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DESIGN BY KATE MARKER OF KATE MARKER INTERIORS

# Season of Growth

Savor the slow life in a lakeside cottage that was revamped with rustic charm and modern touches in just eight weeks.



**PATIO PERFECTION.** These French bistro-style dining chairs add a dose of cottage charm to the patio area. Kate bought the chairs from Wayfair for less than half the cost of near-identical designer chairs.  
**[OPPOSITE] VACATION CALLING.** Guests can follow the red-brick path to the front steps of the Leo Cottage, which is surrounded by leafy greenery and an award-winning garden.

**SMALL SPACES.** Believe it or not, this humble corner used to be a hallway before Kate set her sights on it. The barn door is a stylish space-saver. Textured mirrors, a spiral woven rug and an eight-bulb rope chandelier enhance the cottage's earthy, organic charm.



*When flowers begin to bloom and fresh greenery inspires a change of scenery,*

Kate Marker, designer and owner of Kate Marker Interiors, and her family of four hop in the car and head north, bound for Union Pier, Michigan. They escape to their vacation home, a 1,400-square-foot bungalow just two hours outside their hometown of Barrington, Illinois, where they happily trade asphalt roads for streets of gravel and towering skyscrapers for mom-and-pop shops.



It's a quaint, lakeside town filled with design shops, distilleries, nurseries and wineries. And it's a year-round retreat for the family, who frequent the farmers' markets in the warmer months and bask in the warmth of their wood-burning stoves when it's too cold to venture outdoors.

#### MAKING MEMORIES

Kate, her husband Ken, and their two girls, Lily and Myla, have already created a host of memories in the home, celebrating the country's independence, painting pumpkins, and simply enjoying conversation with one another.

Not to mention the extensive home renovation that Kate pulled off in eight weeks.

She describes the project as the "biggest turnaround" in her professional career, pulling 12-hour days to ready the vintage-meets-modern cottage in time for the 4th of July weekend. She likes to joke that it was a full-on collaboration between Kate Marker Interiors and Ken Marker Exteriors; she tackled the interior design while her husband focused on outdoor renovations.

#### SERENDIPITOUS SHOWING

It was nearly a love-at-first-sight, or rather a love-at-first-scent, experience when Kate and Ken stumbled upon the 1920s cottage. She remarked that "it even smelled like a cottage" and felt that with a little sprucing up, it would be the perfect retreat for her family and others.

From the vintage tile to the wood flooring, it was easy for Kate to find cottage-style inspiration for a comprehensive redesign. She sought to achieve "overall easy living mixed with rustic vibes, fresh and timeless details and a few funkier-than-usual accents."



**|TOP RIGHT| AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL.** Kate searched far and wide to populate the Leo Cottage with one-of-a-kind décor and charm. During a trip to Round Top, Texas, she discovered this vintage American flag from Martha's Vineyard, "beautiful in all its faded glory."



**|TOP LEFT| REST & RENEW.**

The breakfast bar is another example of how Kate made use of every nook and cranny in the cottage. It's a great place to relax and refresh in a no-phone environment, where the family focuses on connecting with one another.

**|OPPOSITE| TABLE & SOFA.**

The Markers, along with a handy renovation team, knocked down a wall to create an open floor plan between the kitchen and living room. Soft touches of blue, pink and green balance well with the white walls and wood accents.

## Find Furniture *That Fits*

Furniture shopping is tricky; it's a big commitment, and price tag is always top of mind. But if you're willing to spend the time and money, here are a few furniture-finding tips to make it easier.

- **SPLURGE AND SAVE.** Pick your priorities and stick to them. While Kate splurged on some of her larger items, she also saved on statement lighting from Amazon and Target, and even discovered outdoor furniture that was a near match to higher priced designer items. Finding lookalikes is a great place to start, especially when decorating a new home or trying out a different design style. If an item doesn't hold up, then you know it's time to spend a little more for something you'll love.
- **SEARCH FAR AND WIDE.** Kate took her search to the next level; she went antiquing in Round Top, Texas, and furniture shopping in High Point, North Carolina. While your travels might be limited, your search doesn't have to be. Skimming through our own Sources page is a great way to discover niche design shops with online stores. Another good way to find unique pieces is to trace items on more popular websites back to their original source.
- **STROLL AND SHOP ABOUT.** In addition to her several-thousand-mile travels, Kate also shopped in the Benton Harbor area to find unique furniture and décor pieces. Shopping around in your surrounding area, you'll find pieces that reflect the environment and have a storied past that you can carry on. This tip is particularly useful when you're seeking specific pieces and wall décor for a lakeside cottage or wintertime cabin.

**JEWEL-TONED GEM.** In the breakfast nook, the emerald-green leather banquette with a funky fringe accent welcomes a woody outdoor ambience into the cottage. It's a well-loved spot, where Kate often finds her daughter curled up reading a book, or they chat with one another.

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**[TOP LEFT] REINVENTION.** The Markers built the wall with ship-lap to create a backdrop for the new stove and vent. Gold accents shine brightly and play well with the rose-gold and copper pots that hang above.

**[TOP RIGHT] REFLECTED BEAUTY.** This modern cabinet with glass doors showcases pottery and a few functional pots and plants. Textured mirrors reflect natural sunlight and brighten the entertaining space.

**[BOTTOM RIGHT] TROPICAL TWIST.** This brand new cabinet holds Kate's entertaining essentials and contains a colorful surprise. She added patterned wallpaper to its interior, which depicts cheetahs and tigers amid jungle greenery, and serves as a backdrop for her collection of copper mugs, tinted glassware and more.

With a little outside-the-box thinking, support from her husband and a few contractors willing to hop on the project in a matter of weeks, it wasn't long before the team created a look that all tied together. To maximize shared spaces, the team created a bunk room that sleeps up to eight children and a game room. Kate also took the creative liberty to make an entertaining space out of a former hallway, and with a little advice from her family, transformed the family room into a luxurious master bedroom. These structural renovations were the first step to transforming the already well-maintained cottage into a modern beauty.





**[OPPOSITE] COASTAL VIBES.** Coral-pink tile complements the bright blue-and-white awning above Kate's gardening shed. These bright colors suggest the beach, just a short walk from the cottage.

**[BELOW] TREASURE FROM TEXAS.** The island is another gem that Kate picked up in Round Top, Texas. It serves as a centerpiece for the gathering place and coordinates well with the patterned tile and wood-beam ceiling.





**SANCTUARY FOR SERENITY.** Soft white linens, a flower-shaped rug and a woven hanging chandelier are a few of the pieces that make the unique open-plan master bedroom and bathroom feel refreshing. Natural sunlight adds a light and airy quality.



**[TOP RIGHT] PLAY PARADISE.** Kate and her kids had a boatload of fun designing the bedroom, which comes with custom-built bunk beds and individual reading lights. A boho chic rug, artisanal pillows from Everland and geometric lighting are just a few of the joyful touches added for the little ones.



**[BOTTOM RIGHT] LAKESIDE LOVE.** The guest bedroom's rattan bed frame and blue and white touches evoke coastal vibes. It's a great example of how Kate makes every room succeed on its own and still maintains a consistent theme throughout.

#### COOKING UP A KITCHEN

Kate soon turned her attention to the kitchen, a central living space where the family dines together. The homeowners tore down the wall adjacent to the living room and constructed a wall with shiplap behind the stove and hood. Brand new ceiling beams, restored flooring and a fresh coat of white paint set the scene for new furniture and "color-saturated appliances," and Kate couldn't be happier with the coral-pink fridge and avocado-green flooring that adds cheery appeal.





**TIME FOR TEXTURE.** From the globe-shaped lantern to the faux cowhide rug to the wood chairs to the pull-out couch, the game room was set up to maximize family time in a stylish, happy environment.



**[TOP LEFT] ESSENTIAL ACCENTS.** Though a neutral palette achieves a quintessential cottage feeling, darker accents add drama and depth. Kate painted the inside of the open shelving in dark navy to make her books and bins pop. The color also dramatically frames the unique tub, which shares space delightfully with the bed.

**[BOTTOM RIGHT] HEARTH AND HOME.** The Markers were blessed with two vintage wood-burning stoves that had been well-maintained. The firewood holder from Bed Bath & Beyond is a great functional fit.

Rather than the more “beautiful and classic” feel of her own home, Kate thought it would be fun to employ “funky and unique” twists that carry throughout the family-friendly vacation home.

#### BATHING IN THE BEDROOM

Kate took her creativity to the master bedroom next and decided to add to “a mint-green freestanding tub” to introduce a quirky feature and make the room stand out to guests. “I would never do that in a typical home, but with the crazy high ceilings and wood-burning stove, it speaks cozy,” she added.

The vintage stove and tub, in addition to the wood ceiling beams, enhance the rustic feeling in the room, while white linens and a woven chandelier add modern qualities to achieve a seamless balance. Who wouldn’t want to retreat to this cozy abode after a beach day or a hike through the woods?

#### OUTDOOR LIVING

Before the fresh white paint, before the pops of color, Kate wanted to refresh the cottage exterior with new colors and new life; she traded pale yellow paint for a versatile navy blue, which looks great covered in a blanket of snow and surrounded by succulents and potted plants.



**FIXER UPPER.** Kate and her husband, Ken, restored the gazebo with fresh paint and simple furniture. White-fringe décor pillows and a pastel pink rug contribute a feminine vibe.



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The Markers also inherited and fixed up an old, neglected gazebo, where the family loves to escape and relax in the buggier spring-time. It's also a space where their two dogs don't mind hanging out. To enjoy the warmer months in Michigan, and the convenient beach access, the couple added a hot tub, a shower and a hammock swing. These affordable amenities are both practical and artful in design, and the outdoorsy materials keep with the theme of the home.

#### REFRESH, REPEAT

After a three-year-long search for their dream vacation home, the Markers are looking forward to making more memories in the lovely bungalow. But Kate is always introducing new pieces and small touches to make it feel homier and more peaceful. What's next for the designer? Well, she's playing around with the idea of turning the garage into a guest house. We'll have to stay tuned for more small-space creativity and quintessential cottage charm. **CB**

SEE SOURCES, PAGE 128.

