

Completed just in time for the holidays, this Beachtown, Texas, cottage has loft-like surprises inside

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# house tour



*Living Large*  
The living room rug is from Dash & Albert; the black table is from Vagabond Vintage. The walls are painted Wickham Gray by Benjamin Moore.





From the outside, Carol and Michael Linn's house in the Galveston community of Beachtown, Texas, has all the hallmarks of a traditional Gulf Coast cottage. A deep, wraparound porch offers panoramic views of the ocean and echoes verandas and galleries found on more formal Southern plantation homes. The metal roof, which features a hipped style (where all sides slope down toward the wall), is a throwback to 19th-century fishing camps. Similar to shotgun floor plans that were common in the region during the 1800s, the slender house is only one or two rooms wide.

But the exterior's historical references belie the industrial-style interior, where San Antonio-based architect Michael Imber and Austin designer Marcus Mohon exposed rather than concealed the house's structural supports, such as wooden posts and beams reinforced with iron braces that offer protection from gale-force winds. Their goal: to choose creative design elements for a result that's strong enough to withstand harsh winds and rain but comfortable enough to fit the couple's laid-back lifestyle. "We wanted to stir things up," says Michael. "We were inspired by the warmth of fishing camps" that dotted the Gulf Coast during the late 19th century, "but we also loved the simplicity of factories, where there's wide-open space with an exposed, rudimentary but storm-proof structure."

Upstairs, the living spaces feature a completely open floor plan, where the kitchen, dining, and living rooms are separated from one another by wood columns rather than walls. Tall windows and 10-foot-high ceilings bring

**Higher Ups**

The ground floor is a mudroom, while the living spaces occupy the second floor. The bedrooms are on the third level.

**Festive Family Fun**  
Cooper, one of the Linns' grandchildren, shows off a gingerbread man he decorated.

**Dine in Style**

The coffered ceiling is painted Woodlawn Blue by Benjamin Moore. The chairs are from Wisteria.







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light into the fluid space, which is decorated in a pale, neutral palette of muted creams, gray taupes, and soft blue greens. Even the stairwell is open, allowing additional light to stream into the long, narrow home. A lime wash on the wide-plank oak floors and distressed finishes on the posts and beams, plus an antique brick fireplace and chimney, help make the warehouse-inspired area feel surprisingly cozy, not cold. “The overall effect is a loft-like space that is open and livable,” says Michael.

On the third level, Michael and Marcus reverted to cottage mode and carved out two bedrooms, a bunk room, and a den under the eaves of popped-out dormers on either side of the house. Marcus used the same muted palette, accented with a few dark elements, in each room upstairs. “Occasional hits of darkness, like the rug in the family room or the artwork in the guest room, work like eyeliner to ground an airy space,” says the designer. Built-in

beds, sloped ceilings, and soft fabrics in traditional motifs such as plaid and ticking stripes infuse the sleeping areas with charm. The layout and decor allow the Linns to accommodate a crowd while maintaining the comfort of a small cottage.

Perhaps more importantly, the Linns can sleep easily knowing that their home will stand the test of time—and nature. “Most new architecture is not built to the standards of old architecture,” Michael says. “When a storm comes through, you can often identify the age of a home based on

**Hallway to Heaven**  
The corridor leads to a sun-dappled porch; the pendant light is from Barn Light Electric.

**Warm Welcome**  
The guest bedroom walls are painted White Heron, a creamy white by Benjamin Moore.

**Movie Time**  
The Linns watch movies in the den. The rug is from Dash & Albert, and the chairs are by LEE Industries.





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how well it fares.” In fact, he found that some of the older building methods were more likely to last than those used in structures constructed during the latter half of the 20th century.

Most area homes built in the past 50 years are on stilts and sheathed in drywall. “When water penetrates those houses, they can become mold gardens. That’s an extremely valuable lesson we learned after Hurricane Katrina,” says Michael. At the Linns’ home, he enclosed the entire ground floor (the level most vulnerable to flooding) in wood, which is less susceptible than drywall to mold. That space—a large area used as a mudroom, with a staircase leading up to the second floor—complies with Beachtown building regulations, which stipulate that living spaces must be built 23 feet above the base flood elevation to protect against tidal surges. At the same time, it offers more charming beach and street facades than houses built on stilts. “Enclosing the house all the way down to the ground allowed us to add a front stoop and a waterfront porch, which connects it to the street, beach, and neighboring houses,” says Michael.

The Linns’ Beachtown home is only an hour’s drive from the family’s Houston base, so it’s an ideal place for everyone to gather for Christmas celebrations. “We built this as a place to get away and spend time with our family,” says Carol. “We love combining the festive feel of the holidays with the relaxed mood at the beach.” With a house as sturdy as this one, they will be able to continue that tradition for years to come. 📍 For more information, see Sources, page 110.

**Bunk Up**  
Built-in beds, painted Benjamin Moore’s Palladian Blue, are dressed with Pine Cone Hill bedding.

**Holiday Cheer**  
The Linns decked their halls with starfish on the tree and a pine-and-magnolia garland.

**Porch with a View**  
Synthetic wicker outdoor furniture from Neoteric Home resists cracking and peeling, even in the coastal elements.

