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Cottage Charm, Coastal Locale

A bespoke home featuring sight lines to the ocean gets a refreshing renovation.

When renovating a 1974 home for a family with four young children in Laguna Beach, California, inspiration is easy to find. After all, there are few muses better than the large dome of blue SoCal sky intermixed with the serenity of the ocean horizon.

The Fox Group, a full-service residential design and construction firm based in Utah, designed a home that reflects the natural beauty of the setting while giving its clients all the amenities an active family requires.

"The interior evokes a peaceful and calm feeling similar to looking at the ocean," says Cara Fox, lead designer and owner of The Fox Group. "It has charm and style as well."

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ABOVE | FOR THE LOVE OF LINEN. A wonderfully substantial custom couch in the family room is made of performance linen and is big enough for every member to sit in comfort. Overall, the styling vision for the space was, as Cara says, “to include the colors within the ocean, as seen in the bold green and sea glass beads.”

The project was complete in just nine months. Now, built-in cabinetry, soothing color schemes and softly elegant details give new life to the previously lacking layout and interiors.

COLORS OF THE OCEAN

Views were of paramount importance in the design—and how could they *not* be?

The home is situated on a property that offers direct sight lines to the Pacific Ocean. Placement of the windows in the home was key, because they function as frames to the stunning artwork of sea.

“We captured the sense of coastal beauty with all the ocean views in the family room and primary bedroom windows,” Cara points out.

In addition, the homeowners wanted to see the ocean view while standing at the kitchen sink. To accomplish this, The Fox Group blew out the preexisting wall and opened the floor plan—while keeping the original staircase—in order to provide a bit of division and purpose to each space.





TOP | KEY PLACEMENT. Cara and her team wanted the TV to feel integrated and intentional in the family room, so they artfully placed built-in cabinetry around it. They also scaled it to the space, choosing to have it stop before reaching the walls. “We knew that we didn’t want the built-in cabinetry to extend the entire length of the wall, so we stopped it with enough room for a furniture desk, because it added a bit of charm and not too much heaviness to the built-ins,” Cara explains.

ABOVE | MESMERIZING MARBLE. Amid the plentiful wood elements in the kitchen, Carrara marble countertops in a honed finish make the space relaxed, yet elegant. Their sleek surfaces also interplay beautifully with the natural light, adding a gentle ambiance alongside the copper hardware.



KITCHEN QUIRK. “The kitchen was meant to feel quaint and have a sense of charming quirkiness,” Cara says. “In addition to ‘quaint and quirky,’ I would use the words, ‘cottage, coastal, fresh, natural and organic, stylish, timeless, beauty and function,’ to describe it.”

The new windows and layout allow nature’s colors to have an active role in the home—an aspect that’s further highlighted by the palette and materials.

“Our decisions were made with ocean colors in mind,” Cara explains. “Soothing and calming light blues, light taupe/sand colors and whites were natural choices. In addition, we used a lot of natural wood stain to evoke a natural vibe.”

Hints of classic timelessness were added via brass hardware and lighting, although The Fox Group also gave the interiors a fresh twist by selecting modern black windows, creating the perfect framing for the gorgeous views.

SHIPS AHOY! Shiplap covers the dining room for a cottage feel, and the table and seating are mismatched to create a curated style.

CUSTOM CABINETS

Custom details were implemented throughout the residence to give it a personalized and warm sensibility.

"In addition to a coastal aesthetic, the family wanted a very thoughtfully designed cottage," Cara says.

Intentionality in the design and execution elevated the place from a house to a home.

"We thoughtfully included some antique art found in the Hamptons (Long Island, New York) to give the place a feeling of established character, charm and depth," Cara points out.

The Fox Group also brought an inspiring creativity to the project. For example, its team designed around the angled ceiling in the kitchen for a unique quirkiness and used copper hardware to warm everything up, just as the sun would.

Cabinetry is particularly significant in the design. Inset custom cabinetry made by Christopher Scott Cabinetry added to the custom cottage feel, and The Fox Group worked off the principle of using every square inch of space for functional purposes while ensuring artful aesthetics.

A beautiful example of this is the kitchen, where the workmanship of wood and design create a stunning environment. Two-tone cabinetry draws in the kitchen's view of the ocean much more effectively than an all-white palette would have offered.

The cohesive usage of cabinetry continues into the family room, where the TV has built-in shelves on either side and even below it to create a bench for stylish storage. These choices allow the home to be "personal, quaint, collected and filled with character," as Cara says.

The home is now an artisanal oceanside retreat with an inviting, cottage spirit. Through soothing color schemes and bespoke cabinetry, the residence shows how coastal style and cottage charm can, together, create a one-of-a-kind home. [CB](#)

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A BALANCE OF BOOKSHELVES. The interior of the bookshelves in the family room is a beautiful, natural wood finish. "Because the bookshelves are two-toned, they add visual interest with the all-white walls surrounding the built-ins," Cara says.



[TOP, LEFT] DETAILS TO DELIGHT. The hanging bed sidelight fixtures in the guest/children's bedroom are warm and inviting. "They serve as a lamp but add more interior interest," Cara points out.

[ABOVE, LEFT] OPERATION OPEN. Airiness was a priority for the homeowners' bedroom. Rather than expanding the room lengthwise, Cara and her team creatively went upward! "We created vaulted ceilings, giving an airy and open feel."

[TOP, RIGHT] DARK ROMANCE. A dark cabinet is unexpected and striking in the guest/children's bathroom. The shade complements the windows seen throughout the home. Cara says, "The dark color was used to bring in a bit of modern elegance and freshness to the space, similarly to the reason we did black windows throughout."

[RIGHT] A touch of polished brass adds warmth and elegance to the bathrooms.