

# New England HOME

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Sunny Spaces, Seaside Style

# SURF'S UP

A Boston designer creates a stylish vacation beachfront sanctuary on Martha's Vineyard.

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The simple beach house was never intended to be grand, so designer Nina Farmer coordinated a gut renovation that gives the cottage a chicness all its own. The exterior was clad in reclaimed cypress, and the deck was rebuilt out of strong, weather-resistant lpe.





What's it like to thoroughly reinvent a house, on your own time and in your own way, with no clients to please? For Nina Farmer, it's a day at the beach—on Martha's Vineyard.

The Boston designer had wanted to take on a soup-to-nuts project, intending to sell the final result, for some time. "I wanted to do the full scope of a summer house," she explains. She knew the Vineyard well, having vacationed there for years. "It's hard to get stuff over," she says. "And some people don't have the bandwidth to concentrate on a summer house; they just want to move in.



**ABOVE:** The home's L-shaped footprint was the only thing that stayed the same; the exterior was transformed with reclaimed cypress siding, a new roof, and new windows and doors. **LEFT:** A clearing is the perfect spot for a firepit and wigwam. **FACING PAGE, TOP:** An intimate dining area is simply furnished with a table from Noir and chairs from France & Sons. **FACING PAGE, BOTTOM:** Custom kitchen cabinet doors were crafted from reclaimed cypress.



I hoped it would sell itself."

She hit pay dirt with the third house she saw, near Lambert's Cove. "The first time I walked in, I walked right out," Farmer remembers. "I thought, 'this is way too much work.' Then I saw the beach."

She followed the short walk down a shaded path to a 180-degree view of Vineyard Sound. Suddenly the nondescript 2,000-square-foot house hidden away on three acres seemed perfect.

She decided the unusual layout was actually a redeeming feature. It had two entrances, one opening to a "main house" with three bedrooms and the other to a guest wing with a bedroom, bath, and sleeping loft. The two are not connected inside, making the space ideal for extended families and guests. There's also a detached bunkhouse.

It was practical but not pleasing. Because of its seclusion, Farmer says, "I wasn't picturing the local vernacular. I wasn't thinking Vineyard style. I was going for a global kind



The common rooms were brightened considerably by a good whitewashing—from the vaulted ceiling to the new concrete floor. Reclaimed wood wraps the exposed beams for a rustic vibe, and the entire house was furnished with collected treasures from around the world for a well-traveled look.



Tucked into a corner of the master bedroom is a mid-century rosewood campaign chair; the painting over it is by Traeger di Pietro, a Vineyard artist. **FACING PAGE:** The detached bunkhouse is a bonus space that Farmer imagined as a rainy-day retreat for games and TV.



Midcentury French daybeds were the inspiration for the custom twin beds in a guest bedroom. The Love One Another light fixture from CB2 and the woven window shades amp up the room's airy feel. **FACING PAGE:** Serena and Lily's Costa bed of hand-braided water hyacinth brings rich texture to another guestroom.

of 'surf house' feel. I wanted it to be a beach house that could literally be anywhere."

Her builders, Vineyard Haven brothers Zack and Matt Stedman, replaced the tired white siding with reclaimed cypress, and installed new windows and doors. Inside, the living room's dark interior was brightened by a coat of plaster over the existing paneling and red brick fireplace. The ceiling was given a fresh layer of paint, and the builders wrapped the ceiling beams with reclaimed wood. Kitchens and baths received new concrete floors and Moroccan plaster treatments, creating a whitewashed canvas for Farmer's unique finds.

The designer sourced far and wide—from Brimfield to custom workrooms, from local artists' studios to markets discovered in her travels. Among her gems: a midcen-

ture rattan chair by Rohé Noordwolde; black Chamba cookware from Colombia; a rosewood campaign chair and ottoman from 1st Dibs; an amphora fragment from a Turkish shipwreck; and pottery picked up in Marrakech while the renovation was underway.

The house took a year to complete and furnish, down to the dishes. Selling it was more of a challenge. It's hard to keep a house in perfect showing condition if you don't live there, the designer notes. And if you miss the island's short selling season, you can sometimes wait another year for a buyer. Luckily, a like-minded client in search of a stylish turnkey beach house scooped it up. All told, the project was fun, Farmer says—and yes, she would definitely do it again.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** For details about this home, see *Resources*.

**INTERIOR DESIGN:**  
Nina Farmer,  
Nina Farmer Interiors  
**BUILDER:**  
Matt and Zack  
Stedman, Stedman  
Construction

