

# Open-Door Policy

This home near the sea blurs the lines between indoors and out with a laid-back surfer vibe and sliding doors that open wide to create the ultimate family home.



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An outdoor rug helps define the seating area on the large deck.

Mark Jones, Shaina Kerrigan, their children, Sophie and Charlie, and dog Mo relax on the oversize porch swing, opposite. Shaina calls it “the gift that keeps on giving” because everyone flocks to it. Having an outdoor living room like this “feels like you gained so much square footage,” says interior designer Katie Monkhouse.



Shaina's goal for the family room—to create a place where a whole crowd of kids could comfortably watch a movie—was achieved with a corner sectional upholstered in washed blue fabric plus a handful of stools and floor pillows. The wall-mounted light fixture takes up no floor space.

**W**alking into Shaina Kerrigan and Mark Jones' home almost feels like you're entering a movie set on the coast. The interiors are airy, beachy, and casual; music is always playing; and the rooms flow right out onto the deck. The strong seaside vibe is not surprising for this couple: He's a lawyer who loves surfing; she's a native Californian and founder of Molly J., a plant-based confections company.

When Shaina and Mark started looking for a home to buy after years of renting, they wanted a place they could make their own, a fixer-upper perhaps. But with two young kids, they eventually decided to go with a house that was move-in-ready. A newly built, two-story Marin County, California, house with a big deck and two sets of oversize patio doors checked many boxes on their wish list.

Shaina called interior designer Katie Monkhouse, whom she'd met through a mutual friend, to help put the family's easygoing stamp on the basic builder home. "It didn't need an overhaul, but it needed life and character," Monkhouse says. "Shaina told me, 'Go wild: Come up with weird stuff.'"

But Monkhouse's first objective was to make the floor plan work. Despite the house's relatively generous size, a center staircase made for narrow rooms on the main level. She arranged the furnishings in the kitchen, breakfast nook, and family

room to promote flow to the outdoor living area and take full advantage of the way the back of the house opens to the deck.

The deck offered the largest span of uninterrupted space, so the family decided to use it for additional dining and seating. Mindful that this is an active family with kids and two dogs, Monkhouse paid particular attention to the flow of foot traffic, making sure there were clear paths. “When you have all the doors open, you can run a loop through the house,” she says.

To keep clutter under wraps, Monkhouse snuck in storage wherever she could. In the closetless entrance, she designed a drop zone for backpacks and coats, and she commissioned a bench with hidden storage beneath the seat for the breakfast nook. She also added doors to some of the open storage in the kitchen, and in the family room, a built-in media console is designed so a pair of ottomans can tuck below it when they’re not in use.

With function covered, Monkhouse wove personality into the interiors but without a decorator’s usual go-to move: “We couldn’t just paint rooms because every room on the ground floor runs into another room,” she says. “We would’ve ended up with a bunch



of accent walls, so we stuck with Simply White from Benjamin Moore.”

The builder had created a strong black-and-white palette with the materials, and Monkhouse strategically picked up small touches of black in the family room rug, the breakfast nook table, and the window treatments. She swapped out basic lighting for interesting fixtures to diminish the spec-house feeling. She also sourced secondhand furniture, such as the rush-seat chairs in the breakfast nook, to add instant patina. To soften the house’s boxy rooms and shiplap walls, Monkhouse used furniture with rounded edges, like the coffee table and ottomans. She added patterned window treatments, colorful throw pillows, and touches of natural wood, rattan, and leather for warmth.

To blur the lines between indoors and out, Monkhouse used a few tricks. In the breakfast nook, she designed one end of

Patterned Roman shades, walnut pendants, two open shelves, rustic wood accessories, and barstools with woven seats add personality to the all-white kitchen, *above*. The family room’s wall-mounted media console, *left*, is just 14 inches deep, so it doesn’t encroach on the traffic flow to the adjacent deck.



Monkhouse designed the breakfast area to hug the wall and leave a clear path out to the deck. For window treatments, she used a variety of patterns in different rooms but stuck to a single fabric in the open-to-each-other kitchen, breakfast nook, and family room for consistency.





the custom bench as a planter to hold a fiddle-leaf fig tree. “You get a big piece of greenery in the middle of the room,” Shaina says, “but it’s built into the furniture, which looks really cool.” The family room’s shiplap wall treatment subtly repeats the linear quality of the exterior siding and the roof, and above the sectional sofa, decorative but realistic-looking surfboards from Tiki Soul Coastal Surfboard Decor celebrate Mark’s passion for surfing.

On the deck, the designer outfitted the space as if it were indoors. A trio of pendants mimics the way lights might be installed over a kitchen island. Same goes for the wood-frame outdoor sectional and chair. “All the outdoor furniture feels like it could be inside,

and the inside furniture feels like it could be outside,” Shaina says. Throw pillows and an all-weather rug turn this part of the deck into a well-appointed outdoor living room.

Then there’s the swinging couch. It answers Shaina’s ask for a sense of fun and has become everybody’s favorite spot to sit. As much as the architecture and furnishings make the inside and outside feel like one, Shaina says the biggest difference-maker can’t be seen: the music of artists like Fleetwood Mac and Bob Marley wafting from speakers installed throughout the home and on the deck. Much like a soundtrack that plays almost unnoticed during a movie, “The continuous music kind of leads you outside. It’s so important to engage all the senses,” she says. ■

On the large deck, which doubles the house’s living space, two of the accordion-style doors are almost always open; all six are ajar when the family entertains. Casement windows open fully rather than halfway as sash windows do. The wide steps enhance the connection to the yard and can act as overflow party seating.

The family decided to use the property’s small outbuilding as a dedicated kid space, wisely keeping kiddie clutter out of the main living room. Simple flagstone pavers create a path between the deck and playhouse.

