



hen Ginna and Derrek
Milan first came to
Belvedere Island, a
quaint town on the San
Francisco Bay, they were
hoping to find a great
brunch spot offering a stiff
Bloody Mary. Instead, they found a new home.
With its quiet, tree-lined streets and amazing
Golden Gate views, Belvedere seemed like just
the place for the longtime city dwellers to
settle down and start a family.

Five years and two homes later, the couple found their ideal house on the island, smack on Richardson's Bay with a dock in back. That was the good. The bad and the ugly included a mishmash of Brady Bunch-era architectural features drowning in overgrown ivy.

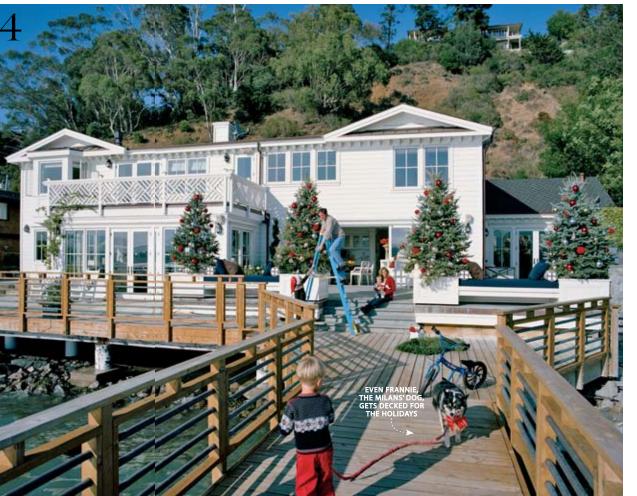
But Ginna and Derrek dreamed of transforming the half-baked hippie holdover into a breezy family retreat. And Ginna knew the right person to undertake the extreme makeover: herself. Never mind that she'd just given birth to her third child and had never designed a home on her own before. After meeting with a handful of professionals whose proposals











## we love...

1. FOLDING
WINDOWS! Hinged
and mounted on a
sliding track, they fold
back like accordions,
instantly transforming
the kitchen into an
indoor-outdoor
entertaining space that
could rival a seaside
resort. SHOP THE LOOK:
Windows, NanaWall

2. SOFT, BEDROOM-Y
HUES, like this fresh
white and soft blue—
lovely for a coastal
bedroom. SHOP THE
LOOK: Walls in Palladian
Blue (HC-144), Benjamin
Moore; Cranley club chair
fabric in Aqua/Nutmeg,
Lee Jofa

3. VINYL UPHOLSTERY, especially on dining room chairs.
The slick, easy-to-clean surface adds a casual, modern touch to the formal space. SHOP THE LOOK: Royal Coach vinyl in Lunar White, Donghia; rug, Madeline Weinrib Atelier

4. THE DOCK AS BACKYARD. In the winter, the Milans make s'mores in the outdoor fireplace and curl up on the daybeds to watch for sea lions.

weren't quite what she was envisioning, Ginna decided to tackle the project on her own.

The assignment took two years of planning and construction and two more of decorating, and required Ginna to multitask-working as a designer to make beautiful spaces and also as a mom to create an environment where her family can live, play, and relax. "There was a lot of trial and error on my part," she admits, "but it was so worth it. I love walking around my house and knowing that every piece is there because I love it."

The solution was a marriage of traditional East Coast architecture and relaxed, modern

California design. Ginna spent hours pilfering ideas from magazines and driving through her old neighborhood in Charlotte, North Carolina, snapping photos of houses. She took all the elements—a colonnade here, a white lacquered coffee table there—and rolled them together.

With the exception of the back patio and railing out to the dock, the Milans gutted the entire structure down to its studs, reorganizing the layout so the most lived-in spots—the kitchen and living room—would have the best coastal views. In the kitchen, a custom countertop extends to the patio, creating a bar area with a set of Adirondack stools. "That way, I can serve the kids lunch outside, and when we have a cocktail party, guests can mingle from





inside to outside and no one gets stuck in the kitchen," explains Ginna.

Indoors, she used a beachy palette, from a sea blue in the master bedroom to a cornflower blue in the living room. The only room missing a splash of ocean color is the dining room, which Ginna distinguished in a more formal way by using brown and mustard yellow.

From washable slipcovers in the family room to the solid, durable Brazilian wood floors, every surface in the house can take whatever the three children, ages 1 to 9, throw at—or on—it. "I don't want to be the kind of mom that gets mad if the kids put their feet on the coffee table or scratch the floors," Ginna says.

## what a view!

VIEW.
The sparkling waters of Richardson's
Bay—a shallow inlet of San Francisco
Bay—and purple mountains beyond provide a backdrop for the blue and white palette.
Sources: page 110

After years of being her family's interior designer, Ginna insists her favorite element of her home is the one thing she had nothing to do with. "Hands down, the best part about living here is being surrounded by water," she says. "It's beautiful and calming—and it feels like being on vacation all year long!"