

BAYSIDE

Bliss

A NEWLY BUILT CAPE BURSTS WITH
ART AND NATURAL LIGHT.

BY KELLY CHASE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID WARD



In 2019, Matt Conway purchased a summer home for himself and his three sons. In many ways, it was perfect: located in the charming town of Dennis, in a friendly neighborhood, and just steps from the bayside beaches. “I love the bayside; the low tide goes out forever,” says Conway. “You can sit and watch folks kitesurfing and families picnicking. It just feels like classic Cape Cod to me.”

However, there was no getting around the fact that the 1960s home was dated. Conway called McPhee Associates, and Rob McPhee, president and owner, came by to kick the dirt on the day of Conway’s closing. “I ran through the property with him, but there were too many structural issues, and it made more sense to start from scratch,” says McPhee. The foundation was failing, the original systems were old, and the floor plan was choppy and cramped.

Conway’s main goal was to establish a gathering place for his family. “My oldest just graduated from college, my middle son is a freshman in college, and my youngest son is a rising senior, and I am hoping to create a place where they’ll want to come spend time at the beach, have cookouts, and relax,” says the homeowner. “I don’t know where they’ll go after college, but hopefully, wherever they end up, this place will call them back home.”

Conway worked with McPhee Associates as well as Christine Arcese and Jen Tenney of Lark and Soul, a Duxbury-based interior design firm, to create a custom-built family home. Beginning with the first floor, the team set the tone with an open plan and high ceilings over the kitchen, dining, and living areas. Long wooden ceiling beams, wide-plank oak flooring, and large, lantern-like light fixtures tie the main floor together.

Many of the details were chosen because they are subtly nautical and not overly precious, according to Arcese, making the space sophisticated and modern while also reminding the family and guests to relax and unwind. “He wanted coastal but didn’t want to be super literal,” says the designer.

Conway envisioned the kitchen as a place for conversation and chose a larger island because he likes to cook. “He also wanted as many cabinets as possible, so there is a massive amount of storage,” says Arcese. The maple cabinets (painted Benjamin Moore “Hale Navy HC-154”) were custom designed by Plymouth Rock Kitchens in Plymouth and crafted by Built by Benchcraft. Other details include Enigma Quartz Pharaon countertops—the quartz continues up into the backsplash. Crisp white shiplap wall paneling adds a seaside vibe.

“One kitchen wall is actually a door,” says McPhee. “Press it and it opens to a full pantry with more storage.”

Also at the top of Conway’s list was indoor-outdoor living. Running along the back of the first floor are three sets of French doors, which connect the main living spaces with the deck and yard beyond. Automated screens enclose the deck to protect against bugs. “Having the space open up like that and letting people come in and out without worrying about a screen door has been amazing,” notes Conway.





Outside, two decks are layered on top each other, meaning the lower deck is completely covered. "There is a drop-down television on the lower deck," says McPhee, "so he can hit a button and watch the game outside."

Maximizing the indoor-outdoor layout meant a lot of re-grading. The McPhee team dug deeper than the previous foundation to make room for the lower level; they also established new retaining walls for a pool installation down the road. On the full lower level, the team created many a man's dream space: recreation room, wet bar, bunk room, full bath, and state-of-the-art golf simulator.

Conway requested a main-level bedroom with his parents in mind. The suite includes a separate bath and is tucked away from any bustle. Upstairs is the primary bedroom, which has a full bath with shower, soaking tub, and walk-in closet. On this level, the team placed a laundry room and two additional bedrooms that share a bath.

A locker room inspired the shared bath's design, meaning there are two side-by-side shower stalls and separation between sinks and toilets. "The upstairs was all about maximizing space and using every square inch," says Arcese. "The same is true for the boys' bathroom—multiple people can get ready at once."

For the main living area, Arcese commissioned a piece of art by Hull artist Jackie Ranney, who works with found objects that wash ashore. The two resulting pieces, titled *Knot Works*, include discarded fishing knots. "The big thing with this project is that Matt was willing to take risks and didn't shy away from color or texture," says Arcese.

The Dennis retreat is already fulfilling its original purpose. Conway and his family spent Christmas in the house (he was able to host his sister and parents, too). "It was a special time. It was the ideal gathering place," he says. They visit in winter occasionally, but the house really comes alive and starts to hum come summer.

Everyone is starting to have their favorite destinations, and Conway's is the upstairs deck. "The sun rises on that side," he says. "I can sit there with a cup of tea in the morning, read a book before anyone else is awake, and that is my absolute favorite place to be." 🌊



RESOURCES

Builder + Architect:

MCPHEE ASSOCIATES OF CAPE COD, East Dennis, 508-385-2704, mcpheeassociatesinc.com

Interior Design: **LARK & SOUL**

