



Making Memories

SV Design, Siemasko + Verbridge's reinterpretation of a lake retreat gives a fresh, modern look to a close-knit family's vacation house.

BY JANICE RANDALL ROHLF // PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIC ROTH

SV Design creates an inviting lakefront vacation house.



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Real Estate terms, an embarrassment of riches might be defined as having proximity to both the water and the mountains. This is what one family found on New Hampshire's Lake Winnipesaukee, a magnet for warm-weather boaters and fishermen that also attracts winter sports enthusiasts bound for nearby Gunstock, Loon, and Waterville Valley.

While the location was everything the family dreamed of, the house didn't match up. At first, in the short term, anyway, it didn't matter. "The homeowners wanted to enjoy the remaining ski seasons with their high school- and junior high-aged kids [before they went off to college]," explains project architect Katy Finkenzeller of SV Design, the firm that had previously worked on this client's primary, North Shore residence. So, the initial plan was to postpone a full-scale remodel in favor of a small renovation of the existing spaces—just enough to make it functional for the family and the way they lived. But when the demolition by Jason Drouin Custom Homes opened up a Pandora's Box of thorny issues, a plan B was hastily called for. "Where we thought we could easily rework, we couldn't," says Finkenzeller.

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The interiors are kept rustic with exposed wood, timbers, and interior barn doors.



The scope of the project expanded significantly, and the family got to enjoy a totally renovated home earlier than expected.

Annual trips out West inspired the ski retreat. "We were familiar with different types of homes that we saw in places like Montana," says the homeowner, "and SV Design guided us to get that look using many local materials and products." For example, maps of the Lakes Region were made into wallpaper for a powder room that also contains a rough-edged sink crafted from New Hampshire granite.

Reclaimed wood, some sourced from an old New England meetinghouse, was used judiciously to achieve an aesthetic that skews toward rustic but stops short of rendering the winter retreat a cliché. The idea was to "avoid the Aspen ski chalet concept and achieve a delicate balance between a lake house and a house that's used primarily in the winter," notes SV Design interiors principal Jean Verbridge. "It definitely has a warmth to it."

Indeed, in a wintry setting blanketed with snow the home looks inviting and cozy thanks to an inspired combination of cedar shingles stained a warm umber and liberally applied navy-blue trim. Previously shingled right up to the windows, the new façade is



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The house lends itself to comfortable entertaining. The aesthetic is contemporary New England. Living spaces open onto one another for intimate gatherings.

a departure from the area's ubiquitous hunter-green trimmed abodes. "It's reimagined and refreshing," notes Verbridge. The front door was moved slightly to provide a more logical entry and the front porch was stripped of its railing, two modifications that make the home more welcoming. As a finishing touch and to heighten the rustic nature of the exterior, the brick chimney was clad in a native fieldstone veneer.

But it's the lake-facing side of the house that wows. The water side elevation is "significantly modified," says Finkenzeller. "It's a lot glossier than before." Enlarged and expanded-on doors and windows not only capture a full-on picture-postcard view but also bring in more natural light. "SV worked within our budget to get something spectacular," says the homeowner.

Echoing the outside chimney, native fieldstone veneer appears inside on the surround of a wood-burning fireplace. The walls flanking the hearth were removed to connect the main living spaces. "Being open and casual, the house lends itself to comfortable entertaining," says the homeowner, who especially enjoys gathering her immediate family together with relatives who live nearby. "It's all about making memories," she says, alluding to SV Design's moniker for the house.

Care was taken throughout the home to maintain the ambience of a New England retreat while giving it a contemporary-leaning facelift. Having worked with the homeowner previously, the SV team appreciated her aversion to clutter and preference for unfussy,



easily maintained interiors. The site location's natural elements steered the selection of organic features. In addition to salvaged wood for the mantel, ceiling beams, stair newels and interior barn doors, there is an antler chandelier and a live-edge bench in the mudroom. "SV Design's attention to detail far exceeded our expectations," says the homeowner, and it was actually she who launched the kitchen remodel with her vision of a copper hood and preference for walnut cabinetry. Finkenzeller and Verbridge riffed on these elements by adding metal banding to the hood and wrapping the wood around the kitchen island—one example of using a traditional material in a more modern way. The warmth of the copper hood was the catalyst for the home's warm, muted color palette.

Even though the family intended to use the house mainly in the winter, they find themselves coming in the summer more and more often. "Since the renovation, we've been saying, 'Let's make more time for this,'" shares the homeowner. "We miss it when we're not there." ■

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