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THE HOUSE THAT JILL BUILT

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INTERIOR DESIGNER JILL NAJNIGIER PUTS HER TALENT TO USE FOR HER OWN FAMILY

“It had to be East Orleans,” says interior designer Jill Najnigier when referring to where she wanted to build a vacation home for her family. Her parents have a home here so there was a strong connection to this section of Orleans, she says, “It’s a very special place, with the most beautiful natural seashore, a residents only off-road beach, and quaint shops and restaurants.

Najnigier, whose work has appeared not only in *Cape Cod HOME*, but also in publications such as *House Beautiful*, *Boston Home* and *New England Home*, was determined that this home would be casual and open, but with each room remaining its own space. Which is to say, the living room is the living room; the kitchen, the kitchen. They are connected to each other via inviting sight lines afforded by wide cased openings rather than by overlapping functions all in the same footprint, which would not have felt as clean.

The only room she didn’t make separate was the dining room. “I wanted it to be part of the kitchen, but set in its own area,” she says. “The goal was casual with a comfortable flow, and space to entertain and host holidays.” With holidays and gatherings throughout the year in mind, Najnigier says, “I didn’t want it to read like a summer home but rather a home that is comfortable in all seasons. It’s really so beautiful here year round.”

How and where the house was to be sited was critical, too. Part of it was about the water. Carry a light kayak over a short dirt path and you’re on Little Cove in five minutes. From there you can paddle out to Mill Pond and then snake your way through the water to a private beach at a spit of land right on the open ocean. In building the house, Najnigier also made sure there would be a deck over the roof from which you could see the ocean. Reached via a staircase starting on a landing outside the home’s second floor, the deck is lined with built-in benches.

Along with the water, there’s a wonderful sense of privacy. The house sits on a parcel just shy of an acre at the beginning of a small cul-de-sac, but when you look out the front windows down the long lawn, all you can see are mature trees bordered by tall, beautifully tended privet hedges. There’s not another house in sight, even though a few are close enough to go borrow a cup of sugar. It feels like you’re in your own private arboretum. From the back, where Najnigier’s husband tends a bountiful organic garden, you can catch only a snippet of one or two other homes from the upstairs landing.

As for the facade, she designed a front-facing gable with one side longer than the other. “I have always loved an asymmetrical side sloping roof,” she says. “That was my jumping off point for the exterior.” Indeed, the long sloping left half of the gable end forms a right angle with an outdoor side porch made majestic by tall white columns.

One enters the front of the home through an arched double doorway fashioned of mahogany, and the arch theme repeats gently through the downstairs like a stone skipping on the water. Just inside, an arched entryway immediately beckons one from the front hall to the living room. Then, directly in the sight line on the other side of the living room, another arch leading to the kitchen mirrors the one at the entrance. The two curves have matching keystones—"on the traditional side but not fussy," Najnigier says. They also have fine, restrained molding on the ends. Najnigier had the stone fireplace opening arched as well, to help unify the spaces. The walls, trim and ceiling are painted in Benjamin Moore Mayonnaise. "At first glance it might appear too yellow or too creamy," Najnigier says, "but when it's installed, it reads a clean, warm white."

The warmth is accentuated with oak wood floors finished in a

ultra-matte finish. "It's a water-based product that gives it a raw feel," Najnigier says. "It feels and looks natural, organic and warm underfoot." She picks up the organic look with seagrass lounge chairs in the living room and kitchen. For color, she employed an ample amount of blues and greens because she wanted the decorating touches to be a subtle nod to the fact that the home is in a seaside community, an homage to the fact that it sits on the Cape. "But in a sophisticated way," she says. Blues that are easy on the eye adorn pillows and other fabrics on the couch and chairs in the living room. A blue-inspired Morgan Dyer painting of a dory on the sea that Najnigier commissioned for the home sits on the mantel over the fireplace. And the hallway leading to the mudroom has a Pauline Curtis painting that's an abstract, blue-on-blue riff of clipper ship sails. For the mudroom itself, she chose a

whimsical-looking bench in a rich, arresting Kensington blue. She found it in an antiques store right in East Orleans, "It had been a bed from Sweden," she says. "The back was the headboard." Najnigier paired the varied touches of blues and greens with what she calls, "really rich neutral colors to add warmth and sophistication, so it doesn't read beachy."

To make the home even more just so, Najnigier commissioned a number of pieces both functional and decorative to fit in particular spots. For instance, the desk nestled into a cozy nook just to the right of the fireplace she had made by Old Biscayne Designs, a furniture company in Georgia that builds handcrafted pieces. And on the dry bar between the cooking and dining areas of the entertaining-sized kitchen, are vessels commissioned and made by Scargo Pottery in Dennis. She designed the wall-mounted console shelf in the mud room, as well.







The dining table is vintage and is her most favorite piece. “I was having some furniture redone for a client and saw this table in the shop that they were using as a tool table,” Najnigier says. “I asked if they were interested in selling it. The top is reclaimed wood from the turn of the last century, and the base is even older. If you look closely at it you can see the history and age of the piece. All they had to do to ready it for me was to give it a fresh coat of wax.” Over the table she hung oversized shade pendants from Visual Comfort. And around it, she put chairs from Restoration Hardware for which she designed covers custom made by her fabricator. The chair color—a pale, misty green—is similar to the color of the Shaker cabinetry in the cooking area—Sagebrush by Benjamin Moore that Najnigier tweaked.

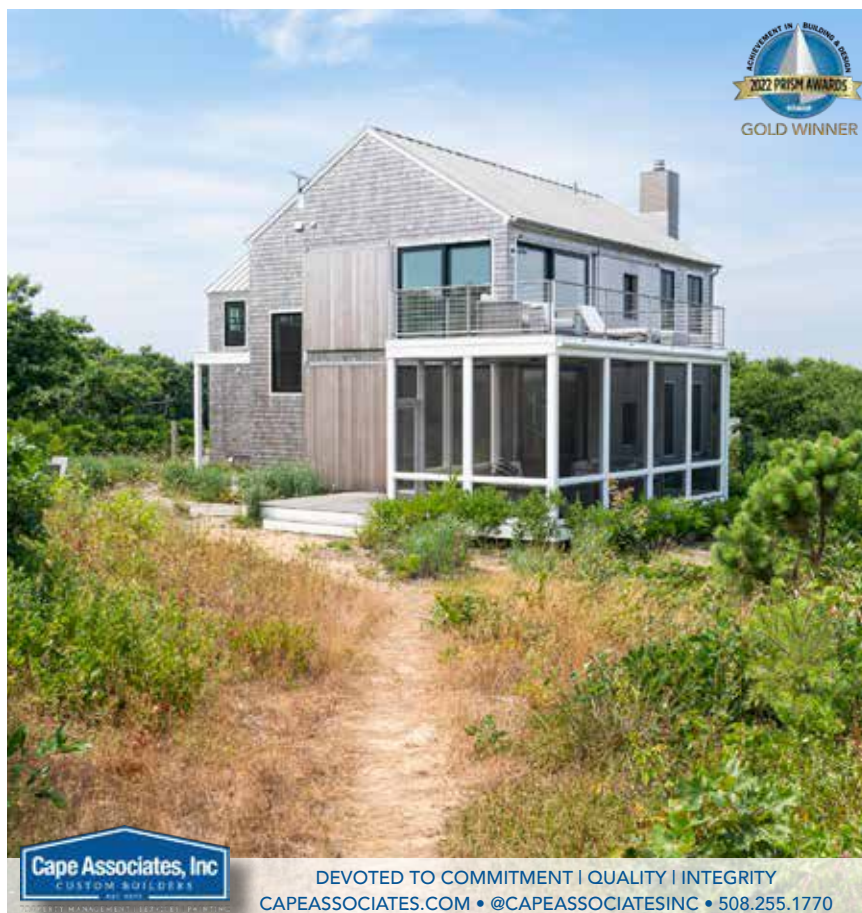
Sage green is also found in the quartzite topping the capacious island and the kitchen backsplash. Najnigier’s prefers quartzite because, she says, “it’s a natural

stone like marble but denser, so it's not as porous, not as vulnerable." The dry bar between the cooking area and the dining table has that same quartzite backsplash and countertop and Ceredo Oak cabinetry as the kitchen island, helping to unify the space.

Personal family touches in the dining area lend their own brand of warmth. Over the dry bar, three water colors from Najnigier's husband's mother's side grace a shelf. Painted in Latvia, they are almost 100 years old. There's also a painting of lemons that Najnigier purchased on a visit to Krakow, and a quintessential sky-over-water painting created by Cape artist Anne Garton hangs in a corner. Beautiful old glass decanters from Europe add old-world luster. Transom windows all around the dining area throw lots of light into the room, while sconces by the windows in the kitchen fashioned with handmade porcelain shades add more light still.

Light has a starring role in the house, which is why Najnigier designed the stairwell to the second floor to be much wider than is typical. She also had a beautiful oval window installed to directly let in sunlight. Details on that window echo the keystones on the archways. When you reach the upstairs, you find yourself not in a skinny hallway but on a large landing that serves as a lounging/reading/work room with a day bed, desk, and other comfy furnishings. "I'll work here for a change of scenery and quiet respite," Najnigier says.

A wing on one side of the upstairs has two guest bedrooms and a private bath for visitors. The other wing has the very large family bedrooms and baths. In the





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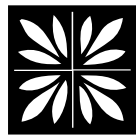
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primary suite, Najnigier had the chest of drawers and nightstands custom made. Representative somewhere in the coloration palette of sage, they add depth and élan to the room and make a warm, felicitous contrast to the pale green curtains that pool on the floor. Various touches throughout the home reinforce the residence's geography—framed arrangements of Cape wildflowers, an antique map of Boston Harbor. Najnigier likes that you can see it was a map and had been folded, “It’s framed authentically, showing the creases,” she says. She also likes that “the colors fit in perfectly.” In other words, she left not a single detail to chance. And now, up to the top deck to look over the trees and out to the open ocean while relaxing with a sunset cocktail. 🏠



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