

# Cultivating A View

On a historic vineyard in Oakville, a new home redefines a familiar Napa style.

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**Architecture:** Timothy C. Chappelle, Arcanum Architecture, Inc. **Interior Design:** Margaret Ash, Margaret Ash Design  
**Home Builder:** John Rechin and Mark Rechin, Total Concepts **Landscape Architecture:** Dustin Moore, Strata Landscape Architecture



To live in Napa Valley is to be immersed in a storied region replete with postcard-like scenery composed of rolling hills and long rows of grapevines. Those features were a natural draw for a young San Francisco couple looking for a vacation home, but finding the right house was, for a time, a challenge. “The options they considered weren’t very inviting. They were all white and sterile,” recalls designer Margaret Ash, who had previously worked on the couple’s San Francisco and Mendocino homes. Because of this, she understood what her clients wanted and was not surprised when they finally chose a dated and worn ranch house over more “move-in ready” contenders. The ranch house may have seen better days, but the property, set within a historic vineyard first planted in the 1880s, was extraordinary. The couple viewed it as an opportunity to create a home tailored specifically to them, and living within the existing house for a time provided the insight needed to build the new home of their dreams.

“The husband has a ladder, which he used to get a better view of the property. Atop it, he saw the perfect grade for a new home, one he thought would establish an axial view of Mount Saint Helena,” recalls architect Timothy C. Chappelle. “And he was right!” Chappelle’s reverence for the setting inspired him to propose a family compound honoring the Napa agricultural vernacular without being gimmicky. “They wanted to be good neighbors, and this is quiet architecture that celebrates simple gable forms,” he says.

Working with project manager Casey Cramer and general contractors John Rechin and Mark Rechin, Chappelle developed a two-story main house clad in knotty Western red cedar and a separate stone guesthouse with two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a kitchen and a sitting area. “It’s not one big box; it’s modular and agrarian,” he explains, noting his penchant for what he calls “skinny houses,” one-room deep spaces that capture daylight and provide ample cross ventilation. “This house is a gathering point, so it’s designed for flexibility and privacy,” he continues. “The great room is like a mini hotel

lobby, and the guest rooms feel like a resort. There are fun things, too, like the bunk room.”

“They wanted to create an unpretentious estate for weekend retreats,” adds Ash, who, like Chappelle, sought to capture the essence of Napa Valley style in a fresh way. “We wanted the house to be casual, but not too rustic or expected,” she explains, noting that the home possesses an almost Hamptons-like spirit, a nod to where the couple first met in New York. The designer began with the color palette, pulling blues, greens, and natural wood tones directly from the landscape, intentionally keeping the primary spaces tranquil to not distract from the view. (Although she did play with bolder colors and patterns in the guest house.) But a mostly quiet color scheme didn’t stop her from finding intriguing pieces such as the antique Savonarola chair that punctuates the entryway or the rope chairs and sculptural wood tables by Caste furniture designer Ty Best in the living area. Ash says of the latter, “Those are the prize items. I knew from the beginning that I would use those tables.” Fine art adds an important layer to this home. The clients worked with art advisor Caroline Brinckerhoff to find pieces by David Hockney, Damien Hirst, James Nares and Adam Fuss.

While almost all of the rooms came together smoothly and as planned, there was one last-minute request: A home office for the husband. Ever nimble, Ash quickly converted part of his closet into a workspace, adding a concealed door to the couple’s bedroom for a seemingly uninterrupted wall plane and even giving the newly created room vineyard views.

Since the home was meant as the ultimate retreat, the outdoor areas were treated as essential elements. Landscape architect Dustin Moore was hired to design a pool, lawn, vegetable garden and a gravel courtyard strung with globe lights for alfresco dining. “We approached the grounds as outdoor rooms,” says Moore of tying the garden to the architecture. “There’s a story in how you go from one space to another.” Chappelle, noting how the olive trees and grasses soften the home and help it become one with the landscape, says, “This house doesn’t stand out. It’s less about being a trophy home and more about a simple existence with family and friends—it’s the epitome of California living.” ■



The Napa Valley vacation home of a San Francisco family was designed to reflect their youthful spirit. Designer Margaret Ash played with modern and traditional elements in the stairwell, pairing an Adam Fuss painting with a Savonarola chair found at Antique & Art Exchange.



"The color palette plays into the mountains," says Ash of the living room's muted hues. Rattan Palecek chairs, armchairs by Gabby and a bespoke sofa and bench are arranged around a pair of Caste tables from De Sousa Hughes. Above the mantel is a work by Damien Hirst. Sconces by Circa Lighting illuminate the display shelves on either side.







**Above:** "The bar is behind the kitchen, connected to the boot room," says Ash, noting how the wood paneling relates to the home's exterior. "It's cozy without being too traditional, and we threw in a little glam with the brass library mesh." The hardware is by Holland & Sherry, and the faucet is by Waterworks.

**Left:** Ash designed a custom table for the dining area and added cushions crafted with Perennials fabrics to the Palecek rope chairs for extra comfort. Over the island, which features sink taps by Watermark, are pendants by Allied Maker. The Wolf range is from Monark, with a custom hood by Steel Geisha Designs.





**Above:** "The pantry has additional refrigerator space and prep areas perfect for catered parties, and it also doubles as the laundry room," says Ash, who chose a dark grout to accentuate the handmade Da Vinci Marble tiles. The hardware is by RH.

**Opposite:** Landscape architect Dustin Moore worked with colleagues Sharon Finkle and Chelsea Zhou to incorporate the couple's favorite plants in the landscape, including Limelight hydrangeas at their bedroom window.





**Above:** "We wanted to use statement pieces in the bath overlooking the vineyards," says Ash, who chose a Blu Bathworks soaking tub and a coco shell chandelier from Palecek. Built-in oak shelving provides space for towels, bath salts and accessories.

**Left:** The couple's bedroom was given a Kravet-upholstered window seat for storytime with the children. Ash gave the custom bed Walker Valentine linens and pillows made with Galbraith & Paul fabrics, and paired the Lee Industries armchair and ottoman with a side table from Noir.





"The garden has a relaxed elegance because their requests were simple," says Moore of the couple's backyard wishes. "A lawn big enough to throw a ball, a pool and a gravel court for entertaining or pétanque." Natchez crepe myrtles were planted near the guesthouse, and a variety of grasses were chosen to provide movement in the breeze. The seating by RH is paired with Frontgate umbrellas.