



Nautical in Norfolk

An airy new reno
opens up a cozy
cottage for family
play all year long.

By Lisa van de Geyn

Photography by Nicole Aubrey





Painting the panelling and fireplace white definitely brightened the space, making it clean and crisp all year.

The custom unit under the television was originally designed as a floor piece, but St. Amand decided to have it mounted, creating a floating cabinet.

Three hours southwest of Toronto

on the shores of Lake Erie in Norfolk County, Turkey Point, Ont., is a summer hotspot for Ontarians—its two kilometres of sandy beaches are ideal for swimmers, and there's plenty of fishing, camping and hiking in the hamlet. While most of designer Sarah St. Amand's clients are in and around the Greater Toronto Area, she says she fell in love with the small beach town after a retired couple contacted her about renovating and redesigning their family cottage, located right on the canal. "They've had the cottage for more than 40 years and really wanted to create a place for their kids and grandchildren to migrate to in the summer," says St. Amand.

The 1,200-square-foot, three-bedroom home had never been renovated and the design had remained the same for most of the last four decades. "The space was quaint but awkward. The layout wasn't working—it just wasn't user-friendly. It also wasn't equipped for year-round living, which was something that had been becoming increasingly important to the grandchildren, who enjoy spending winters cross-country skiing and snowmobiling in the area."

St. Amand and her team took their inspiration from the picturesque landscapes and decided to take a nautical approach when choosing the palette—she went with lots of bright white and navy hues. When it came to renovations, one of the biggest structural changes she made was having the ceiling in the kitchen raised to make the cottage seem more spacious, St. Amand explains. "We were able to keep the existing barn beam, and we painted the pine panelling and fireplace white for a clean look." ▶



She also opted to hang a map of the area from the 1970s above the fireplace to pay homage to the homeowner (a fisherman who enjoys cartography) and hung his prized collection of decoys. “It was important to him to keep these treasures, so we found the perfect spot for them where they don’t encroach on table space.”

The main living areas in the cottage were in desperate need of a refresh. The kitchen was small and the layout made it difficult to comfortably maneuver. “The biggest challenges, though, were dealing with the food-storage and food-preparation problems—there was never enough space for either,” St. Amand says. “So we got creative. We put the microwave in a cabinet to get more counter space and added a pantry, which keeps the couple much more organized.” In the family room, St. Amand chose a large sectional to increase seating and covered it in a pet-friendly fabric for the four-legged members of the family. Yellow—a favourite colour of one of the homeowners—was added in the accent pillows, and it adds to the summery feel of the home. “The couple were shocked when they saw the finished space,” says St. Amand. “It had been so long since they made any substantial changes to the look and feel of the cottage, and they were so glad they finally decided to breathe new life into the space. It’s such a special place for their kids and grandchildren, and now the family can really call it home in every season.”





LEFT: St. Amand went with off-white cabinetry, making them pop against the white backsplash and walls. The addition of wood throughout the home also makes an appearance in the kitchen—here it's over the stove and underneath the countertops.

BELOW: The dining area was opened up and St. Amand chose a stunning live-edge table as the room's showpiece. She surprised the homeowner—an avid birdwatcher—with the framed heron painting, which works perfectly with the cottage's nautical theme.



The bathroom may appear more modern than the rest of the home upon first glance, but that's because there's such a sharp contrast between the white and black accents St. Amand used. The wood around the mirror gives off that cottage feel while the hardware on the cupboards adds a bit of glamour.

