

New Beginnings

A homeowner's triumphant return to a beloved town helps her maintain her priorities: slow living, family, and fun by the water

**BAY ST. LOUIS,
MISSISSIPPI**

The coffee table is from Urban Market. The upholstered chair is by Hickory Chair.

Becki Abercrombie is a woman of her word. When *Coastal Living* first spoke with the Louisiana-based designer in our July/August 2006 issue, one year after Hurricane Katrina, she had these parting words to share: "We will return! We won't abandon the coast we've come to love. We'll work to bring back Bay St. Louis. And when the lines form again at restaurants and the roar of cicadas fills warm summer nights once more, we'll be there." But it wasn't an easy promise to keep. Because her former residence had been completely leveled by the hurricane, Abercrombie went looking for a new place, promptly falling in love with a badly damaged but still standing early 1900s bungalow. For nine months, she toiled feverishly to transform the home, crafting an open floor plan and installing sparkling new floors, high ceilings, and a hard-working kitchen built to accommodate dinners for her large family. Here, Abercrombie's lessons for giving a home a second chance. ▶





The home's exterior is painted Brilliant White by Benjamin Moore.



The rocking chairs are from L.L.Bean. The wicker chairs are by Maine Cottage.

1 REINVENT VINTAGE SCORES. Each day at the bungalow begins and ends on the screened porch. To outfit the space, Abercrombie worked with her sister, Ginger, and daughter Jane, a New York-based interior designer, to scour flea markets for the perfect pieces. She then turned to daughter-in-law Sara, a decorative painter in Baton Rouge, to refinish the finds. "It was a collaborative effort," Abercrombie says. "Everyone had a part to play."

2 MAKE ROOM FOR GUESTS. Throughout the year, relatives come to visit in droves, so Abercrombie ensured there would be plenty of space for everyone, outfitting a large bunk room with twin-size beds for the kids. Extra sleeping quarters are up the stairs in the loft area, the object of many an amicable debate. "The kids all fight about who gets to sleep there," she says with a laugh. ▶



The quilts are from Pottery Barn. The sheets are from Traditions Linens.



DISCOVER BAY ST. LOUIS! Scan this photo (see page 4) or visit coastalliving.com/baystlouis



The woven pendant is from West Elm. The appliances are from Dacor.



The butler's pantry sink skirt fabric is Picnic Check by Lee Jofa.

3 WORK SMARTER. Abercrombie designed an extra-large kitchen to accommodate multiple chefs at once. An oversize island provides ample surface area for prepping and cleanup, while a butler's pantry (above) off the kitchen holds an oft-frequented ice maker and refrigerator for beverages, so as not to disturb the work flow.

4 GO TREASURE HUNTING. The dining room exemplifies Abercrombie's perseverance: The hutch is full of her husband's aunt's dinnerware, which she recovered from her previous home after Hurricane Katrina. Everything else in the space is a family heirloom, an antique, or purchased from local consignment shops. "I shopped vintage a lot," says Abercrombie. "I wanted the house to look like it had been here for a while; I didn't want to buy all new furniture."

5 FIND YOUR BLISS. According to many members of the family, the porch swing is the best seat in the house. "You can't have a cottage without a porch swing," Abercrombie says. "Ours overlooks the garden and a banana tree and gets the best ocean breezes. We have coffee out there every morning." **For more information, see Sources, page 106.**



The hutch is from British Traditions. The cushion fabric is Exchequer from Brunswick & Fils.



The custom porch swing is by McDonald & Sons. The rattan chairs are from World Market.

“YOU CAN'T HAVE A COTTAGE WITHOUT A PORCH SWING. OURS OVERLOOKS THE GARDEN AND A BANANA TREE AND GETS THE BEST OCEAN BREEZES”



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