

# New England HOME

Celebrating Fine Design, Architecture, and Building

## Summer Means Cape Cod

An admiring look  
at our region's  
seaside treasure



Creating an authentic seaside vibe, one white-painted plank at a time.

# the coast is clear

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The sunroom is everyone's favorite, thanks to the curvaceous Acapulco rockers from Blackman Cruz that set the tone for the modern, stylish space. Designer Heather Wells adhered strictly to the black-and-white palette here, and used it throughout to keep the home airy, relaxed, and beachy-casual.





**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** The spacious living room is furnished with custom, linen-upholstered sofas, a custom coffee table, and for added drama, a vintage Augusto Bozzi lounge chair, all grounded by a textural dhurrie rug. An artful vignette features a 1950s Wormley cabinet and a vintage Fritz Schlegel wingback chair. The powder room is painted with Farrow & Ball's Off-Black, a stark exception to the "white walls only" rule throughout the home.



**PROJECT TEAM**

**Architecture:** Dell Mitchell Architects  
**Interior design:** Heather Wells  
**Builder:** Mark Grenier, MG Design Build  
**Landscape design:** Richard Johnson  
 Landscape Architect

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he house has summer written all over it—from its planked walls, beamed ceilings, and wide windows to its sublime sunroom. In classic coastal style, it's relaxed and casual with a palette dominated by white, but it's also stylish and sophisticated. It's exactly what the homeowners had in mind.

It started out as a nondescript, dated seaside cottage on the Cape, with walls covered in dark paneling and small windows that didn't do justice to the property's finest asset: its killer ocean views. The house seemed a fish out of water, so architect Dell Mitchell and interior designer Heather Wells, both of Boston, were charged with giving the home the full-on beach treatment. "The clients wanted a Cape Cod feeling, but fresher and lighter, with rustic

notes," says Wells.

At first, the homeowners leaned toward a Scandinavian-inspired design, says Mitchell, but they kept coming back to a "beachy, camp-like look." They wanted an unfussy space, a beach house, but one that felt curated, not cobbled together.

The house sits on a small oceanfront site, and although it's not a proper Cape in style, says Mitchell, "It's made of basic Cape materials, and it has features, like double gables, that make it a little more distinctive."

Like a lot of renovation projects, this was a collaborative affair that included Yarmouth Port builder Mark Grenier. In a move that seriously refreshed the first floor, Mitchell and Grenier gutted the kitchen and added a mudroom and powder room. Exist-



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**CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT:** The dining room’s wide windows complement the originals while ushering in more light; the custom dining table, surrounded by Eames molded plastic chairs, has a modern farmhouse feel. A corner stars a Knoll Cross Check bent-plywood armchair and vintage Erik Höglund chandelier. A custom metal console blends seamlessly against planked walls; the lamp is vintage, from the 1950s.



old poorly tacked-on porch, and Grenier transformed it into the gorgeous space it is now. If the water view were not so enchanting, the furnishings might steal the show, especially the quartet of Blackman Cruz Acapulco rockers. A glass coffee table that sits on a rug woven from paper yarn keeps the room airy.

Wells put together a distinctive palette. “Everything is black and white or gray and oatmeal,” she says. “We started with some pale colors, but we liked the idea of going strictly black and white.” There’s no question that white owns the day, but thoughtfully placed wood and black accents, including the black living room sofas, keep things grounded. “We wanted to be practical,” says Wells. “We knew that both white and black fabric can get dirty—but black less so.”

Coastal chic is a very different look for the homeowners, who are avid collectors of contemporary art. Their primary residence is spacious, with lots of color and large pieces, but here, the artwork is smaller, and most of it adheres to the black-and-white theme.

Wells hunted for vintage pieces, like the many unique chairs, that would feel collected over time. The designer showed restraint throughout, keeping accessories to a minimum and forgoing fussy window treatments.

Her creative client came up with plenty of ideas of her own, Wells says. In the oversize entryway, for example, she suggested they create a place to play games and do puzzles. “The entry is big, with large

ing bathrooms were made over, new windows and French doors were installed, and fresh wood flooring was laid down for a warm look and feel.

The revamped home celebrates light. “We opened up a lot of the windows and redesigned them, making them much bigger than the originals to enhance the views and make the interiors much, much brighter,” says Mitchell. In the dining room, a new picture window with side panels complements the original six-over-six panes. The upstairs hall and stairwell are flooded with natural light, but the sunny glow doesn’t come from the clerestory windows, which are not on an exterior wall at all. On the other side of the windows is a skylight-like chute that leads up to the

new dormers, the actual source of the light.

Next, the design team added cottage charm. The wood planking and beams on the ceiling are original, and while Mitchell didn’t set out to mimic them exactly elsewhere, she definitely took the planking idea to heart. “We added wallboards with visible studs and nails. We created a look that goes with the house,” she says. “You might think with so many planks and panels, the wind could blow right through, but it can’t. The house really is finely made.”

To emphasize the summer-by-the-sea feel, walls and ceilings got a fresh coat of white paint. The new sunroom may stand as the best example of the home’s refined coastal style. The design team reimagined the



The kitchen, a study in black and white, is a classic gathering place for family and friends. A custom table/island that works for both food prep and casual gathering is surrounded by two kinds of counter stools and illuminated by industrial-chic hanging lamps.

The upstairs hallway is made extra cheerful and airy with added dormers and a fabulous Highwire Tandem light from Apparatus. **FACING PAGE:** A soothing guest bedroom features a gently layered bed, a custom console, a kilim rug from Steven King, and a knockout vintage Italian chair and ottoman.

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windows, so it just seemed like leftover space," says Wells. "We wanted to activate it, so we added a floating bench and a small table. It's a favorite spot that gets a lot of use."

For the dining room, the homeowner wanted a farm table, but one with clean lines. The table she and Wells chose fits the bill in its whitewashed simplicity. The plastic, molded chairs surrounding it make the perfect casual, practical match.

The statement-making kitchen design was a collaborative effort. The black table/island base, counter stools, and pendant lamps stand in sharp contrast to the white of the planked cabinetry, marble countertops, and a back wall covered floor-to-ceiling in white

Moroccan tile. The abundance of textures and sheens was intentional, says Wells: "There's a dull floor, dull white walls, and shiny tiles. The plaster of the range hood is chalky, the rug is woven. All in all, it's a very tactile space."

Wells concedes that working within the boundaries of the color palette in every room was tricky at times. "We had to keep everything spare and clean. We had to stay simple, yet interesting." The "new" beach house is all that and more. It's sweet, cozy, calming, and serene. It's urbane, in the most relaxed way possible. And to think it all came to be in pursuit of endless summer style. ■■■

**RESOURCES :** For more information about this home, see page 186.