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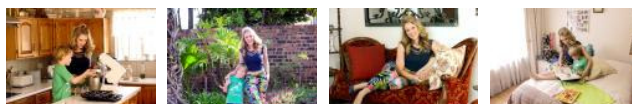
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## Pics: A former Miss Earth at home

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Catherine Constantinides and her son Matthew love to cook and bake in the large eat-in kitchen.



October 5 2015 at 10:35am  
Johannesburg - Sustainability and all things environmental are very close to the heart of Catherine Constantinides, former Miss Earth.

Her passion for the planet is not surprising, considering her environmentally in-tune childhood home and current address.

"We recycle absolutely everything. We have six bins outside where we sort our rubbish at source and a Bokashi organic waste bin, which creates fertiliser for our garden."

The Constantinides' home in Ridgeway, south of Johannesburg, is filled with family trinkets, childhood photographs and comfortable furniture that make the Greek home an inviting space and the perfect play area for her son, Matthew, five.


Built in the seventies, the brick house features exposed wooden roof trusses and is built on various levels. The garden has impressive vegetable gardens and fruit trees. Constantinides says she has fond memories of her childhood. "I remember picking strawberries and fruit from the trees," she says, recalling playing with her brother and sister.

Tiled flooring and brickwork feature throughout, with an alluring kitchen and dining area where the family converge during traditional Greek meals.

Four bedrooms, a vast pool and entertaining area and established garden absorb the extended family. Outdoors, birds are encouraged with large trees and suspended bird nests. Roosters add to the daily soundtrack and the bustle of southern Johannesburg keeps the energy outside in tune with the dynamic buzz indoors.

As a teenager, Constantinides envisioned a life involved with environmental work and motivating other youth to achieve their green ideals. At 16 she began her first business, SA Fusion, which sought to raise funds for the projects she believed in.

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Constantinides' life calling came when she teamed up with the international organisers of Miss Earth. After a few years of working with them and two intense years in Cambodia helping a local community, Constantinides brought the Miss Earth concept to South Africa in 2003, and was crowned the first recipient.

Since then, the title and the women who have been lucky enough to be part of the pageant over the 12 years have gone on to extraordinary heights.

"We want to know that every girl selected learns something that will impact them and help them generate basic life skills, including knowledge of climatic issues, social skills and how to fundraise."

She is currently a LeadSA executive, furthering the brand with her enthusiasm and relationship skills. And on Sunday she was announced as one of South Africa's 21 Icons, a series that showcases citizens who have left an indelible stamp on the fabric of our society.

A collection of gumboots, used on environmental excursions when her work takes her outdoors, take pride of place in the bedroom. In the dining room, alongside brother Mike's artwork, a set of accumulated Starbucks coffee mugs adds a quirky touch. "I love to find the mugs when I travel to exotic places, but sometimes kind friends bring them back for me."

She has always valued the open home philosophy. "This was always a place for everyone – some of them didn't know they had another home," she laughs.

"But friends and family were always first and we have so many wonderful memories of this home."

Constantinides was married for two-and-a-half years during which time she had Matthew. At the time, she lived in Lonehill, which she says she loved, but a return to the family home means Matthew, five, is exposed to his Greek roots. Next year, he is due to start grade R at Saheti school.

Mother and son like to cook together in the large, eat-in kitchen. Georgina, Constantinides' mother says the family are close and they have always followed a green domestic lifestyle.

"One of the things I am most passionate about is food security," says Constantinides. And the family have extended their dedication to green projects by starting a community food garden in an open area nearby, in addition to their private pavement food garden.

Greek lifestyle and a very real sense of family invade the Ridgeway home and Matthew's laughter lends a sense of exuberance, echoing Constantinides' love for the next generation.

\*I www. 21icons.com/

**Words: Samantha Hartshorne**

**Pictures : Bongwiwe Mchunu**

**Saturday Star**

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