

ON THE DOCK OF THE BAY

In Marin County, California, a young mother of three turns an old hippie hideaway into a welcoming home for the holidays





A spray-painted bench at the entry coordinates with the high-gloss front door.

we love...

THOSE FUNKY WING CHAIRS! Slender silhouettes make them a sculptural, modern take on a classic piece. The bold-patterned upholstery reflects the color of the sea.

■ **SHOP THE LOOK:** Chairs, Ironies; Shalimar chair fabric in Ciel, Donghia

BOLD BLUES It took Ginna three tries to find the perfect shade of cornflower blue paint. ■ **SHOP THE LOOK:** Walls in Sea Reflections (1664), Benjamin Moore

GOING FOR BAROQUE The intricate curves of the mirror and white lacquered coffee table add glamour to the traditional living room.

“The blue works so beautifully with all the light that pours into this room—not too bright but not too washed out, either”

—GINNA MILAN



When 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



THIS NAUTICAL-CHIC TABLE, WITH ROPE SPIRALED BENEATH A GLASS TOP, IS BY RALPH LAUREN

1



NO FUSSY DRAPERIES HERE—CRISP WHITE ROMAN SHADES ARE SIMPLE AND CLEAN AND DON'T DETRACT FROM THE VIEW

2



DARK BROWN WALLS BECOME EVEN MORE DRAMATIC IN A HIGH-GLOSS FINISH. PAINT COLOR HERE: SILHOUETTE (AF-655) BY BENJAMIN MOORE

3



EVEN FRANNIE, THE MILANS' DOG, GETS DRESSED FOR THE HOLIDAYS

4

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



ON THE HOUSE

STYLE White clapboard traditional with a seaside twist

SPACE The 4,300-square-foot home has two stories, five bedrooms, three living areas, a dining room, a gym, an office, and a kitchen that opens up onto a large bluestone patio.

SETTING Belvedere Island, a small town on the Tiburon Peninsula just north of San Francisco

VIEW The dock offers enviable views of the Golden Gate Bridge, Sausalito, and Mt. Tamalpais. "I'm determined to get my kids to go dock-to-dock caroling this year," Ginna says.



Ginna takes a break from decking the halls to work on this year's Christmas card.

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!

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.

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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!"