



The red theme in the large, open kitchen (left) in Candelaria Silva and Tessil Collins's Dorchester house was Silva's idea. Work by local artists as well as portraits and art pieces that reflect the couple's shared heritage are displayed in their home. (Globe Staff Photos / Michele McDonald)

AT HOME WITH

## New dawn for a couple and their charming old house

### Life at Home With Candelaria Silva and Tessil Collins

By Leigh Belanger, Globe Correspondent | December 23, 2004

Candelaria Silva loves to point out the hitching post in front of her Dorchester home. A visitor might not notice the heavy old peg in the ground, but there it is by the front steps, an iron reminder of a time when travelers on this tidy street near Adams Village were driving buggies, not cars. "I love that kind of history," says Silva.

ADVERTISEMENT Silva, 50, and her husband, Tessil Collins, 52, bought their home a year ago. This is their first Christmas in the house, which is decorated with angels and

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The newlyweds are spending their first Christmas in their new home.

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smells of fresh pine from the sparkly tree in the corner of the living room. The couple, who were married Dec. 11, "haven't decided whether we'll invite people or whether we'll just snuggle in together" for the holiday, says Silva.

Since they've lived here, Silva and Collins's house has had its share of visitors. Silva is the director of ACT Roxbury, a cultural development nonprofit that organizes, among other things, the Roxbury Film Festival and Roxbury Open Studios. Collins, a lifelong Boston resident, teaches communication arts at Madison Park Vocational Technical School and is a television/video/internet producer. At their house, the first either of them has owned, Silva and Collins host dinners for playwrights, filmmakers, painters, and others.

The walls of their home are hung with work from local artists. In the hallway, they have assembled a group of portraits and art pieces that reflect their shared heritage. Family portraits of Silva's great-grandparents and Collins's grandparents flank a print of an American flag recast in multicolored stars and stripes to represent America's cultural mix. A print of Martin Luther King, Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, and Frederick Douglass hangs below the flag.

Although the couple each brought their own art, furniture, and decorations to the house, "everything blends," says Silva. The couple's couches from their apartments furnished the living room. "We do plan to get new furniture," says Silva, "but I believe in living in a house for a while and letting it talk to you." In the dining room, Collins's plants accent the dusky purple walls. And the kitchen -- well, unless Collins brought his own red accessories, it would be hard to blend collections in the kitchen.

"I've had red for 10 years," says Silva. "Now everybody's catching up to me."

The kitchen's gray walls, stainless appliances, and slate floor are perfect foils for the riot of red accents Silva has added to the room. Plates and mugs are fire-engine red. So are smaller appliances, like a blender and a standing mixer. There are prints of tomatoes on the wall, and a cutting board covered with images of strawberries on the counter.

Just as her red collection suits the slate and stainless kitchen, Silva says the room suits her. She enjoys cooking more in this house than she did in her old apartment, she says. In fact, there's very little about their new home that Collins and Silva don't love.

"We had been looking and looking," says Silva. "We came to this open house. We liked it. We went to the bank and did the math and went, ooh-ooh," she says, wincing.

"We came back and it was still on the market. It was almost like a divine finding," says Collins.

Silva nods in agreement. "They always say when you find your house, you'll know," she says. "This was our house."

There was very little work Collins and Silva had to do upon moving in, other than make the house their own. "It wasn't our intention to find a fixer-upper," says Collins. "We don't need to do major stuff, but maybe just enough to say, 'OK. This is my house. I can knock down a wall if I want.'" ■

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