

# beachy keen

EUROPEAN FLAIR MEETS WATERFRONT LIVING



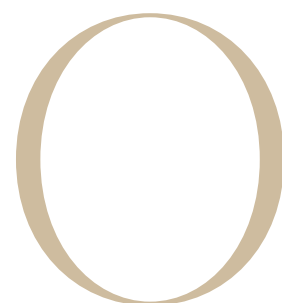
BY MALIA MCKINNON FRAME // PHOTOGRAPHS BY EMILY SIDOTI

**FRENCH TWIST**  
The facade gives off a stylish French traditional vibe, but inside it is modern and beachy chic.





**FIFTY SHADES OF GRAY** An open floor plan allows for a “great room” feeling and is dominated by soothing tones of gray, white and beige; the TV room and kid’s office (above right) is a favorite hang-out space and can be closed off with pocket doors for a more intimate feel; Lin’s cleverly “hidden” staircase inside the pretty foyer (above left).



**ON** LOOKING BACK, IT WAS QUITE A DARE. “I love the warm traditional feel of European homes—particularly French ones—but I also wanted a house that felt fresh and modern. How would we successfully mix the two styles?” homeowner Nicole Russo remembers asking herself.

Russo and her family had purchased a home in 2014 with unobstructed alley views of Penfield Beach. They loved the location close to town and being able to see the sunrises and sunsets, kids playing on the beach, and the Port Jeff ferry floating by. “Ours is one of the lowest lying Fairfield beach areas, and many homes suffered major damage during Hurricane Sandy,” explains Russo. Since the home they purchased was unsalvageable, the Russos had to start from scratch. Luckily for them Russo’s dream team, with whom she has redone several houses with over the years, was waiting in the wings. “Building and renovating is

like therapy for me,” she says. “It’s fun and so amazing to see a home come to life.” The homeowner’s talented group included interior designer Lin Moty of Lin Moty Interiors, architect Matt Dougherty, and John McCafferty of McCafferty Construction.

The first challenge of how to blend two almost-opposing styles beautifully was the greatest. Moty and Dougherty hashed out several drawings before agreeing on the finished product: A modern beach house designed with French features and truly unique accents that put the home in a league of its own.

The most obvious juxtaposition of classic and modern is on the home’s exterior. Three sets of French doors with custom shutters set under large window boxes are befitting of a charming French country cottage, yet the facade seamlessly transitions to contemporary





**JOIE DE VIVRE** The finished ground level is a nice spot for entertaining after a great day at beach, dining al fresco, or relaxing and watching the kids play in the pool. A daybed swing adds visual interest and fits the whole family. The hot-tub deck, off of the gym and master bedroom, is a great place to do yoga or take in the view.

driftwood-toned shiplap siding and floor-to-ceiling gray clad windows on the sides and rear of the home, a serendipitous pairing. Another interesting design feature is the absence of an exterior staircase. Russo didn't want one, yet the home had to be built several feet off the ground to be FEMA-compliant. Lin came up with the perfect solution: Build a grand foyer with an interior staircase that leads to the first floor where the living areas come to life.

When contemplating the overall design of the home, Russo told Moty she wanted an easy keeper. In that vein, a heated porcelain tile that looks like cerused oak anchors the entire first floor. "It's maintenance free, you can't see sand on it and because it doesn't feel like you're walking on tile you don't need a rug," says Moty. Throughout the large kitchen/family room/living area great "room" that runs the length of this floor, the absence of crown moulding evokes a contemporary open, airy feel that's chic, yet casual and comfortable. "We entertain year-round, but this home is really a summer spot and we want it to be fun for our two high-schoolers to have friends over," explains Russo. Most nights, a crowd ends up walking back to their house from the beach for an impromptu pool and pizza party.

For the furnishings, Moty and Russo used a method they'd employed countless times before. "Lin's process is to pull together paint colors, fabrics and kitchen hardware I like, then she designs the rest of the home around these styles and other specific items I love,"



**DETAIL ORIENTED** French doors that flank the front door stylishly house his and her storage rooms. Fun pops of blue can be found among the kids' bedrooms and bathrooms with pillows, bedding, and the bright Marmoleum floor.

says Russo. For example, after Russo fell in love with and purchased a fun, large-scale abstract orange, yellow and turquoise painting, Moty designed a custom alcove at the top of the second-floor landing to fit the artwork. The home's design feels modern, but a few classic furnishings keep it inviting. "In one room, you'll see a straight-edge modern table next to a comfortable traditional sofa, and the juxtaposition of old and new is what gives this home warmth and makes it very different," says Russo.

There are several other surprising design features that set this home apart. Some of those include a Juliette balcony off the living area that overlooks the back yard, and the glossy, white pilasters that run up the walls and across the ceiling defining the kitchen/dining area from the family room. The master bathroom, modeled after one in a Copenhagen hotel that Russo loved, combines dune and white-colored tile in one area with his and her vanities, and an entire wall of low-iron frosted glass on the other side that encloses a linen closet, an oversized shower and a toilet, all backlit by LED lights. Last, but not least is the pièce de résistance: Instead of defaulting to a mediocre crawl space on the ground floor, Moty and Dougherty designed a covered 750-square-foot entertaining area that encompasses the ground floor and spills out onto the pool and lawn. Nine-foot ceilings, a dining area and several lounging spaces make this room available for three-season fun and endless entertaining possibilities. Silver chic ceiling fans, sleek console tables and comfy sofas echo the beach chic vibe, and a dining table made of multiple smaller ones allows the family to move them out to the lawn or into any configuration.

In retrospect, the collaboration couldn't have been more fun and successful. "What started off as a design challenge reaped major rewards," says Russo. ■