

inspired by
family

Just as planned, this Vermont vacation home has become a gathering place for loved ones year-round.



ABOVE LEFT | As visitors approach from the road, they get a dramatic peek through the trees before the Shingle-style home comes into full view. **ABOVE RIGHT** | Dappled afternoon sunlight plays on the walls and ceiling of the entry, inviting a closer look at the lake through the doors at the back of the house. **OPPOSITE** | To take full advantage of the sun, architect Dennis Wilmetts designed a two-story glass gable wall that fills the entry with light.



Life can be hard when a young family lives on the West Coast and the rest of the clan is back East. Traveling takes time—kids aren't easily portable.

Since moving to the San Francisco Bay area, this couple and their three children have trooped back and forth several times a year to New York, Pennsylvania, and Vermont to visit relatives.

But in 2000, they decided they wanted just one place they could go, a place where their entire families could gather. They found it in Vermont, on the shores of Lake Champlain—a destination that made traveling seem less like a hassle.

It was the property that seduced them: three secluded acres set beyond a grove of trees, with a broad lawn that slopes gently to the edge of the clear lake. With the lot came an inadequate cookie-cutter Colonial house. So they asked architect Dennis Willmott of Truss Cullins & Partners Architects in Burlington, Vermont, to design a new, relaxed home for the site.

They wanted the home to look open and unfussy, but what mattered more was how it would feel from the inside looking out. Together with Willmott, they decided on 4,450 square feet of casual, beach-house-inspired space. The house is a modern take on Shingle style, with rustic shakes, deep-green trim, and a shed-style, sky blue galvanized-metal roof.



OPPOSITE | It's not really far from the action, but the living room with its cozy fire and cushy chairs was meant to be an "away" space that is somewhat isolated. Visitors entering through the front door have to go down a hallway, turn, and pass the kitchen to get here.

ABOVE | "The more windows, the better" was the mantra in designing the living room. To compensate for all that exposure, walls were highly insulated and the windows are triple-glazed. This also created a quiet space.

Recipe for a Retreat

What makes a house live large and feel welcoming to friends and family members, no matter how many crowd in? It's all about space planning, architect Dennis Willmott and interior designer Kim Deetjen say. At a minimum, you need:

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| 1 | At least one great gathering place. In this house, the crowd can stretch from the dining room to the sunroom, and out onto the deck. | 3 | Dedicated places for quiet time, preferably away from common rooms. Remember, you're building a retreat. |
| 2 | Public spaces positioned near the kitchen and waste/recycling area. Plan for quick cleanups of large gatherings you will host. | 4 | Comfortable guest quarters that afford privacy—for them and for you. Place the master suite at a remote end of the house. |

Fuss-Free Family Kitchen

While many hands make work light, too many cooks can make a mess. So these homeowners planned to accommodate many chefs in the kitchen. Their advice:

- **Make your kitchen as large as you can** and build work zones away from traffic patterns so no one is tripping over anyone else.
- **Plan for an avalanche** of plastic cups, paper plates, and bundles of napkins. You'll be shopping at warehouse stores, so you'll need lots of storage space.
- **Choose easy-care finishes** and surfaces. As this kitchen demonstrates, durable can also be a good look.
- **Remember: The more sinks, the better.** This will keep your two trading aunts apart. And think of all the cleanup they'll get done.



LEFT | Guests can take a seat or lend a hand at the broad island in the middle of the kitchen. A butcher block top makes it durable, while a graceful shape and cheerful red finished board make it beautiful.

ABOVE | The orderly kitchen includes ample pantry closets in the far wall and narrow shelves that hold glassware.



The couple opted for an open floor plan, mimicking the layout of their California home, which they knew would sell for all the family. Noise travels freely, but the trade-off is keep views through the house, with light flowing across spaces.

A two-story glass gable wall defines the front of the house, bathing the south-facing entry in sunshine. The light draws visitors through the house to north-facing French doors that frame the lawn, the lake, and the islands beyond. "It's a light well for the whole building, creating one long axis to the lake," Willmott says.

The kitchen invites guests to linger: interior designer Kim Denton and project manager Deborah Bow designed the room to handle kids, traffic, and cooking. Open with dedicated work zones, the kitchen has multiple sinks and dishwashers, and a central cooktop. There's a large refrigerator and, close at hand, smaller cooling drawers for milk and other staples. Paints infuse the room with a blast of color.

People live a little differently in "vacation mode" than they do at home, Willmott says, so the house was planned to suit a leisurely lifestyle. For instance, near the back door is a wall of outlets for stashing flip-flops, goggles, and sunscreen.

ABOVE • The homeowners wanted a random life design in the kitchen, but that would have been costly. Instead, they designed a pattern that was repeated and related as they were set.
RIGHT • A gathering house needs a spacious dining room, so the owners designed one that could comfortably seat 12. The distressed furniture follows their "no-fuss" rule.





The upper level houses three bedrooms, including a master suite, and offers access to a screen porch and gallery overlooking the lake. Open shelves and lots of books, instead of closets, make it easy to see what you have at a glance.

The couple wanted a year-round home, so they gave special consideration to insulation, heating, and ventilation. All the windows are triple-glazed, and the lower level is vapor-sealed so it stays comfortable and dry.

How has the house been received by the relatives? A constant stream of guests is the answer. The house sleeps 10 easily, but it's held as many as 18 happy people. ❧

WITH MERIE LUTINA • DESIGNER KAREN LISBACH-BRYANT
PHOTOGRAPHY MICHAEL PATRINO

Shopping Guide, page A18

OPPOSITE | This is the best of both worlds. The screen porch offers views and fresh air while keeping the bugs at bay.

ABOVE | By designing a wide screen porch, deck, and upper-level gallery, the architect created multiple vantage points to look toward the lake. For those inside, there are expansive windows.

ABOVE RIGHT | This lounge chair on the deck is the best seat in the house—one of them, anyway.



About this Home

SQUARE FEET: 4,800
BEDROOMS: 5
BATHROOMS: 4 full,
1 half

FOOTPRINT: 50x65 feet
LOCATION: Shore of Lake
Champion, Vermont
EST. COST: \$2,000,000

❶ **Family mealtimes.** Gathering with loved ones means spending time round the dining table, so the dining room is nearly as large as the living room.

❷ **Inside/outside.** Another smart design move is easy traffic flow from the kitchen to the deck.

❸ **Kids' space.** The lower level of the house has been designated as kids' territory. There are bunks and an open room where cousins play.



UPPER LEVEL NOT SHOWN