

A design team looks to Island Creek for  
inspiration in crafting a family retreat

# WEEK'S END

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**Previous spread: The home and its outdoor living areas enjoy panoramic views of Island Creek. Purple Cherry's curved design (above), achieved through angled wings clad in alternating Western Maryland building stone and white clapboard, maximizes the views. A cobblestone pattern embellishes the gravel parking forecourt. In the dining room (opposite), a Century table with a forgiving, distressed finish seats a crowd. A solid Perennials weave covers the fronts of the side chairs, while a Cowtan & Tout print enlivens the seat backs and host chairs. A solid Perennials weave covers the fronts of the side chairs, while a Cowtan & Tout print enlivens the seat backs and host chairs.**

Sweeping vistas of Island Creek, a tributary of the Tred Avon River, sold an Arlington couple on an idyllic, five-acre point of land in Oxford, Maryland. “We’re surrounded on three sides by water,” observes the wife, a community volunteer. “That’s really what makes this place so special.”

The pair had dreamed of owning a second home on the Eastern Shore, in part because the husband, an energy consultant, loves to sail—a passion their two kids, now ages 21 and 18, inherited. Unfortunately, the property’s existing 1950s farmhouse, which had served as the family’s retreat since they purchased it in 2004, did little to celebrate its surroundings. “When you opened the front door, all you saw was the stair,” the wife recalls. “You couldn’t see the water. We really wanted to maximize the beautiful view.”

With its choppy layout, the farmhouse also lacked a comfortable, open space for hosting large groups of family and friends. And its dearth of spare bedrooms and baths posed a challenge with overnight guests. After considering a renovation to address these drawbacks, the couple ultimately decided to build anew. They tapped architect Cathy Purple Cherry and designer Marika Meyer to conjure a custom escape tailored to their goals and needs.

The watery panorama dictated Purple Cherry’s site-sensitive plan. Curved to follow the shoreline, the house is one room deep, with a circulation spine extending from end to end across the front. As the architect notes, “Every single room is rotated to the incredible view and connects to the water.”

An expansive sightline to Island Creek greets guests as they step inside, thanks to smart positioning of the stairs and vast expanses of glass along the rear. Beyond the entrance hall, Purple Cherry set the open-plan gathering space—which encompasses the kitchen, everyday dining zone and living area—in the center core. She then built out from there with angled wings. The library and guest quarters sit to the right; the butler’s pantry and dining room to the left. Above, each of the four en-suite bedrooms, including the central master, boasts a balcony overlooking the picturesque point.

The winged design, executed in an exterior mix of stone and clapboard, imbues the new, 8,000-square-foot abode with a sense of history befitting its locale. “Those decisions—transitioning from the center core to the stone links to the white clapboard—were intentional. I wanted to reinforce the feeling of evolution and keep the roof mass down,” explains Purple Cherry. “Nothing about the scale of the home feels big; it’s a series of smaller pieces.”



*Architecture: Cathy Purple Cherry, AIA, LEED AP, principal; Brian Bassindale, RA, Purple Cherry Architects, Annapolis, Maryland. Interior Design: Marika Meyer, Marika Meyer Interiors, Bethesda, Maryland. Builder: Choptank Builders, Easton, Maryland. Landscape Design: Kevin Campion, ASLA, principal; Nick Ries, project manager, Campion Hruby Landscape Architects, Annapolis, Maryland. Styling: Frances Bailey.*





“EVERY SINGLE ROOM CONNECTS TO THE WATER.” —CATHY PURPLE CHERRY



**Clockwise from opposite, top: The kitchen marries Carrara marble countertops and an elongated subway-tile backsplash with custom cabinets from Pennsylvania-based Lyndon Heath Cabinetry. Meyer selected carefree furnishings for the living area, where she resuscitated existing club chairs with a durable, marine-blue woven fabric from Perennials. Purple Cherry added coffers to the great room’s nearly 12-foot ceiling to create a sense of history. In the casual dining area, French sliders frame a view of the reimagined pool and terrace, with Island Creek beyond.**

Intricate interior details throughout, from coffered ceilings to built-in cabinets, dovetail with the evolved-over-time aesthetic. Divided-lite windows, coupled with transoms on the first floor, feed the narrative too. “Most clients facing the water do not want those divisions, but [the wife] wanted the house to feel older,” reveals Purple Cherry. “We morph our architecture to our clients’ wants.”

The kitchen’s foremost must-have: double islands. One island serves as the food-prep station (where crab cakes are often in the making); the other, lined with stools, as a congregating spot. Marble counters cover the custom-crafted cabinetry.

Access to the outdoors also topped the owners’ priority list. The living area’s sliding French doors open to a sizeable porch, fitted with retractable screens, that extends their entertaining space. “The porch was the best decision we’ve ever made,” enthuses the wife. “This is where everybody hangs out, and it’s got a beautiful view.”

A saltwater pool, bluestone terraces and contextual landscaping enhance the scene. Using native plants, from lush grasses to flowering shrubs, Campion Hruby Landscape Architects created a Chesapeake garden to complement the natural terrain. “There’s a casual informality to the Eastern Shore landscape,” notes principal Kevin Campion. “We designed the planting to let that casual elegance just flow right up to the house.”

Inside, Marika Meyer, who also outfitted the couple’s primary residence in Arlington, found inspiration in the setting too. “We wanted the interiors to reference the home’s coastal location but not be specifically nautical,” she recounts. “The palette of blues and greens ties to the water and views.” The designer left the windows bare in the main-level public spaces. “Without drapes, your eye is drawn to the exterior,” she explains. “We embraced the sightlines and there’s a continuity from inside to outside.”





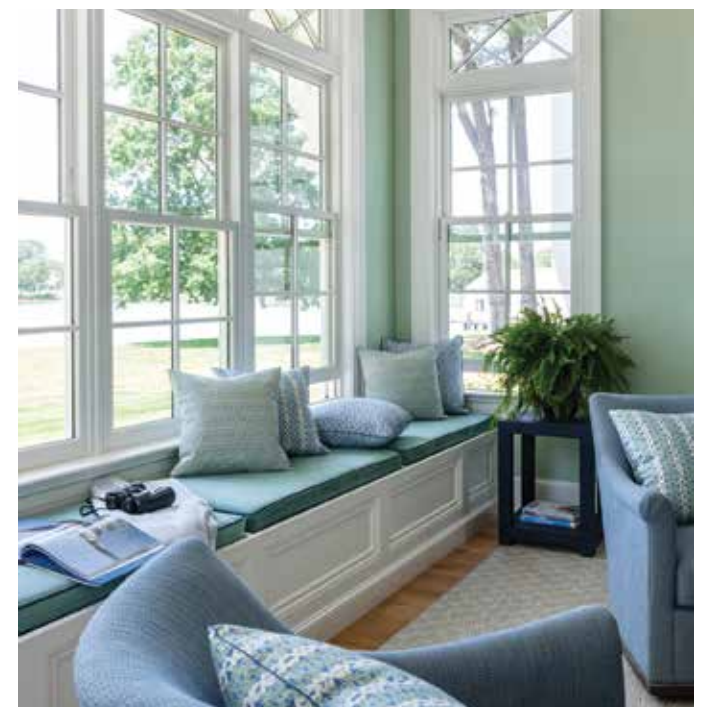
Wrapped in a soft-green wall covering from Cole & Son, the library (these pages) is the wife's "happy place" and a favorite spot for morning coffee. Four chairs from Hickory Chair swivel for conversation or view-gazing; their accent pillows sport the Dove Stripe fabric from Meyer's own line, Marika Meyer Textiles. The window-bench pillows are covered in various prints—Dove Stripe, Pompeii and Roman Fig—also from the collection. A painting of an underwater scene by local artist Jill Basham crowns the mantel.

Much of the designer-client conversation centered on the need for durability. "This is a family home, a retreat, and [the owners] wanted everyone to feel welcome and to enjoy the space without worrying," says Meyer. "The overarching goal was to create a happy home."

To that end, she instilled a relaxed yet polished sensibility. There's a mix of casegoods sporting anxiety-proof, distressed finishes, and clean-lined upholstered pieces such as the living-area sofa and ottoman—both sheathed in performance fabrics.

As the designer points out, "The furniture and finishes are care-free, but we elevated the look to match the integrity of the interior architecture."

The clan escapes often to their easy-going home, which they appropriately christened "Week's End." Reports the wife: "It's wonderful for family time." ↴







A woven-texture wall covering from Cowtan & Tout envelops the master bedroom (top and opposite), where Matouk linens grace the bed. Bespoke window dressings, crafted by Everett Design here and throughout the home, highlight water views. Carrara marble floors lay a luxurious foundation in the master bathroom (above, left and right); an MTI Baths soaking tub, paired with a Delta floor-mount faucet in polished nickel, sits strategically in the window bay. Lyndon Heath Cabinetry crafted the custom, double-sink vanity.





The daughter's bedroom (opposite) features a Lee Industries bed covered in a sporty Kravet stripe. The window seat, fitted with a twin-size mattress, provides a reading perch and sleeps a visiting cousin. French doors in the upstairs guest room (above) open to a private balcony affording water views. A Vanguard chair, with cushions covered in a neutral solid from Perennials, rests by those doors. A private dock and boat house (left) constituted must-haves for this family of sailing enthusiasts.