



OPEN HOUSE

A little TLC and an injection of style turn a beachfront home in Delaware into an entertainer's paradise

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The sectional is from Verellen. The coffee table is from ABC Carpet & Home. The artwork is from Cisco Brothers, and the rug is from Eliko.



The table in the entry (left) is from Patrick Sutton Home. The mirror is by Slaysman Forge. In the living room (above), the rug is from Greenspring Carpet Source, and the chairs are from Provence Collection. The antique water wheel sculpture is by Roberta Schilling. Opposite: The table on the porch is from Central Station Interiors; the chairs are by Gloster.

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SOMETIMES, FINDING THE PERFECT HOUSE IS AS simple as love at first sight: a spark, a flare, a firing synapse, and you know you've found "the one." This, however, wasn't one of those times. When the future owners of a Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, retreat first took a tour through the 1980s-style house, they weren't sure it was the right fit for their entertaining-centric lifestyle, but that all changed the moment they caught their first glimpse of the breathtaking views of the Atlantic Ocean right outside the windows. Like all good relationships, it would take some work, but with the help of a talented design team, they knew that they could one day be very happy together.

With hopes that that day would come sooner rather than later, they reached out to designer Patrick Sutton and hit the ground running. Because they had collaborated on the homeowners' other residences, they trusted the designer to let loose here. "I had a lot of freedom," says Sutton. "They're a fantastic family, and having worked with them before obviously made things a lot easier this time around. I already knew what kinds of things they would respond to and what

they wouldn't." Forgoing anything too precious or prissy, Sutton developed a blueprint for the house that would take its cues from what drew the homeowners to the spot in the first place: its waterfront location.

He started with the palette, opting for soft, muted, neutral tones to channel the sandy expanses and cool, moody blues to echo the ocean. In order to create a seamless relationship between indoors and out, though, Sutton knew he would first have to do some heavy lifting. In conjunction with Baltimore-based Penza Bailey Architects, the designer crafted a plan to both knock down old walls (opening up the main living area for better flow and lighting) and put up new ones (enclosing former screened-in porches on the main and second floors). "Before, there weren't any spaces where the family could sit to just watch the weather coming in over the ocean," says Sutton. "That's why we really wanted to make those areas a part of the house. It was just another way of bringing them closer to the water."

Next, the designer carefully curated super durable furnishings with sophisticated silhouettes, paying

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Clockwise from left: The glazed subway tile is from Waterworks, and the vanity is from Restoration Hardware. The bedding is from Matteo; the wire-brushed oak wall is by Miken Builders. The bed is from Hickory Chair, and the bedding is by John Robshaw. Opposite: The sofas are from Verellen. The coffee table is custom by Patrick Sutton.

special attention to scale and comfort. “I didn’t want to do a stereotypical beach house,” he says. “I wanted it to be relaxing, but I also wanted it to be elegant.” The best example of Sutton’s unique perspective here is the ornate table at the entrance of the home. “It’s incredibly intricate and rustic,” he says. “It’s a definite showpiece, but it’s also masculine and a little rugged. If you dropped something on it and dinged it, you wouldn’t even notice. That’s what we wanted.”

It’s a philosophy that comes in handy, especially given the homeowners’ love of entertaining. Because they wanted to be able to accommodate friends and extended family at a moment’s notice, they needed the house to be low maintenance and capable of multi-tasking. Downstairs, Sutton accounted for a potential influx of guests by creating a variety of different seating groupings—like the kid-friendly TV room, with an oversize sectional, and the more adult-geared family room, with deep sofas and tufted poufs against a backdrop of floor-to-ceiling windows that overlook the rolling dunes. Upstairs, in addition to the five main bedrooms, a large loft area is outfitted with beanbags and boat-shaped beds for impromptu sleepovers.

With all the hard work done, the homeowners are finally enjoying the home, convinced that hard-won love is the best kind after all. And for his part, Sutton is happy to have played matchmaker. “When I did the grand reveal, the wife came in first, and she burst into tears,” he says. “There was an immediate emotional connection. They wanted it to be the kind of place where they could spend time with those they care about most, kick off their shoes, and recharge their batteries, and that’s what it is. There’s an easiness to the house that stays with you.” **For more information, see Sources, page 114.**

