



Rustic RETREAT

Interior designer Connie Vernich helps this young family modernize their rustic cottage.

For the past decade, professional football player Josh Kline and his wife, Natalie, have moved often given the nature of Josh's job. But soon after having their first child, daughter Kroy, the family was eager to put down roots and decided to make Tennessee home. They fell in love with a 10-year-old home in the quaint little town of Leiper's Fork, where people often say there are more cows than people.

The Klins enlisted the help of interior designer Connie Vernich to revamp their modern, rustic cottage. "The home and its surroundings are inherently rustic, so we wanted to honor the aesthetic, but apply it in a modern way," Connie says. "The view of the creek is the focal point and the heart of the property. We didn't want to distract from the views, [which] are truly the artwork of each space." Keeping the view in mind, the colors used throughout the home are nature inspired. Using dark charcoal colors and warm-toned leathers mixed in with a neutral palette helped Connie and her team achieve the look they were after.



Thoughtful layers like the Sherpa wool on the bench, knobby sofa pillows, linen draperies, woolen blankets, and warm whiskey-colored leathers add texture and elegant warmth to the living room.

Natalie loves to cook for her family. So, when Connie and her team found these antique framed cutting boards at market, they knew the pieces would make the perfect art installation to represent Natalie's love of antiques, vintage charm, and cooking.



Connie made minor but transformative updates to every space, including fresh paint, furnishings, and lighting. “The biggest change was lightening up the home,” Connie says. “It previously had a darker feel, so by adding warm white [paint], the sun now reflects off the walls for a more light and cheerful space.”

The living room is elegant and inviting. “Other than the exterior views, the wood-burning fireplace is the focal point of the room and creates an instant coziness in the winter months,” Connie says. The inspiration for the color scheme came from not only the outdoors but also the beautiful buff and gray Tennessee limestone on the fireplace. “When you walk in the [space], you can feel how cozy and warm the room is, not just from the hearth, but the fabrics themselves speak to this.”

The dining, living, bar, and kitchen areas are all open concept and connected to one another. “We wanted it to be functional as they entertain family and friends, yet also relaxed enough for a family weekday dinner of three,” Connie says. They opted for dramatic light fixtures that weren’t overly formal and found that the Palecek fixtures were the perfect balance of fun, texture, and form. “This piece ties the dining, living, and bar area together,” Connie says. “The Kline family is so relaxed and easygoing, and we wanted this space to reflect their personality. A formal dining room truly does not suit their lifestyle, yet we knew the space needed to still be tailored and inviting.”

The Palecek dining chairs have a line that draws your eye across the room for added interest.

The custom cocktail table allows the Klins more flexibility for entertaining. They can keep the table at a high height to serve from, and for a more intimate setting, it can adjust to coffee-table height. The fluted detail on the custom cabinetry adds a modern touch to the bar.



The bar area was the only addition the Klins made to the house, and it is now the main entertainment area. “It is very rustic and modern, yet highly functional,” Connie says. “The clients wanted a bar, so we dreamed up a multifunctional space for everyday use as well as entertaining.” Both the bar and the cocktail table were custom designs executed by a local iron artisan and cabinetmaker. The center table can be set at dining height or be spun down to coffee-table height.

One of the most used spaces in any home is inevitably the kitchen, and that is certainly the case here. The mix of modern and rustic elements encapsulates the home’s style. The team repainted all the window grids in the home with Sherwin-Williams’s Iron Ore. “One of the reasons we do this in homes with a view,” Connie says, “[is because] the darker the window grid is, the more your eye is drawn outwards.”

The master retreat is an oasis of calm and a perfect



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To find a happy balance between feminine and masculine elements, the couple opted for custom bedding in Ralph Lauren striped fabric, and they went in a softer direction with the white linen drapes, tying in the striped fabric. The cozy, textured white chaise longues make for a comfortable spot for the couple to retreat.



blend of both feminine and masculine design notes. “We showed the clients many color schemes, but they were both so drawn to the Schumacher blue, heavy-textured grass cloth wallpaper,” Connie says. “Against the warm leather, this just pops even more.” Breaking from the rich, moody palette of the bedroom, the en suite bathroom is a delightfully tranquil space that offers both privacy and a stunning view.

While the home’s interiors are ultra-cozy and welcoming, the exterior and surrounding outdoor property also offer the ideal ingredients for a peaceful retreat. “Josh is an avid outdoorsman. The creek is his

favorite place to be,” Connie says. The design team helped pull together a beautiful outdoor space to extend the home’s living area outside. “We wanted to add some fun, so we found an outdoor fabric with dogs,” Connie says. The couple loves animals and have a Cavalier King Charles spaniel, so this was an innovative way of adding fun to a quiet and serene space.

The family’s main goal was to make this house their own and modernize the space to reflect their taste. And thanks to the many layers of thoughtful design elements and personal touches, it is an inviting family home with plenty of room to grow. ■

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