



simple elegance

JUST PERFECT—INSIDE AND OUT

BY JENNIFER MOORE STAHLKRANTZ // PHOTOGRAPHS BY PHILLIP ENNIS



INSIDE OUT Windows and porches encourage an indoor-outdoor lifestyle. The living-room fireplace, one of four in the house, was made from vintage Boston street curbing and backs up to the sunroom that overlooks the pond. An arch beneath the custom staircase draws the eye through the dining room to the gardens beyond.



“Years

ago when there was a lot of vacant land and people wanted to build a church or temple, they would just walk the land until they felt good about a place—the energy—that’s where they would build,” says Dan Divitto, who has been constructing spectacular homes in Westchester and Fairfield Counties for more than three decades. “So, I looked at different places and I came here, I walked down to the pond, and something felt right about it. The energy felt really good.”

The founder and president of DPD Builders purchased a ranch house on nearly four wooded Ridgefield acres back in 2004. A single dad, sharing custody of his three children with his ex-wife, he wanted to create a warm and welcoming home for his kids. “I moved in, and every night I would walk around with a glass of wine, working to manifest it—to figure out how the house should be laid out and what had to be done,” he says.

Four years in, he had the ranch bulldozed, rented an apartment, and worked with architect Darren Mercer to create a basic footprint. By 2010, he had constructed an apartment above the new garage and then two things changed: he engaged a colleague—designer Chris Corcoran—to help him with interior details, and he fell in love with Meg Selfe.

“Chris and I had worked on a few jobs together over the years, and he helped me focus on my goal of simple elegance. For example, he encouraged me to have a common, consistent thread. While things don’t need to match, they should relate.



FOOD & WINE The kitchen, left and above, is a popular gathering place during parties, while the scullery, below, is where the Divittos have breakfast and send the pots and pans for clean up at night. Meg's garden, right, provides produce all summer long for the couple who both love to cook.



Then it looks pleasing to the eye as you move through the house." The love story, on the other hand, started when two couples suggested that Dan and Meg meet. It took six months for them to finally connect, and when they did, there was no doubt. Nine months later, she moved into the garage apartment, and they began to work together on the final details with invaluable guidance from Corcoran.

"Each morning, we would walk the space and talk about what Dan envisioned for himself and his family, and at some point, I became part of the equation, too," says Meg Selfe Divitto, who married Dan in 2013.

By 2014, the construction was complete. The Divittos moved from the apartment to the new master suite, and the kids—Blake, Steele, and Colette—settled into their thoughtfully designed and crafted new rooms.

The couple painstakingly planned their formal front entrance under the shade of a gracious covered porch, but like many 21st-century families, they generally enter their home through the side entrance. "We wanted the alternate entrance to be an actual room," says Dan. "In the old days, people would have porches, and when they needed more space indoors, they'd enclose them—complete with bead board on the ceiling and bluestone on the floor. We wanted to create that same feeling."

They added radiant heat to warm things up and French doors to frame the view of the pond and back garden. "We bring in our outdoor plants in winter, so it's like a greenhouse which makes it even cozier. You can see through the plants to the outside and all the snow, but you're nestled inside," says Meg.

To the right is a back staircase that leads to Meg's office and the garage apartment where the couple likes to hole up on





SPECIAL SPACES The upstairs boasts a reading nook on the landing, family bedrooms, and a master suite with a breezy sleeping porch. The garage, where Dan likes to tinker, is outfitted with radiant heat, a sound system, and a bathroom.



weekends for a staycation. With a view overlooking the garden, it's a romantic getaway that reminds them of their early years together.

A hallway to the left leads to another popular destination in the house: the scullery and kitchen. Avid cooks and entertainers, Dan and Meg plan the upcoming week's meals every Sunday. The scullery is a cozy kitchen where they hang out as a family during the day, do prep for larger meals, and send the pots and pans for clean up during dinner parties. The expansive kitchen is for entertaining and serving guests. It's almost like having a family kitchen and a party kitchen, side by side.

Around the corner is the front foyer where an arched doorway focuses an arriving guest's view straight through the dining room to outdoors. "From every vantage point, I wanted there to be a view that made you think 'I want to be there,'" says Dan. The recessed paneling and custom French staircase set the tone for Dan's desired simple elegance.

On the far side of the foyer is the living room, anchored by a massive stone fireplace made from vintage Boston street curbing. "In a blizzard, this is where we gravitate. It's the central hub of the house, the balance point," says Meg. The adjacent, wood-paneled sunroom serves as the TV room. Huge sports fans, the Divittos host a Superbowl party each year with guests flowing from room to room during pre-game hours, but when it's time for kickoff, they've been known to cram 30 to 40 people in the tiny sunroom.

Upstairs, there are five bedroom suites, and the basement is outfitted with an extensive workout room. Pressed for where one might find him if he had some free time on his hands, Dan says "with a glass of wine in hand walking the whole house and garden. I love to walk and look at everything and just feel good about it. Because everything here, I didn't leave until it was perfect. Inside and out." ■



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