



**Is Carpinteria the new Malibu?** So it would seem from the number of homes there being converted from beach shacks to luxury vacation homes. Long considered the poor relation of nearby Montecito, this small coastal community, about 85 miles north of Los Angeles, has caught the attention of affluent homebuyers in search of a not-so-remote beach getaway.

This hidden pearl of a home came to the attention of Kevin and Joan Knee after Kevin's boss, Bill Guthy, bought a house there. Guthy (a founder of the infomercial company Guthy-Renker, where Knee is executive vice president, chief operating officer and chief financial officer) and his wife Victoria Jackson, founder

*By Hunter Drohojowska-Philp*

*Photos by Mary E. Nichols*



## BEACH BLANKET BARBECUE

Previous spread:  
Interior designers  
Monique Lafia and  
Christopher Arvin  
renovated the prop-  
erty to resemble a  
traditional East Coast  
beach house, adding  
ocean-facing windows  
and a teak dining  
table and chairs on  
the front porch.



of Lola Cosmetics, had renovated their Carpinteria house with designers Monique Lafia and Christopher Arvin. Impressed with the results, the Knees bought a house nearby and contracted the same design team.

The 1930s house was dark inside and out, so the Knees told the designers to make the home merely livable, as they planned to tear it down and rebuild in a few years. But the Knees loved the remodel so much that the temporary makeover has become a permanent vacation home.

Arvin and Lafia, whose offices are based in nearby Santa Monica, special-

ize in designing interiors for estates and getaway properties. The Carpinteria home is the latter, especially for the Knees, who live eight months of the year in the desert in Indian Wells, Calif., near the Guthy-Renker office. Lafia says that while the Knees' main house has "a color palette of brown and rust, the beach house was done in colors that reflect the sunlight that is so beautiful in Carpinteria."

The designers gutted the two-story home and made changes that took advantage of the ocean views. "It was my vision to keep it very light, with vanilla and cottage white paint, limestone

This page, above:  
A banquette with  
drawers underneath  
was built for storage.  
The antique oak stools  
and kitchen table are  
from Hideaway House  
in Los Angeles. Right:  
A circular table with a  
lazy Susan and Nan-  
tucket dining chairs  
are by Richard Mul-  
ligan. Tableware is  
from Indigo Seas.





counters and bamboo floors, which resist water damage," Lafia says.

It also had to be designed pragmatically, since the Knees have four children, ages 5 through 10. "The place had to be comfortable and family-oriented, but without us worrying about anything getting ruined," says Joan Knee. "We were looking for a cottage style that could fit as many people as possible, since we both have large families back east."

The house has only three bedrooms, so the challenge was to create spacious living areas inside by incorporating outside spaces. Lafia installed retractable

sliding doors in the combined living and dining room that faces the ocean so that the house would literally be open to the beach. Teak lounge chairs with pea-green cushions beckon from a wood deck set amid the boulders that linger above the crashing waves. Additional lounge chairs and a dining table are arranged on the spacious front porch that runs the width of the house and facilitates alfresco meals and whale watching.

Instead of the separate bedrooms they enjoy at their Indian Wells house, the four children were assigned to bunk beds in one large room. Lafia

helped them retain a sense of their individuality by putting each child's initials on a chair at the game table and monogramming their towels. Their mother was thrilled with the decision. "It's tighter for the kids, but also nice because it brings them closer together for a short time. They have to get along better instead of going into their own rooms. It seems to work well."

She also left most of their toys at home, bringing only their bicycles. "It forces them to get on their bikes and play in the park," Joan adds. "There is more family fun here, not so many of the stresses of home."

The designers worked to maximize storage space on both sides of the long, narrow kitchen. Dishes are from Sur La Table.



The children's room features custom-made bunk beds with drawers by Richard Mulligan. "It's tighter for the kids, but brings them close together," says homeowner Joan Knee.

Lafia and Joan chose the fabrics and went shopping around Los Angeles to acquire furniture and accessories from stores that specialize in a cottage atmosphere, including Richard Mulligan Antiques, A. Rudin, Thomas Lavin, Gazebo, Hideaway House and Indigo Seas. Together, they picked out such quirky items as turquoise apothecary jars, seashell mirror frames, an old-fashioned hat mold and a coatrack to lend personality to the home.

Kevin Knee weighed in on the technology installed throughout the house. A plasma television was placed over the new fireplace, and storage for audio-

visual equipment was created, along with bookcases. "Kevin is a golfer and likes sailing. Joan likes gardening," Lafia says. "We selected books on those subjects, as well as children's books."

Round and square stools—and a banquette that has four drawers underneath for storage—surround the table in the breakfast room. More formal dining takes place at the circular table off the living room or outdoors, although there is very little formality within the house. "Everything has a whimsical feel," Lafia says. "It is about mixing the unexpected. There are plates covered with antique cigar bands, a shell box

and antique fabric pillows on a cozy chenille sofa."

Chairs of wicker and tables of painted wood add to the insouciance. "We used cottagey furniture, such as the celadon side table with the distressed finish, keeping in mind that drinks would be put down by kids or friends who don't use coasters," Lafia says.

Upstairs, she opened up the master bedroom to the endless expanse of the Pacific Ocean. The emphasis is on simplicity and serenity. She employed tones of tan, white and teal. Bamboo shades can be lowered to block glare or heavy striped drapes can be closed. The

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Right: The master suite includes a seating area that faces a fireplace and plasma television. The windows facing the ocean are draped with Zoffany fabric. The canvases of blue and white ginger jars are from Gazebo Antiques.

Below left: The small house is made to feel larger by the designers' decision to add teak chairs with deep cushions on the front porch.

Below right: Lounge chairs by Janus et Cie are perched on a stone terrace above the beach.



far end of the bedroom accommodates a seating area with a new fireplace, plasma television and a small desk, so Kevin can work from home. "Because of chill and fog, I put in fireplaces and kept cashmere throws all around," Lafia points out. "It can be gloomy outside, so inside it has to be cheery. That factored into my decision to use colors like ivory, butter and sea blue."

Lafia and Arvin provide everything that their clients need when they move in, such as food in the refrigerator and clean towels in the bathrooms. "This house is a real respite from the stress of life," Lafia says. "The children have a big sandbox. There is a barbecue pit and a spa. We do a real turn-key service.

From beginning to end, we handle everything, from robes to toothbrushes to detergents. Our goal is to take stress away from clients. Everything is done so they can relax and enjoy."

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