

# Stargazer Cottage

After an unexpected encounter and a year of hard work, this couple created a lakeside haven worth coming back to.



In the dining room, window treatments by Lacefield Designs feature a floral pattern atop a striking black background—a pattern that reminded Kelly of a local farmers' market she frequents while at the lake house. The fabric pulls in the black wicker chairs at each end of the farmhouse-style table, providing a sophisticated contrast to the softer finish of the Louis XVI-style chairs lining the sides.

While a rainy day at the lake may mean disappointment for most, for interior designer Kelly Kole and her husband, a bit of bad weather led to something life-changing. During a visit to a friend's home on Lake Santeetlah in North Carolina, the couple had a chance encounter that changed everything. "One rainy day, my friend said, 'Let's go look at houses just for fun,'" says Kelly. They went along with the whim and, by the end of the day, had found the home that would become their new summer haven.

What followed was a year of renovations, during which they gutted the home and reworked the layout for functionality. And with a year to make decisions

about finishes and fixtures, Kelly had plenty of time to try something new. "For the first time in my life, I decided to go all neutral, which is very unlike me," she says, noting that the space was "a great laboratory," and that she found inspiration in the home's natural surroundings.

Despite not having worked with an all-neutral design before, Kelly knew how important it was to create interest within the space. To introduce color and texture, she pulled in vintage Turkish rugs, globally sourced textiles, and intentional art choices in every room. Throw pillows repurposed from Indian kantha quilts dot the family room sectional, and a cozy fireplace area was built around a painting commissioned from an Atlanta, Georgia, artist.



The commissioned artwork over the fireplace, around which the structure was designed, is flanked by sconces Kelly had custom made by a couple in Tennessee. "[That painting] was really my pride and joy," she says. "It was kind of the kickoff to how I felt about the whole house."



Warm beams and other wood accents lead up to the centerpiece of the open layout—a kitchen of custom-made cabinets stained a warm brown with, as Kelly says, “a hint of gray.” She adds, “It’s such a tiny kitchen, and that really made the space.” Kelly took the subway tile, paired with a dark brown grout, to the ceiling, topping off the look with live-edge wood shelves and pendant lights inspired by old train depots.

At the end of a day spent socializing in the open living space, the bedrooms offer quiet respite—and plenty of cozy style. More kantha quilts paired with Anthropologie pillows warm up a pair of beds in one guest room, while the other room features a calmer palette, finding its interest in a vintage rug and a macramé wall hanging from Guatemala.

---

A showpiece in the kitchen area, the collection of antique breadboards was inspired by a café in Charleston, South Carolina. “I made it my mission to collect those boards,” Kelly says, noting that most of them are from France and Hungary. “I’m still growing the collection a little bit, but it is definitely the highlight of the kitchen.”



*“This is a place  
for family and  
friends to gather.”*

—KELLY KOLE



"I wasn't sure if I was going to do window treatments in this house, because it's so pretty with the shiplap and all the light," Kelly says while pointing out the drapes in the master bedroom. When she came across this pattern by Lacefield Designs, however, she was struck with the impression of sunlight on the water. "It was such a unique pattern that I said, 'That's it—I'm doing window treatments.'"



- AS SEEN IN -  
THE COTTAGE JOURNAL  
© HOFFMAN MEDIA 2021



And while the inside of the house is welcoming and cozy, the outdoors are the main attraction. “This lake is really a hidden gem,” Kelly says. With double porches perfect for everything from morning coffee to evening cocktails and an extra-large dock that encourages plenty of waterside activities, there’s no shortage of opportunities for soaking up the sun—but the beauty doesn’t disappear at sundown.

“When my husband would visit the home during construction . . . we had this rickety little dock at the time,” says Kelly. “And he would go out at night and lay on his back and look up at the sky and call me and say, ‘I’ve never seen stars like this in my entire life.’” The experience earned the home the name “Stargazer” and set the tone for a haven that would keep the Koles coming back every weekend of the summer—rain or shine. 📍

TEXT BY BETHANY ADAMS  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LAUREN RUBINSTEIN



- AS SEEN IN -  
THE COTTAGE JOURNAL  
© HOFFMAN MEDIA 2021