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# HOUSE & HOME

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# A Summer Place

Signature East Coast style meets breezy West Coast living in this modern rendition of the seaside classic.

By Kim Christie Photography by Rob Melnychuk

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The Valdes family use the back door as their main entrance, so architect John Hollifield made it a special entrance for them. Michael Luo of Earthrise adorned the porch steps with overflowing flowerpots.

*Opposite:* Simple accents give the living room a comfortable, lazy feel. Deep lounge chairs from W.D. Western Designers are covered in Schumacher's Stowe Texture celery-green chenille. Window treatments are Sanderson's Acorn fabric.

# Summertime.

Breathe in the air. It's thin and salty on the West Coast. Seagulls cry out at the tourists. There's laughing and splashing and all sorts of general mayhem down at the beach. And at the end of the day the Valdes family wander home, carrying the remnants of a picnic lunch. They sprawl on the porch, reading or playing with their dog Snuggie, reluctant to see the day end.

Their house was built for a day just like today. Its yawning veranda pulls you out the back door and into the sunshine. Bare feet smack against the chunks of slate that dot the property. And after an hour or two of digging in the garden you can pad into the house with little concern for the dirt you bring with you.

"That's the way we designed it," says architect John Hollifield. "It's a livable house. A house where you don't have to be concerned with whether or not your hands are dirty."

"We had a definite idea about the feeling it should have," agrees owner Wendy Valdes. "We knew the character of the house we wanted — informal, a bit cottagey. We wanted to stay away from anything too elegant."

The house is overscale, right down to the sofa cushions. The ceilings are high and the hardwood floors expansive. It's a light, airy house, sunshine pouring in through large-paned windows. Uncluttered and painted in muted tones, it's a house that owes its unmistakable rhythm to its architectural detailing. The Craftsman-style wainscoting, panelling and mouldings "simply evolved," says Hollifield. "A dynamic developed between the homeowners, the architects and the interior designers. The Valdeses came to us with a specific look in mind for the exterior but we worked out the interior detailing together. It was an interesting design process. The



Styling by Alda Pereira

*Above:* The architecture and design team (clockwise from top): project architect Shawn Blackwell, interior designer Robert Ledingham, architect John Hollifield and project interior designer David Clarke.

*Above right:* The house is painted a sunny yellow (Benjamin Moore 290). The grounds, designed by landscape architect Judith Reeve, share the same tailored simplicity as the house. The front door (at right) is an updated New England style. Coach lamps on either side welcome evening guests.

*Right:* The games table was designed by Ledingham Inc. and fashioned by Michael Trayler & Co. furniture. A Scalamandré Cork Plaid fabric covers the Shaker Country armchairs by Pearson.



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A rust-coloured wool carpet, designed by Ledingham Inc., covers the living room floor. The print on the sofa is Osterley by Colefax & Fowler. The fireplace is faced with Manitoba Tyndall stone, each piece carefully chosen for the precious fossils evident at the surface. The painting in the corner is by Jamie Everard; the one by the fireplace is by Barb Wood.



house developed its own character as we went along."

Wendy Valdes laughs now, remembering the very practical concerns that led to the painted wainscoting around the lower levels. She thought it would hold up best under the constant barrage of a house full of children. "We kept saying, 'It has to be kid-proof! It has to be kid-proof!' They must have thought our kids were hell on wheels!"

From day one this was meant to be a family home, not a showpiece. "In our last house," says Wendy, "our whole family was squeezed, day and night, into a little family room just off the kitchen. The living room just gathered dust." Here, the large principal rooms all open off a central hallway. "No one ever disappears into a wing," says Hollifield. "There's no family room, so the living room is basically a great room. It's easy to supervise. You're aware of where the family is at all times. And the openness adds to the feeling of size. That's the trend today. People want larger spaces but they don't want to increase the size of their homes."

Naturally, this larger-than-life sense of scale had to apply to the furnishings too. Interior designer Robert Ledingham and project designer David Clarke of Ledingham Inc. were brought in early on. "We were at the framing stage," says Wendy, "and it was time to choose the fireplace, but we couldn't agree. When it came to the details we had a hard time deciding."

Basically, they were beginning from scratch. Their old family room furniture was worn into the ground. The living room furniture was too formal for their new plan. "Every time we met with David," says Wendy, "he would have two or three directions picked out for us. There would be three piles of fabric samples and pictures of furniture and I'd always beeline to one. It was such an exciting process. Everyone asks me 'Would you do it again?' Absolutely!"

Rust and ochre oak leaf-patterned fabrics chosen for the dining room chair cushions became the basis of an oak leaf theme that runs throughout the house. Clarke photocopied an oak leaf on the fabric and used it to design the living room area rug. It's a personal piece unique to the Valdes home.

Ledingham Inc. also designed much of the furniture, combining elements of different pieces — an arm style from one chair, a leg from another — and had it custom built. They chose celery greens and rusts for upholstery fabrics. "We didn't want strong colour," says Clarke. "We wanted the house to be fresh, bright, livable, comfortable. Everything is mixed and matched so you can move it from one room to the other and it still works." That was especially important to Wendy Valdes, who wanted the furniture to feel like pieces that had been collected.

"You know the nicest compliment we've heard about this house," says Clarke, "is from people who ask, 'Is it an old house or one you've renovated?' And the answer to both is no. It's a brand new house."



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The dining room walls were hand-painted and stencilled by Rosemary Sleight. Chairs from Form & Function were antiqued and glazed by Creative Finishing Specialists then covered with Sanderson Falling Leaves and Oak Check prints. The maple trestle table is a Ledingham design built by Michael Traylor & Co. The roman blinds here and in the living room are Sanderson Pinpoint Leaf fabric. Candelabra from Light Resource.



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*Right:* The bright, airy kitchen by Kitchen Space is the hub of the home. The bar stools were found at Form & Function, then painted red by Creative Finishing Specialists. Countertop and backsplash tile by World Mosaic. The light fixture above the island is from Light Resource.

*Below:* A corner can be as perfect as a picture and lovely in its solitude. It's easily mistaken for a mirror but the painting is by William Roberts, from the Equinox Gallery. A simple white chair by Lexington is covered in Maxwell Fabrics' Labyrinth check. The wicker chest is from Palecek.

*Bottom left:* The bathroom colours are clean and simple to match the room's lines. Cabinetry from Downstview; light fixtures, Light Resource; handmade white ceramic tiles are by Andy Blick of The Plant.



*Left:* The guest bathroom is papered with Sanderson's Acorn print, from the Morris Co. collection. Antique wooden boxes pile beneath the sink add a warm country feel. Light fixture, Light Resource.

*Below:* This bedroom has the best of both worlds, a cosy fireplace and two doors leading out to the patio. The stained glass a custom Ledingham design created by glass artist Brian Baxter. The Palecek lounge chair and ottoman are covered in a Maxwell Fabrics cotton damask. The watercolour of boats is by Raymond Chow

*Opposite:* A bank of large-paned windows surrounds a sturdy breakfast table designed by Ledingham and constructed by Michael Traylor. Lexington's East Meadow side chairs were finished by Creative Finishing Specialists. Sanderson's Falling Leaves and Oak Check prints brighten up the bench. Light fixture, Light Resource. **H&H**





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