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Melanie Benecki in
the living room of
her lakeside cabin
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A woman with blonde hair, wearing a colorful floral patterned shirt and white pants, is sitting on a sofa with a black and white checkered pattern. The sofa is positioned in a living room with a wooden ceiling and walls. To the left of the sofa is a large vase with bare branches and a bowl of round fruits. In the foreground, there is a wooden chest with metal hardware. To the right, a white chair with a dark wooden frame is visible. The room features a fireplace surround, a window with a grid pattern, and a door with glass panes.

Melanie Benecki relaxes in the living room of her cabin at Lake Martin, Alabama, that was designed by noted architect Bobby McAlpine. The sofa is one of McAlpine's own designs from his eponymous home furnishings collection with Lee Industries. Black and white photographs of formal French gardens are framed and matted in a strikingly modern fashion. The fireplace surround is concrete. McAlpine purchased the chandelier on the Old Dixie Highway Antiques Row in West Palm Beach.

Sweet Languor



On the shores of Lake Martin, Alabama, architect Bobby McAlpine rethinks the concept of weekend living in a new “old” cabin for Melanie Benecki and her family. Here, modest sophistication is the order of the day.

PRODUCED AND WRITTEN BY CLINTON ROSS SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERICA GEORGE DINES



All of the walls and windows in the cabin, including in this intimate sitting area, are milled of hundred-year-old Canadian cedar. ■ OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A vintage messenger bag features a time-worn patina. Oversize crystal prisms were added to the antique chandelier. Rustic and contemporary design elements work in striking juxtaposition in a passage-way on the main floor. Custom window hardware is elegant in its simplicity. A curtain wall of windows in the living room rises two stories. Sculptural pussy willows frame a photograph of a French garden scene.





Just how much does Melanie Benecki love the lakeside cabin she shares with her husband, Stan, and their family? Well, a lot. So much, in fact, that she keeps a photograph of the home's architect, Bobby McAlpine, on her bedside table. While the picture is kind of a playful nod to the man who designed the house—and whom the Beneckis have since befriended—the sentiment is one of pure endearment.

"Years ago," says Melanie, "I used to go to bed, and in my prayers I would ask for a 'Bobby' house. Now, I sleep in one and I

With windows that wrap around two sides of their top-floor master bedroom, Stan and Melanie Benecki liken the space to a treehouse. ■ **OPPOSITE, LEFT TO RIGHT:** A powder bath features an elevated vanity that seems to float. Sink, Kallista. A combination game room and sleeping area is a favorite retreat for the Benecki's children and their friends.



have to pinch myself." The cabin, located on the shore of Lake Martin, Alabama, is where the Beneckis and their three children—Cydne, 18; Harrison, 15; and Colin, 4—wile away hot summer days.

Neither Stan nor Melanie had been to Lake Martin when Stan met McAlpine there one day to discuss business and to see The Camp at the Ridge, an enclave of cabins designed by the architect that's located within The Ridge at Lake Martin. (The Beneckis' company, Benecki Fine Homes, has collaborated with McAlpine on more than half a dozen projects across the Southeast.) While he was at Lake Martin, Stan toured one of the

finished cabins and was immediately taken by its charm. That was on a Saturday. By Monday, he had urged Melanie to fly down and take a look for herself. "I walked in and immediately said, 'done.'" says Melanie. "I didn't even go out on the lake and I hadn't even seen the view."

McAlpine's inspiration for this cabin, and the others at the compound, is based upon a cabin of his own that he built at the lake 20 years ago. The new versions, including the Beneckis', are more than just houses—they're statements about the suburbanization of the countryside.

THESE CHAIRS WERE DESIGNED BY THE ARCHITECT FOR THE HOUSE. THE SEATING IS COMPOSED OF A ROUND TABLE AND FOUR CHAIRS. THE TABLE IS MADE OF WALNUT AND THE CHAIRS ARE UPHOLSTERED IN A LIGHT FABRIC. THE CHAIRS HAVE A HIGH BACK AND WOODEN ARMRESTS. THE TABLE IS SET WITH A VASE OF BRANCHED TWIGS.



When the barn-style doors and windows in the dining room are opened, the line between indoors and out is blurred. Windows wrap around the entire circumference of the house. The Benecki's dock provides easy access to the lake.



Surrounded by custom seating, the concrete-topped island is a favorite gathering spot for casual dining and conversation. When it's time to entertain, dual ranges and dishwashers are at the ready. Appliances, Jenn-Air. Simple burlap curtains conceal a well-organized butler's pantry.





"I wanted to build an exemplary project that is my understanding of how you should posture yourself when you're at the lake," says McAlpine. The houses should send a message that there is a better way of doing things, he adds. For starters, the cabin's basic design is a box, pure and simple. "That alone is very quietly teaching modesty," says McAlpine. "All you need, literally, is within those four walls." And because the architect fashioned the house entirely out of mature materials—primarily 100-year-old Canadian cedar—the cabin quietly fades into the surrounding wooded landscape. The result is a project that is modest, yet sophisticated at the same time. "You don't have to drag 'town' with you everywhere you go," McAlpine

says. As for the Beneckis, when they're at Lake Martin, there's no doubt that town is the farthest thing from their minds, both literally and figuratively.

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