

WARM TIDINGS

THE SPIRIT OF THE SEASON SHINES
IN A RENOVATED WATERFRONT HOME
IN WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA,
WITH EASYGOING OUTDOOR SPACES
AND GLIMMERING COASTAL COLOR



BY BRIELLE M. FERREIRA
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANNIE SCHLECHTER
STYLING BY LINDA HIRST

The outdoor sectional is by Ebel Incorporated, and the rug is from Overstock. Opposite: The china is by L'Objet. The reindeer bowl is from Vagabond House.



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OR LONGTIME PENNSYLVANIA RESIDENTS Sean and Beth Lang, the holidays had always been synonymous with cool weather, evergreens, and lots of powdery white snow. So when the couple moved south to West Palm Beach, Florida, with three children in tow—and found themselves instead surrounded by balmy breezes, palm trees, and plenty of bright blue water—Beth was skeptical. “I thought, ‘There’s no way. We need snow!’” she says with a laugh. But her worries turned out to be unfounded. “There’s something magical about palm trees

strung up with lights. We ended up not missing the cold weather at all, and now I couldn’t imagine spending the holidays anywhere else.”

And while some of the credit for the Langs’ easy adjustment to subtropical living can be chalked up to the couple’s long-standing relationship with the Sunshine State (Sean grew up summering in nearby Delray Beach) and to the close proximity of grandparents for their children—Jackson, 16, Lulu, 9, and Ella-Ross, 6—much of it belongs to interior designer Margaret Kaywell. It was Kaywell’s job to transform the family’s glass-covered, classic Le Corbusier-style house directly on the Intracoastal Waterway into a cozy retreat they would be comfortable calling home. “We had all of this dark and traditional furniture that we had brought with us from Pennsylvania, as well as pieces that had been left behind by the previous owners,” Beth says. “Margaret was able to save nearly all of it and make it work for our new house.”

Clockwise from left: The whale ornament is by Cody Foster & Co. The walls in the entryway are painted Water Chestnut by PPG Porter Paints, and the mirror is by Currey & Co. Daughters Lulu (left) and Ella-Ross work on a gingerbread house; their aprons are from Williams-Sonoma. Opposite: The chandelier is from Pottery Barn.





Before she could develop a plan for the furniture, though, Kaywell had to turn her attention to the practical: collaborating with builder Benno Janssen to bring in some architectural interest and to improve the functionality of the interiors. Together, Kaywell and Janssen designed and implemented new casings, crown molding, and kitchen countertops (butcher block for the island, and marble on the remaining surfaces). Then they repainted almost all of the walls, both inside and out, in varying shades of white and sandy neutrals. “The palette was very important to the Langs and me,” says Kaywell. “We didn’t want to pick any colors that would clash with the gorgeous water views, and we needed to stick with shades that would brighten up the existing furniture.”

The best example of this is in the front entry, where walls painted creamy white become the ideal backdrop for an ornately carved console table from the homeowners’ Pennsylvania digs. The fresh new palette helped capture the youthful, casual beach style the Langs wanted, which Kaywell then expanded upon by pairing the console with bright yellow chairs—handpicked by Beth—and a driftwood mirror, and spray-painting the home’s original red and green sconces a cheerful bright white. Establishing the palette at the front door, explains the designer, is important because it sets the tone for the rest of the house.

In the dining room, too, existing brick walls were also lightened with white paint, easing the introduction of the dark wood table and chairs. Additional elements—a capiz shell chandelier, a quartet of mirrors, a salvaged bench reupholstered in coastal stripes in sea glass hues of green and blue—help bring the outdoors in. “When you walk in here, it feels fun and sparkly,” says Kaywell. “The pieces that the Langs brought with them were all so beautiful, but many were more formal in nature. Now, the water is reflected in the mirrors and on the glass top of the table, and it gives you a better sense of place.”

This was an appropriate design motivation for the family, considering that it was the dream of living on the water that prompted them to pull up their Northern roots in the first place. In fact, they now spend most of their time outdoors, lounging on their cozily outfitted deck and enjoying the Intracoastal view. “The deck was almost jarringly white when we moved in, too bright in the direct sun,” says Beth. “But after Margaret had it painted a more natural color, we can’t get enough of it. Right after Thanksgiving, the kids love to start blasting holiday tunes out there and counting down the days until our tree goes up.”

Though the outdoor space is one of Beth’s favorites, the kitchen still comes in first in her eyes—every day, of course, but especially on the days leading up to Christmas. “Each year, one of the kids makes a list of things we have to bake before Santa comes,” she says. “Lulu made it this time around, so we’re going to have peanut butter pretzel bites, cinnamon buns, chocolate kisses cookies, gingerbread houses, and sugar cookies with lots of sprinkles.” And just like that, Christmas arrives for the Langs in South Florida. No snow necessary. **For more information, see Sources, page 98.**

Brielle M. Ferreira is a freelance design and decorating writer based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

From top: The younger daughter’s room is painted Pink Blossom by Benjamin Moore; the comforter, shams, and bench fabric are all by Duralee. Beth and Sean Lang get in the spirit with son Jackson and daughters Lulu and Ella-Ross. **Opposite:** The stockings are from Table Matters, and the gold stocking hangers are from Macy’s.



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