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WITH ENDURING APPEAL



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Stymied in their search for an old house, a best-selling author and her husband build their own version of a classic New England shingled farmhouse.

TEXT BY DAN SHAW

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A homeowner and his designer conspire to bring a 1920s Tudor-style home up to date while preserving its fine craftsmanship and gracious spirit.

TEXT BY MEGAN FULWEILER

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In these Connecticut homes, the spaces everyone uses the most are as stylish as they are functional.

BY LISA E. HARRISON

ON THE COVER:

A Litchfield County house is a little bit country and completely sophisticated. Photograph by Michael Partenio. To see more of this home, turn to page 88.

A makeover peels away the layers to give a home in the countryside a sophisticated simplicity.

Pastoral Mission



○ TEXT BY MARIA LAPIANA

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○ PRODUCED BY STACY KUNSTEL

○ INTERIOR DESIGN BY CLAUDIA
KALUR, CFK INTERIORS

The step-down patio, just off the home's family room, is a favorite entertaining spot. **FACING PAGE:** Formal gardens, tree groves, and meandering walkways surround the New Preston house.





home in the country can, at times, be a little too country for some people.

This proved true of a New Preston farmhouse that won the hearts of a New York City couple in search of a Litchfield County getaway.

The wife remembers: “We were looking for something with charm, plenty of space to spread out, with all the important amenities—beautiful trees, a great lawn, a pool, tennis court, guesthouse, entertainment barn, and in close-to-move-in condition.”



They found almost everything they sought. The house certainly was livable. The centuries-old main dwelling with two additions—one a sunroom and the other a bedroom wing—had been substantially





A white-on-white hallway is punctuated by a sleek console and graphic zebra painting. FACING PAGE, TOP: The abstract painting in the living room is by artist Steven Miller. FACING PAGE, BOTTOM: The living room's large fireplace threatened to overpower the living room, so Kalur used her signature "chic neutrals" to scale back its imposing size.

In the kitchen, everyone's favorite gathering spot, traditional millwork and more modern furniture make happy companions. **FACING PAGE, TOP:** Walls of windows in the family room provide generous outside views. **FACING PAGE, BOTTOM:** The barn-sided family room as seen from the lawn.



renovated by previous owners. It even came furnished—a plus, because just five weeks after closing, the family would celebrate Thanksgiving in the house.

It was nearly perfect for the young, active family, says the wife. “We have four children ranging in age from five to fifteen, so having lots of space was a priority.” The glitch: it was over-the-top country. “The house was decorated in a traditional French Country style, with green kitchen cabinets and green walls everywhere,” says interior designer Claudia Kalur. With its plethora of distressed finishes and abundance of accessories, the look was just too fussy for this family.

So Kalur, of CFK Interiors in South Kent, was called in to tone things down. “We knew that with a fresh coat of white paint and an update to many of the fixtures, we could create a contemporary country-style home that better appealed to our taste,” says the wife.

That more modern, pared-down kind of country is



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Kalur’s clients ask for all
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The home holds many "country modern" vignettes, including a corner retreat in the master suite. FACING PAGE, TOP: The silver prints in the charmingly retro bath are by New Milford artist and decorator Ron Norsworthy. FACING PAGE, BOTTOM: A midcentury bedside table suits the master bedroom.



something her clients ask for all the time, says Kalur, who for five years managed Privet House, Litchfield County's popular purveyor of sophisticated antiques and home furnishings.

The designer says she is averse to labels, but when pressed, she calls the style "modern, country but chic."

"I see it in a lot of New York City clients," she says, "weekenders in their thirties-to-mid-fifties, who have an urban aesthetic. They want the modern side of country. And even among those with a more traditional sensibility—those who like art walls and collections, for example—there's a modern undertone to it."

To achieve the look, Kalur lightened up every room, bit by bit, until the whole house had been gently contemporized. The overhaul extended to the entertainment barn on the second floor of the detached garage, as well as to the guesthouse, an award-winning building designed by the noted Greenwich architectural firm Halper Owens some twenty years ago. The latter was refreshed with new furnishings, but at the homeowners' insistence, Kalur preserved its camp-like feel.

With paint as the ace up her sleeve, Kalur reinvented the compound without altering the structures in any way. She began with the kitchen, using her signature Benjamin Moore colors: Winter White on the cabinets, Dragon's Breath (a muted gray) at the back of the open shelves and on the island.

"Once we had established that base," says the wife,



"we built the rest of the design around it."

Kalur added to the palette as she moved through the rooms. "We wanted uniformity throughout," she says. "I started with the 'chic neutrals'—taupes, creams, and grays. Then we added the splashes of color. Black and white is a sophisticated combo that pops against the neutrals we were using."

The renovation evolved "piece by piece, room by room," remembers the wife: "light, bright rooms, no heavy window treatments, soft inviting fabrics, and nothing too precious."

Kalur may have avoided precious, but she didn't forgo special. In the living room, for example, she designed every piece of clean, modern furniture. And in doing so, she showed the locals a lot of love. "We are very lucky to have so many wonderful and talented artists and craftspeople in the area," she



“We play, swim, eat,” the wife says, “and maybe most important, we sit back and watch the sun set behind the trees.”

says. “I always want to be supportive and use them as often as I can.”

Among her favorite pieces are lamps in the master bedroom. “They were made by the fantastic duo behind dbO Home in Sharon,” she says. “I also love the live-edge coffee table in the living room that I designed with, and had made by, Greg Randall of RT Facts, in Kent. Even the bar cart—I designed a custom version with The New Traditionalists, and it was proudly made thirty minutes north of us, in Torrington.”

The homeowners are also great advocates of the arts and wanted work by local artists, says the designer. A favorite painting—a bold, broad-strokes work by Steve W. Miller, who has homes in New York

City and Kent—hangs in the living room.

The family enjoys the home inside and out, year-round. Gardener Kyle Shay, who lives right around the corner, has been lovingly sprucing up the landscaping for the last three years. “I have always loved that piece of land, with its natural outcroppings and slopes,” says Shay. She has spearheaded everything from revamping the vegetable and wall gardens to giving the pool area a much-needed facelift. “There are always ongoing projects,” she says.

The family enjoys the lovely yard and its surroundings just as much as they do the house.

“We play, work on landscaping projects, swim, eat,” the wife says, “and maybe most important, we sit back and watch the sun set behind the trees, throwing beautiful warm shadows across the lawn.”

The project took as long as it did in part because the homeowners wanted to enjoy the house throughout the process, says Kalur. Now that the transformation is complete, the family is delighted with what the wife calls the “clean and bright and inviting” new look. “Each room has its own purpose and gets used,” she says. “We have now replaced every single piece of original furniture with our own, so it very much feels like we are living in ‘our house’ now.” •

RESOURCES For more information about this home, see page 140.



The main room in the guesthouse is clearly rustic, with a handful of contemporary touches. FACING PAGE, LEFT: A view of the guesthouse, which sits up the hill from the main house. FACING PAGE, RIGHT: A welcoming guesthouse bedroom, dressed for summer.