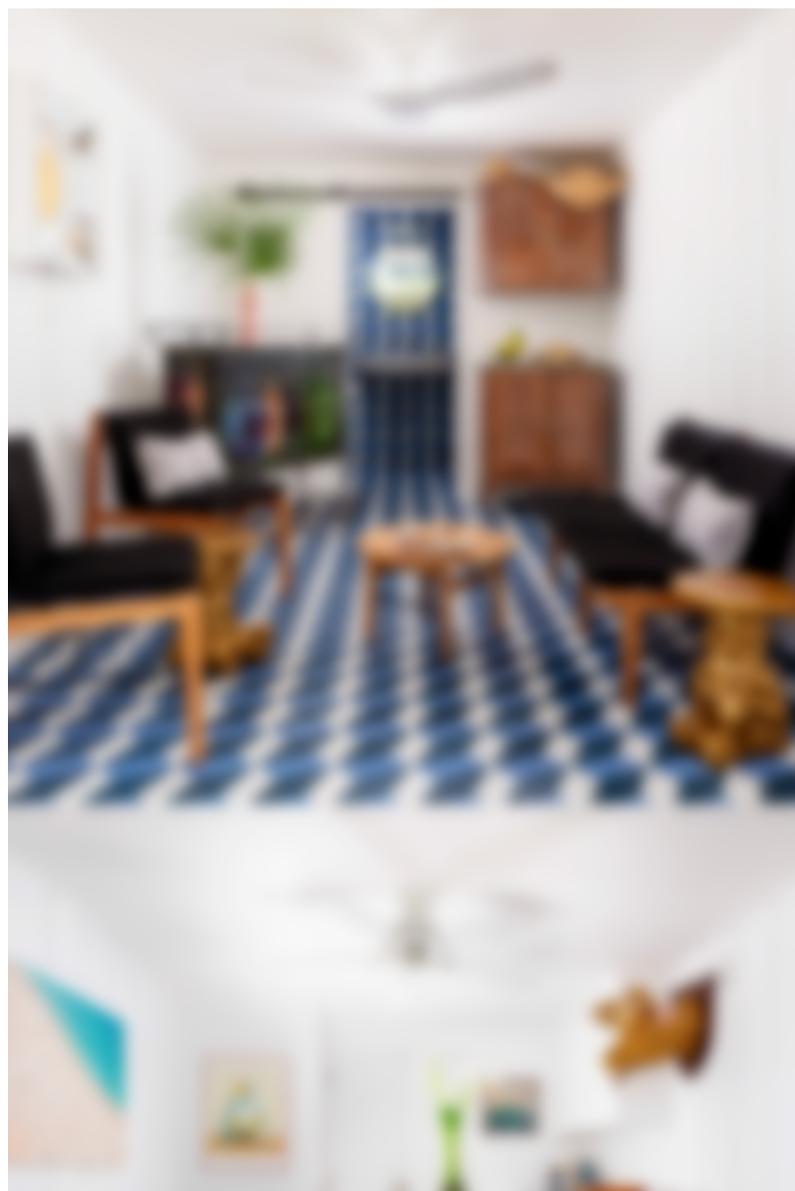
Top, a vintage suite of old-world Palm Beach-y seating is offset by a graphic black-and-white wall; *above*, a *Gilligan's Island*-themed cabana, located in a residential building on South Ocean Boulevard, is a venue for many crowded cocktail parties.

Cabanas have always been part of Palm Beach society. My preppiest-of-the-preppy friend remembers her neighbors in the 1960s and 1970s gathered at her beach-association cabana at the end of her father's sandy lane. "North of town by all those streets with the bird names—Mockingbird Trail, Nightingale Trail—each street had their own beach structure," she reminisces. (A few streets still do.) "Past town near the Kennedy compound and the Phipps estate. WASP-y, bare-bones ... that was part of the charm."





A cabana at a Palm Beach apartment building is very different from the forlorn, look-alike-cabanas ethos at a country club. Turns out that upping the ante on one's cabana game is a competitive, *serious* sport in the best way. Many poolside cabanas here (and at private homes) are filled with whimsical designs and accoutrements.





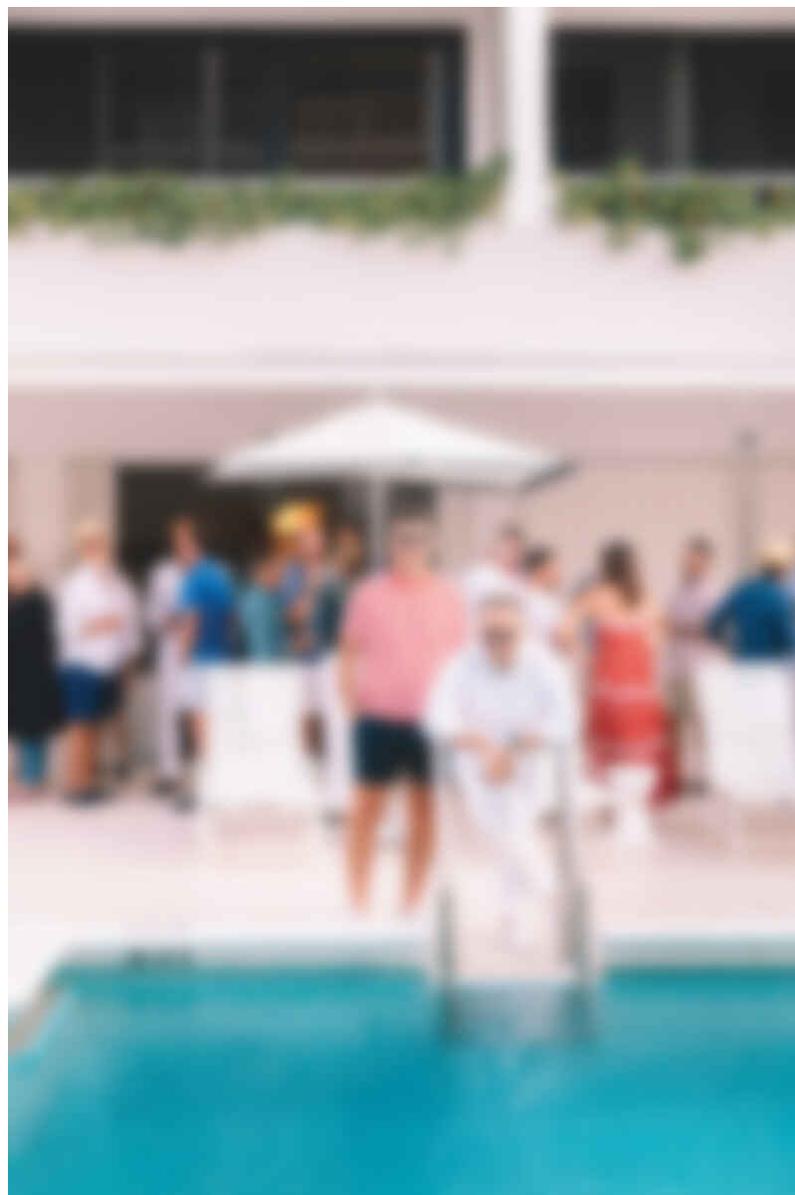
Top, the hand-painted tile bar was found after a years-long search; *above*, kitschy accents against an otherwise neutral color scheme.

At the apartment building on South Ocean Boulevard where I spend my time, entertaining author and designer Steven Stolman, also famous on the Eastern Seaboard for his legendary cheese puffs, can be spotted in his cabana, styled with full-on camp. His *Gilligan's Island*-themed abode comes complete with framed photographs of Lovey and Thurston Howell III, Ginger, and Mary Ann. He's also added shrunken coconut heads, and a fancy, stocked bar.



“Our ‘Cabana Crawl’ morphed over the years into this hysterical cocktail train of guests where anyone is invited,” explains poolside partier Scott Sanders, an interior designer with offices in Palm Beach and New York. “They are always wildly

successful: each cabana has a signature drink and food. I serve my father's famous party food, called Charlie's Chip Dip, with a top-secret recipe from our family's 1940s Sanders Dairy in Ohio. My friends call it the "crack dip." It can *only* be served with Ruffles potato chips—*the ones with the ridges!*"



Steven Stolman (in foreground) hosts a pool party in 2021.

Told you—Palm Beach social life is structured everywhere you turn, down to the *exact texture* of a chip. You just have to ignore the dreary pink-and-green-attired crowd, who believe their undefeated Exeter squash season still counts. If you come, go hunt for the refreshing cabana scene, with their modern ideas about what to do

when—rules you'll actually enjoy following.

SCOTT SANDERS'S SPIKED ARNOLD PALMER

2 oz. Tito's vodka
1 oz. fresh lemon juice
2 tsp. simple syrup made with brown sugar
2 oz. cold water
3 oz. freshly brewed Pure Leaf iced tea, chilled
Small saucer filled with raw brown sugar
Small saucer filled with lemon juice

Swirl rim of a festive pool glass in lemon juice, then swirl glass in raw brown sugar. Add ice to glass. In a separate glass, add iced tea, vodka, water, lemon juice, and a good dash of simple syrup. Stir or shake, and pour into the festive pool glass. Serve in a frosted plastic cup with a turquoise-and-white-striped paper straw, a lemon wheel on the rim, and a sprig of mint.

AS THE CABANA CRAWL CONTINUES, THE DRINKS BECOME LESS FUSSY ...

Take two cups of Paul Newman's Lemonade made hastily in a pitcher. Add two cups of Pure Leaf iced tea ... or any iced tea. Pour in a generous glub-glub of vodka, and garnish with a lemon slice and mint. Or not!

STEVEN STOLMAN'S PALM BEACH CHEESE PUFFS

Makes six dozen

1 loaf Pepperidge Farm white sandwich bread
½ cup olive oil
¾ cup mayonnaise
¾ cup finely grated Parmesan cheese
1 tbs. grated sweet onion
Preheat the oven to 375 degrees

With a ½-inch round cookie cutter, cut rounds from slices of bread. Place bread rounds on a half-sheet pan lined with parchment paper, and brush with oil. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, until golden. Transfer rounds to a cooling rack. Mix mayonnaise, cheese, and onion in a small bowl. Transfer cheese mixture into a pastry bag, or a ziplock bag with one corner snipped. Pipe mixture onto each round. Bake for 15 minutes, until golden and bubbly. Serve on a round glass dish or silver tray, with a paper doily.

Holly Peterson is the author of The Manny, It's Hot in the Hamptons, and It Happens in the Hamptons. She has contributed to The New York Times, the Financial Times, Vogue, Departures, and numerous other publications

Photos: © Nickolas Sargent/Set design by Sean Mellyn (cabanas); Nicholas Mele (Stolman)

