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Beach Cottage Breakthrough

An architect and designer duo make a tiny Bald Head Island, North Carolina, home feel spacious and bright—without adding a single square foot

MAKEOVER
MAGIC
2012



AFTER

BEFORE



The walls are painted Calm by Benjamin Moore. The barstools are from Modern School Supplies.

There's something alluring about a cozy beach cottage. James and Joelle Clark had "small" in mind when they were looking for a vacation home on Bald Head Island. So when they came across a 1,150-square-foot bungalow just steps from the beach on the North Carolina barrier island, they saw past its abundant imperfections (water damage; a tiny, dated kitchen; and an inefficient floor plan) and purchased it just weeks later. "The house needed serious work, but it was the right size," says Joelle. "We didn't want a huge house with unused space that would require lots of upkeep." Now, thanks to help from architect Jason Bigelow and designers Lili O'Brien and Leigh Anne Muse, the house is cheerful, family friendly, and efficient. Here's how they took the house from dark and dated to bright and airy.

Rethink the rooms.

Before, the dining room occupied the center of the house, while the kitchen sat in a dark corner. By moving the kitchen to the former dining area and adding a large, eat-in island, Jason opened up the space to the two-story living room. In the former kitchen, a full-service butler's pantry offers additional storage. "We altered the way the house lives without changing the footprint," says Jason. >



The living room chair is by Lee Industries; the rug is from Pottery Barn.

Makeover Magic

Architect Jason Bigelow shares his remodeling smarts.

- **Add in—not on.** In lieu of an addition, consider altering the function of existing rooms, especially those you don't use.
- **Customize your plan.** A renovation presents opportunities for tailoring each space to suit your family's specific needs.
- **Get the most bang for your buck.** Investing in quality materials, finishes, and fixtures ensures that your upgrades will stand the test of time.
- **Build in flexibility.** Create multi-purpose spaces that can accommodate a crowd. (In a second home, be sure to consider the room you'll need for weekend guests.)
- **Upcycle.** Giving found objects and reclaimed materials new life lends instant character and imbues a sense of history.
- **Show restraint.** Not every splurge pays off. Remember, simplicity often makes the most sophisticated statement.



BEFORE

AFTER



The rafter tails are painted Barely Teal by Benjamin Moore.

2 Bare it all.

Few structural changes were made in the living room, but a lighter, brighter palette—plus forgoing window dressings—makes a world of difference. Lili and Leigh Anne got rid of the valance curtains and blinds covering the large windows to usher in more natural light, making the space feel larger. They also stripped and pickled the original oak floors and painted the walls and trim white for a simple, crisp look. Even the furnishings—a white cotton slipcovered sofa, wooden tray coffee table, and natural woven rug—amplify the less-is-more vibe.

3 Preserve the best of what's left.

Joelle and James were charmed by the home's original cedar-shake shingles, so they didn't change a thing. They did, however, perform much-needed maintenance, such as pressure washing the shingles and adding a fresh coat of paint to the porch ceiling and rafter tails. "The exterior has classic beach cottage character, and we didn't want to lose that," says Joelle. >

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COASTAL HAVENS

The countertops are by Charles Luck; the sconce is by Robert Abbey.



4 Open up small spaces.

Sliding barn-style doors made of reclaimed pine on rustic tracks allow the butler's pantry and master suite to open up completely—and close off to conceal a mess or afford privacy. "Sliding doors are a smart use of square footage," says Jason. "Because they slide instead of swing, they save a ton of space." Another space-saving idea: Opt for open shelving in lieu of standard upper cabinetry to keep small rooms, such as the butler's pantry and kitchen, from feeling closed in. >



The Plan

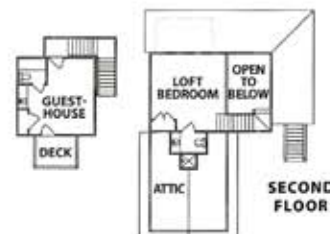
BEFORE

The dining room was the largest—and least used—room in the house. The master bedroom had no privacy.



AFTER

The eat-in kitchen, which opens to the living room, is the hub. Barn doors close off the master bedroom, now upstairs.





The Nadja Mueller artwork is framed by Larson-Juhl. The stool is from Viva Terra.

“OUR SMALL HOUSE IS FULL OF SURPRISES, LIKE THE SUSPENDED BUNKS, WHICH NEVER GET OLD. DETAILS LIKE THAT MAKE LIVING HERE FUN”

5 Take it outside.

By furnishing the wraparound porch like an indoor room, complete with a plush daybed, hanging lanterns, and artwork, Lili and Leigh Anne extended the house's living space outside. "This porch makes our house live so much larger than it really is," says Joelle. "It's a small house, but it's super efficient. We don't need another inch of space."

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Joelle, James, Ford, and Turner

6 Hang it up.

An oddly positioned closet made furnishing the children's room a challenge. So Lili and Leigh Anne installed four hanging bunks (made of teak, suspended from the ceiling with cable, and bolted to the wall for extra security) that fit perfectly into the unusual space while still providing room for play. 🐾

For more information, see Sources, page 134.



The kids access the top bunks via a simple painted hardware store ladder. The blankets are from Sundance.

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