

Eastern Exposure

A young family with East Coast roots and California soul builds a house that bridges the divide.



Cedar shingles, barn wood and a wrap-around porch aren't the typical architectural features one expects to find in Manhattan Beach. But leave it to East Coast natives Mike and Christie Newman to seamlessly blend their familiar signs of home into the neighborhood.

"We both grew up in central Pennsylvania, spent time on the New England coast and always loved the architecture," says Mike of the couple's design inspiration that was packed with nods to Nantucket. "We appreciate the different styles, from Spanish and Italian to modern, but we wanted to bring something that felt comfortable for our family."

For the Newman family of four (plus two dogs, two cats and one bird), home meant a 5,000-square-foot, reinvented, Nantucket-style house with a backyard pool on 1.5 lots in East Manhattan Beach.

Having moved to California several years ago for Mike to pursue a career in law and Christie in fashion design, the former high school sweethearts knew what they wanted from a family home to accommodate their growing girls, ages 10 and 8. "We had the opportunity to rent different style homes around South Bay," says Mike.

"One of the houses that we lived in last had a really big yard, and we were spoiled," adds Christie of their wish for space. While the norm in beach cities is homes built vertically on narrow lots to capitalize on ocean views, the couple chose a spacious backyard for their kids over sweeping views of the Pacific.

"They went up and out," says designer Jon Starr of Starr Design Group, who conceptualized the couple's vision on the generous corner lot. Jon was already versed in East Coast design principles, having built his own family home in a similar vein. He stepped up to the challenge of reinventing the classic shingled house for the family.



By anchoring the design with a traditional saltbox frame and adding structural elements—including a barn—the house seems to have been built over time. “The reference point was always to have a mix of old and new,” says Jon of the materials, which combined reclaimed barn wood, cedar shingles, silkstone and Pennsylvania Bluestone.

“We gravitated toward those natural elements: shingles that would age and metals that would patina,” says Mike.

Though the couple wanted the character and warmth of an East Coast-style home, the interior floor plan was thoroughly modern. On the main floor, the kitchen and family room—joined with an outdoor dining space—are practically one, while the five bedrooms are located on the second floor.

To reinforce the barnyard reference indoors, Jon used reclaimed wood throughout, including the stairway and exposed beams overhead. Adding polished cabinetry and smooth finishes into the mix creates a visual play

between rustic and sleek that's most evident in the kitchen.

Designed with entertaining in mind, the kitchen has a large, silkstone-topped island as well as a bifold bar that extends to the outdoor patio, creating a snack bar during pool time or a buffet for barbecues. The culinary base is its busiest on Friday nights.

"Friday is sushi night," says Christie happily. "We go to the local market for fresh ingredients. Mike prepares the fish, and we sit around the table and make sushi. It's our favorite tradition!"

Ever the close-knit family, the foursome's go-to spot is a cozy enclave on the second floor. "We found that even with space, we were always in one room together, so we designed the flex room," says Christie of the bonus area that opens onto a balcony. "We close off the downstairs and snuggle together to watch a movie or read a book without feeling like you're in a big house."

When it came to furnishing their home, the couple grounded the space with a neutral color palette of greys. However, they eschewed the rush to decorate every inch, preferring instead to let the process happen "organically," says Christie.

Indeed, Jon's team happened upon a pair of quirky, refurbished lights from LaGuardia Airport that have become a family favorite, while heirlooms add sentimental flair throughout. "My grandmother was a concert pianist, and I was able to inherit her piano," says Mike, whose eldest daughter plays in the home's music room, located just off the entry. "To be surrounded by things that are important to you and represent your family is fantastic." The overall result is warm and casual.

Perhaps the detail of the house that best represents the family is its spacious backyard, chosen especially to fit their active lifestyle. Privatized by a fence and silver hedges, the lawn is punctuated by a pool, outdoor

patio and green space, where the girls like to play soccer and chase one another.

“We’ve already had neighbors commenting that it’s nice to hear young kids out there laughing,” says Mike. Christie adds with a smile, “We’re hopeful that they’ll want to bring their friends over well beyond the age when they might want to go hang out somewhere else.”













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