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Annual Guide to Buying, Building, and
Owning a Home in the Green Mountains

AT HOME

in Vermont

Living the Good Life

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An Upscale Outdoor Kitchen
Old House Made New

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SUMMER ALL YEAR

Owners: Dee Dee O'Brien, Dennis Sanders
Location: Shelburne (on Lake Champlain)
Style: Laid-back lakeside cottage
Details: Guest apartment, music studio
Builder: Peregrine Design/Build
Architect: Truex Cullins & Partners
Photography: Carolyn Bates



ON THE LAKE

A house mirrors the personality of its owners, so Dee Dee O'Brien and husband Dennis Sanders must be a lot of fun. They moved to Vermont from Boston in the mid 1990s, and eighteen months later, bought a 1920s lakeside camp that had been converted to a year-round home in Shelburne. "The smaller cottage was pretty 'campy,' with a dirt floor and a woodstove," says O'Brien. "We rebuilt that building first, and then we lived in it while we were tearing down the main cottage. It was a camp; it hadn't been built to last. In the end, all we could save was the fireplace. So we rebuilt around that."

The new home is approximately 2,800 square feet. Upstairs has two baths and two bedrooms, including the master bedroom, which also has its own den. The downstairs guest room has a full bath. The first floor is wide-open and made for entertaining, with an elegant floor plan that flows from the kitchen to the dining and living rooms.



Stones from the property were used to build the original summer-camp fireplace, which Sanders and O'Brien saved during the renovation. The first floor is open and cheerful, with bright colors, hardwood floors, and lots of windows to take advantage of the view. Instead of paint, Venetian plaster gives the walls a faint, textured pattern.



The upstairs den has its own deck, and the door on the lake side leads out to a brick patio with a table for warm-weather meals. The exterior is extrapolated from a Scandinavian style, with shingles above and brightly-painted wood siding, in deep green-blue with red and yellow accents, below. "The architect calls it Swedish, so I guess it is, but to us, it feels like a lakeside cottage," says O'Brien. "It's a comfortable, laidback home that retains the original summer-camp feel."

The two-acre property now has three buildings: The main house, a garage that O'Brien and Sanders built new, and the small cottage they lived in during construction, now reconfigured to include a guest apartment upstairs and a music studio for Sanders downstairs. (An oncologist by profession, Dennis also plays drums in a blues band called "Left Eye Jump.")

Because the house was originally built so close to the lake, the size of the home is restricted by various zoning regulations. "We don't mind at all," says O'Brien. "We never considered moving it back so we could build it bigger. The house was sited perfectly the first time around."

In summer, Dee Dee and Dennis—and their teenage daughter, Annelise—pretty much live outside. They have a 28-foot sailboat, several kayaks, "and every other water toy you can imagine," says O'Brien. "Most people take their family vacation in summer, but we never want to leave—it's a fun time to be home. When we first moved to Vermont from the city, we didn't think we would wind up living on the lake. But once we got here and started looking around, we got pretty serious about doing that. It's a great home and a great place to live."

GOOD LIFE rooms that make life more fun...



This custom mudroom, by Peregrine Design/Bulld, has hanging hooks, drawers, and cubbies for all kinds of outdoor gear, from muddy boots to mittens. (On the other side of the room is a built-in ski and snowboard rack.) The stone floor is easy to mop.

