

MADE FOR EACH OTHER

Southern traditions and English style naturally
meld in a family's Austin residence.

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Interior Design: Sara Malek Barney, BANDD/Design

For Kim and Tom Chappell, a West Coast couple who relocated to Austin just weeks after welcoming their third child, finding a designer to feather their new nest was a critical need. “I wanted it to be finished and decorated by the time we moved in,” Kim recalls. To their rescue came designer Sara Malek Barney, whose local firm first caught the couple’s attention online. Together, they all set their sights on a house by architect Adam Steiner and Nalle Custom Homes. For this abode, which features ample square footage and a large yard for the young family, Barney instinctively knew the way forward: finding common ground in the couple’s stylistic tastes.

“My clients have different opinions, but they can see eye to eye,” Barney explains. Kim grew up in Georgia and favors traditional design, namely “monograms, pinstripes and tufted pieces,” the designer notes. On the other hand, British-born Tom, a former designer, skews more modern. With Venn diagram-like precision, Barney identified their area of overlap as a simplified spin on English-cottage style. It speaks to the husband’s roots in Northwest England and reminds the wife of her childhood in Atlanta. “My aesthetic and Southern really go hand in hand,” Tom says, “so we were able to make it work nicely.”

What none of them wanted, however, was anything that felt themed. Nary a chintz nor a ruffle is to be found in these contemporary rooms, and yet, they all have a decidedly charming feel. Barney and her project manager, Meghan Kardow, enhanced and added to already existing elements such as the ceiling beams and wood paneling while creating continuity between each room through the palette. “I always use color, but softer hues as opposed to a Crayola box,” Barney explains of her chosen buffs, blues, grays, greens and pinks. “The house initially featured a lot of white, which we updated with a more muted scheme,” she continues. “This involved adding layers of color for depth, and incorporating pattern through textiles, wallpapers and herringbone floors.”

The couple, meanwhile, focused on practicality for the furnishings. “We wanted a balance of pieces that are polished but not precious,” Kim says. To that end, Barney imbued the rooms with a comfortable, walk-in-the-countryside spirit. Woven catch-all baskets tucked under the entryway’s ebonized-oak table create an immediate sense of ease, while repurposing the existing dining room table and chairs honors the owners’ past. In the kitchen (where an expanse of open floor space often doubles as a dance floor), the designer intensified the palette by painting the lower cabinets a light blue. “It worked well with the white oak; it’s English cottage, but not at all frilly,” she describes. That palette returns in the formal yet inviting living room, where new upholstered seating pairs with meaningful pieces. These include both an antique chest of drawers from the clients’ previous residence and a landscape painting of Spanish oaks in Sea Island, Georgia, by artist Ken Wallin—a sweet reminder of where the couple wed.

This home also provided the family a chance to truly personalize their spaces. “We wanted a real Mom-and-Dad area,” Tom explains, noting they had not prioritized their bedroom in previous homes. Now, however, these parents have the retreat they always envisioned, made all the more inviting by a fireplace. The children also had a say in their rooms, with the daughter helping select her own wallpaper. “They’re at an age where they have a lot of opinions, so we wanted them to be involved,” Tom says. And along with a polished office for Kim and an upstairs family hangout (complete with a big sectional and projector screen for cozy family gatherings), you’ll find a guest suite nicknamed “The Cottage” situated above the garage. “It gave us the opportunity to have some fun with the design,” says the husband, referencing the double queen-size beds and wallpapered ceiling. Adds the wife: “Tom’s family visits from England for long stretches, so we wanted them to have an escape, and it feels like their very own little bed-and-breakfast.”

It’s safe to say this home came together with everyone in mind. “They live a real life here,” says Barney of her clients. “We put a lot of love and care into this house, and we all won.” 🏡



Southern luxury blends with European charm in this home designed for a young family. Hanging above the iron entry door by Olympus Doors is a Charleston yoke-mount light from French Market Lanterns.



Left: In the entry, a custom wall-mounted console from Mockingbird Made mingles with a Cleo lamp from Visual Comfort & Co. and vintage mirror found on 1stdibs. The ceiling light is from Rejuvenation.

Opposite: A CB2 table and Pierre Jeanneret chairs ground the dining room. Palmer Hargrave's Mallory ceiling fixture is from George Cameron Nash. Sheer Kravet draperies lend a luminescent feel.





Above: Kitchen cabinetry painted Farrow & Ball's De Nimes complements a vintage rug found on Etsy. Brass accents include a Waterworks faucet from Alexander Marchant, Savoy House Glenn wall sconces from Hinkley, Inc. and pulls from Rejuvenation.

Opposite: The clients' barstools sit below Gale pendants from Visual Comfort & Co. in the kitchen. A backsplash of white quartzite with gray veining joins a window shade in Schumacher's Sierra print.



Right: William Morris' Pimpernel wallpaper from Culp Associates partners with moody subway tile in the powder bath. Geneva sconces from Visual Comfort & Co. flank Arteriors' Edmund mirror. The Waterworks faucet is from Alexander Marchant.

Opposite: The office features an Uplift Desk design and Serena & Lily chair. Spoonflower's wallpaper meets paneling painted Benjamin Moore's Rushing River. Currey & Company's Eduardo chandelier illuminates a Jaipur Living rug.





Left: An existing desk and RH chair appear in a child's bedroom. The Anthropologie mirror reflects walls covered in Wallpaperie's Avignon pattern in Blush.

Opposite: Worlds Away side tables and Crate & Barrel lamps frame an Anthropologie rattan bed, which rests on a Jaipur Living rug. A Patricia Round chandelier from Made Goods lights the space.

