

New England HOME

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THE NEW MOOD:
COZY, CHIC &
COMFORTABLE

Everything **Old** is **New** Again

A fresh design approach makes the familiar feel novel when a couple moves and totes along many of their favorite furnishings.

Text by **Bob Curley** | Photography by **Jessica Delaney**

Kicking your feet up in this unfussy living room feels natural, and there's ample room to do so thanks to the oversize ottoman, brought over from the owners' previous home and paired with a new sofa.



RIGHT: A landscape by Vermont artist Craig Mooney adds a splash of color to the dining room's quiet palette. **BELOW:** Barstools and chairs are companion pieces that unify the kitchen and dining area. **FACING PAGE:** The onetime dining area is now a bright, airy sitting room that feels like an indoor-outdoor space despite being fully enclosed.

What does an interior designer do when her clients want a fresh look for their new home, but also intend to repurpose many of the furnishings from their former house? Trust your instincts and your relationship with the client, says Justine Sterling, who took comfort in the fact that she had also designed the house the couple was moving out of, so was entering familiar territory.

Her clients were living in a waterfront home in Norwell, Massachusetts, when a neighboring property that was larger and had even better views of the North River came on the market. They decided to buy it, while keeping their smaller house for family members.

PROJECT TEAM

Interior design: Justine Sterling, Justine Sterling Design

Builder: Peter Bilodeau, Bilodeau Builders

Landscape design: Peter Bilodeau, Bilodeau Builders



In the chandelier-lit master bedroom, the most formal space in the home, an imposing bed is balanced with softer tones in the bedcoverings, bench, and divan. **FACING PAGE:** An inviting soaking tub occupies a sunny corner of the master bath; the gossamer shades provide privacy while letting in plenty of natural light.



Having only recently remodeled, the two were determined to bring as much of their existing furniture and decor along with them as possible. At the same time, they asked Sterling to conceive a casual coastal design to complement the beautiful river views from the rear rooms of the new home. “We had a jumping-off point because we could take much of the previous house and move it over,” says Sterling. “A lot of the design palette had already been established, but I tried to introduce some new elements to create interest and make it feel like a fresh home for the owners.”

Before moving and painting could begin, however, Sterling faced a dilemma: the new house, while oth-

erwise spacious, had an undersized dining room that simply could not accommodate the twelve-seat farm table the couple uses for family gatherings with their children and grandchildren.

Teaming with builder Peter Bilodeau, Sterling resolved to gut the home’s screened-in porch and build a new dining room in its place, opening up a wall so that traffic could flow seamlessly from the adjacent kitchen and retaining the space’s indoor/outdoor pedigree with floor-to-ceiling windows. The project included adding a pair of custom shelves to hold mementos and keepsakes, flanking a bar with a countertop stained to match the farm table. The practical benefits of converting the space into a heated, insulated room extended to the bathroom one floor up, which had been bedeviled by freezing water pipes in the past.

The owners were spared the expense of renovating the kitchen, thanks to a recent remodeling job by the previous occupants that paired white cabinetry with an island top of polished black granite for a crisp look. Sterling used matching woven Serena & Lily

🏠 The king bed’s placement necessitated some design gymnastics on Justine Sterling’s part. The solution: commissioning a pair of narrow night tables.





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Columns, cupolas, and gabled dormers give the front of the home a sense of formality belied by the casual elegance of the interior. Views of conservation land are appetizers for relaxed outdoor meals. A pair of wine refrigerators in custom cabinets and walls of navy shiplap make a compact but comfortable wine-tasting room.



☑☑☑ **Leveraging an empty corner of the basement, Sterling and Bilodeau created a walk-in wine cellar with a tasting table positioned before a large mirror to provide the illusion of space.**



barstools and dining chairs to put a fresh face on the casual dining and food preparation areas.

The former dining room became a sitting area with a sofa facing the river and telescopes and binoculars on hand to get a closer view of the birds soaring over the protected conservation land that runs down to the water's edge.

Sterling carefully inventoried every piece of furniture in the old house before designing the new one, which builds on a variety of gray tones with touches of sea-glass green and blue. Textured rugs and wall coverings connect the interior to the inspiring coastal environment. Strategically hung artwork provides vibrant splashes of color, notably Maine artist Craig Mooney's landscape painting in the dining room.

Furniture was cleverly repurposed: a pair of armchairs previously arrayed in an office found their next life in the sitting room, matched with a newly acquired woven grass table. Likewise, the room's new sofa is

tossed with pillows taken from the house next door.

In the living room, the oversize ottoman is a holdover; the sofa was custom built to match its bunk. The two-story expanse of stonework on the wall facing the sofa was trimmed to mantel height to better match the overall design and provide space for hanging a TV.

The king bed in the master bedroom was another large piece that made the journey across the cul-de-sac. Its placement necessitated some design gymnastics on the part of Sterling, who commissioned a pair of narrow night tables to accommodate the tight confines between a wall and window flanking the bed. A treasured chaise, on the other hand, was a perfect fit under the bedroom windows overlooking the river; a new chandelier enhances the room's overall feeling of relaxed elegance.

The bright and playful upstairs bedrooms were designed with the grandchildren in mind. Sterling eschewed custom beds and furnishings in favor of



durable and economical off-the-shelf choices in a room where fun, not fashion, reigns supreme. The grandkids get matching beds in gender-neutral colors, but rock-paper-scissors decides who gets to nestle with a book in the solo swing chair.

In a small, empty corner of the basement, Sterling and Bilodeau created a walk-in wine cellar with navy shiplap walls, twin bottle fridges confined within custom cabinets, and a tasting table positioned before a large mirror to provide the illusion of space.

Outside, Bilodeau re-landscaped around the entirety of the home, removing overgrown brush,

re-grading the two-plus-acre property to direct water away from the house, and strategically adding trees and other plantings to enhance the coastal feel without detracting from the views. Street appeal was noticeably improved with the addition of a cobblestone driveway, and an elevated patio edged by a stone wall yielded extra outdoor entertainment space, with sail shades providing stylish seasonal protection from the sun.

Blending old and new furnishings and harmonizing them within a new design was a challenge, admits Sterling, but, she says, “I think having a little challenge makes for the most interesting designs.”

Furnishings that stayed behind are now providing a starting point for the old home. The owners’ son and daughter-in-law live there now, and Sterling is helping them fashion a space they’ll love. “This little cul-de-sac has been good to me,” she says with a laugh. ■

RESOURCES: For more information about this home, see page 260.

🎨 Sterling eschewed custom beds and furnishings in favor of durable and economical choices in a kids' room where fun, not fashion, reigns supreme.

The playful, gender-neutral guest bedroom hosts frequent sleepovers by the grandkids. **FACING PAGE:** The room’s swing chair ranks as the most popular seat in the house (for kids, anyway); whimsical plates and a collection of bright and friendly coastal-themed prints bring personality to the white walls.

