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DESIGN

NEW ENGLAND

GATHER AROUND

THE
MAGAZINE
OF SPLENDID
HOMES
AND GARDENS

BEAUTIFUL KITCHENS FOR EVERYDAY LIVING

THE HOUSE WAS built using modular construction with a super-insulated envelope; the main rooms were oriented south to capture passive solar heat. A trellis-covered terrace (THIS PAGE) expands the living area. The design incorporates New England vernacular such as a covered front porch (FACING PAGE) and a steep pitched roof.



LIGHT,

LAND,



A modern farmhouse
brings creature comforts
and urbane style
to a rustic setting

luxe

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As

architect J.B. Clancy began sketching a country retreat for his longtime friends from New York City, he was looking for the right balance between modern and traditional. Clancy, a principal with Albert, Richter & Titt-

mann in Boston, refined the drawings with his clients' input, and each variation included more New England vernacular — a steep pitched roof, a generous overhang of eaves, and a covered front porch — while retaining light-filled, open spaces within.

"They wanted it to feel fresh and new but still fit in with the rural Connecticut landscape," he says.

What the owners now call their modern farmhouse sits high atop a rise at the front of their 112-acre wooded property in Litchfield County, Connecticut. A gravel driveway that winds its way up from the road follows a path beside an old stone wall.

This lofty perch wasn't the most obvious place to build their two-

➤ KITCHEN INSIGHT A PLACE TO GATHER

In designing the kitchen, the primary objective was to create a comfortable gathering space. One of the owners, the wife, recalls that even when they rented a vacation house with a "supercramped and dark" kitchen, the family still crowded around the table to hang out.

"We wanted to make sure we had a space with plenty of room for eating and lounging," she says.

The large public space is oriented to maximize natural light, says architect J.B. Clancy. Two sets of French doors allow it to open to the spacious terrace in warm weather. Interior designer Mary Chan persuaded the wife to install open shelving above the kitchen cabinetry. "I was hesitant," says the owner, who was concerned about dust collecting on the dishware. Chan persuaded her that dust wouldn't be the problem it is in the city. Now, the owner says, "I'm really glad we did it. It makes the kitchen feel more transparent."

At Clancy's suggestion, a small room off the kitchen originally intended to be a generously sized powder room became a pantry. With a second sink, plenty of cabinets, and a wine refrigerator, the pantry provides a place to stash the slow cooker, coffee machine, and other small appliances that would otherwise clutter the kitchen counters. The change makes the overall room "less heavily weighted toward the kitchen," says the owner, "and more relaxed."



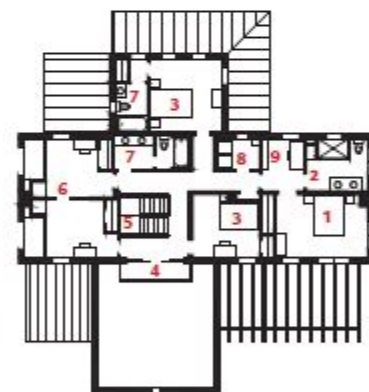
DESIGNED TO ACCOMMODATE multiple activities at once, the kitchen (FACING PAGE) is part of a central gathering space. Rustic materials such as reclaimed white oak flooring and barnboard on the wall add texture and a sense of age. A separate study (ABOVE) is a more intimate space, with built-in window seats on both sides of the fireplace.

THE KITCHEN'S OPEN shelving (LEFT) is a handsome focal point against the wall of reclaimed barnboard and a handy place for storing frequently used dinnerware and glasses. The island holds a cooktop, with a stainless steel vent hood above.



FIRST FLOOR

- 1 FRONT PORCH
- 2 ENTRY
- 3 POWDER ROOM
- 4 MUDROOM
- 5 STAIRCASE
- 6 PANTRY
- 7 KITCHEN
- 8 DINING/LIVING AREA
- 9 TERRACE
- 10 PLAYROOM
- 11 BACK PORCH
- 12 STUDY



SECOND FLOOR

- 1 MASTER BEDROOM
- 2 MASTER BATH
- 3 BEDROOM
- 4 BALCONY (OPEN TO PLAYROOM BELOW)
- 5 STAIRCASE
- 6 BUNK ROOM
- 7 BATH
- 8 LAUNDRY
- 9 OFFICE

BUILDER
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story vacation house. A large, open field deeper into the property and accessible by a grassy path from the road would have been far easier. But the owners, a husband and wife with three children now aged 8, 11, and 13, decided to keep the green expanse pristine, save for a tennis court. It is not easily seen from the house, and getting there requires a short walk. "It's nice to kind of discover," says Clancy.

To speed the building timeline, the owners hired Huntington Homes of East Montpelier, Vermont, which specializes in energy-efficient, factory-built, modular construction. The house has a superinsulated envelope, and the main rooms are oriented south to capture passive solar heat.

The exterior design was influenced by Massachusetts photographer Steve Rosenthal's book, *White on White: Churches of Rural New England* (The Monacelli Press, 2009), which captures the ever-shifting tones of white on village churches in varying lights and seasons.

THE SCULPTURAL STAIRWELL in the foyer (FACING PAGE, BOTTOM) is made of cold-rolled steel, oak, and LUMASite panels intended to read like a shoji screen. An illuminated stone "pillow" is by sculptor Mark Mennin. LUMASite also flanks the hall (FACING PAGE, TOP) on the floor above. At one end of the hall, a children's bedroom (ABOVE) has two sets of built-in bunk beds. A sliding door in the middle of the room can divide it into separate spaces.

Clancy enhanced the white stain with horizontal banding on the lower half and vertical bands above. The bands, he says, cast shadows and alter the tones of white at different times of the day.

Inside, rustic materials add texture and a sense of age. The spacious foyer, for example, has slate flooring and walls of reclaimed barn-board. Elsewhere, most of the floors are reclaimed white oak.

The foyer faces a sculptural stairwell made of cold-rolled steel supports, oak steps, and LUMASite panels. "We labored on that a long time and went through many iterations," interior designer Mary Chan of Bartleby Objects in Brooklyn, New York, says of the stair design. The translucent LUMASite reads like a shoji screen, but the "more robust" material is better suited for a household with three children, Chan says. A paper lantern by Isamu Noguchi above the stairwell subtly ties in with the Asian sensibility. An illuminated stone "pillow" by sculptor Mark Mennin beneath the stairwell glows a warm shade of orange.

At the front of the house is the kitchen/great room, the family's primary gathering space. From their experiences renting other vacation homes in the area, "we knew that, functionally, that was how we were going to live," says one of the owners.

A wood dining table with seating for 10 takes center stage in the room, with the kitchen at one end and a slate-front fireplace at the



other. A window seat generously topped with pillows creates a cozy corner nook. A wall of windows opens to the trellised terrace. “The idea was for there to be one big room where multiple activities could be going on at once,” Chan says.

An island nearly as long as the dining table defines the kitchen. Lined with white cabinets, it is topped by thick slabs of marble and houses a built-in gas range. Behind it, the wall holds open shelving that exposes rough-hewn wood paneling, more cabinets, and a porcelain farm sink.

Off the kitchen is a large playroom where a swing hangs from the vaulted 20-foot ceiling and two hammocks are strung from wall to wall. Art supplies line another wall, and there is a flat-screen television surrounded by built-ins on another.

A balcony overlooking the room from the second floor was conceived as a place for children to put on puppet shows for an audience below, Chan says, but proved too high for easy viewing. Instead, it became a quiet reading space with a sliding LUMAsite panel to close it off for privacy.

A cozy study completes the main floor. Here, window seats flank the fireplace. A built-in wood desk made of ash with thin-plate steel shelving was custom-designed by Mark Williams of December Box in Brooklyn.

Upstairs, there are four bedrooms, including a kids’ room with two sets of bunk beds built into one wall. A sliding door can divide the room into two separate spaces.

WITH HAMMOCKS SLUNG from the walls and a swing hung from the ceiling, the playroom (ABOVE) welcomes kids no matter what the weather. **FACING PAGE:** The pool house’s steel-and-glass pavilion (TOP) shades the patio; a green roof provides insulation and integrates the building into the landscape. A glass garage-style door opens to the pool (BOTTOM RIGHT). An outdoor shower (BOTTOM LEFT) has a ceiling cutout and a sliding door for privacy.

Off the terrace, stone steps down a slight slope lead to the pool area, where a steel-and-glass pavilion extends from the pool house to provide shade for the rock patio. On the front of the pool house, a glass garage-style door can be raised for easy, open access to and from the patio. A green roof helps insulate the building from the sun.

Another Mennin sculpture, this one a large rock with a sculpted impression that suggests a human-shaped indent, sits by the pool.

Clancy says the sculpture makes a warm resting place when it heats up in the sun.

From the back of the house, a walk through the woods leads to a sea of green — a mowed field for outdoor games, with another field and the tennis court beyond. The court is flanked by an entire Mennin rock installation that includes several sculpted recesses for seating.

Overall, the effect is what the owners wanted: a casual, not-overdesigned living space, plenty of room for kids to let loose, and finishes with the patina of age rather than the shine of the new.

“It was really very much about being away from the city,” Chan says, “and making things feel easy.” ■

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