

# SUMMER CENTRAL

*A rustic pool barn and pool rewrite  
Cape Cod family fun*

The moment homeowner/interior designer Jill Morelli bought a salvaged soapstone sink from a Boston restoration store, she had a call to make. She phoned her husband to say, "I think we're doing the barn, because I just bought the sink."

The two had been debating about whether to restore the barn on their Cape Cod property and turn it into a cool, multipurpose pool house/garage to accompany a new pool terrace and stow their dune-riding Jeep. Having just finished renovating their main home, they hadn't quite decided to take the plunge. The soapstone sink sealed the deal, and they're glad it did. The family's pool barn and outdoor oasis has been a game changer for summers on Cape Cod.

The sink would sit in storage for a year or two before architect Peter McDonald of Peter McDonald Architect would write it into his design plan and Cape Associates would build it into the kitchen of a new pool house/garage. But first, they'd assess if the existing barn could be used, says McDonald, which is always the preference. Once it was determined to be beyond hope, Cape Associates saved the "special and unique beams of the old barn," says President and CEO Matt Cole, to be later repurposed for outdoor furniture. Meanwhile, McDonald, a contextualist, looked to the shape and details of the old barn (i.e. the roof edge and faces) to inform a new design that would "resurrect an old form yet treat it in a modern way," he shares.

Together with the homeowner, who, by all accounts brought out the best in this project and operated as an extension of the design team, a clear vision was hatched for a rustic but modern poolside barn that would "frame the property nicely, connecting the backyard to the



"It's so easy to have friends over. Gone are the days of entertaining in the house. People can just come over and go straight to the barn."

—Jill Morelli

home, and create an entertaining space for those enjoying the pool or simply enjoying a cocktail in the barn," says Cole. The no-fuss aesthetic would mingle cedar and horizontal shiplap, exposed rafters and wall studs, oversized hardware, less-is-more lighting, non-slip concrete floors and no fewer than four vertical grain cedar barn doors—all with a slightly different design and copper screens.

The barn doors were a given from the start, as the homeowners wanted a structure that opens wide to the pool and landscape in the summer and closes for the winter. The barn doors were custom—some double, French-door style, others sliding—but all with generous openings. "You can drive a tractor into this barn and put hay in the loft," laughs McDonald.

Or, you can have a full view of the kids swimming at all times and feel connected to the grounds and pool. The voice of landscape architect Kimberly Mercurio of Kimberly Mercurio Landscape Architecture was key in planning the overarching design scheme. "It was really important that the pool house open in two directions," she says, "so that you could get that view of the pool from inside."

The pool terrace intersects with the pool house, and boasts a similarly clean-lined aesthetic comprised largely of grass, wood and bluestone

and a sparkling, highly-detailed pool with extra thick coping and silk-smooth water, thanks to its UV light and ozone cleaning system. The bluestone terrace is inlaid with thyme, which emits a lovely scent when underfoot, while privet hedges line a custom white cedar pool enclosure fence. Liriope, a low grass with purple flowers in August, Himalayan birch and a few hydrangeas round out the softscape. The effect is striking and altogether seamless. Says Mercurio, "The barn does not exist without the pool or the terrace. They are all interconnected."

The design trifecta is also functional, as all elements facilitate stress-free entertainment. "It has made it really easy to enjoy the Cape without ever leaving our house," says Morelli. Now, instead of anticipating the needs of a full house for a day at the beach and constantly packing and repacking food and sweatshirts, the family simply sends out a group text. "People either show up or they don't, and everyone just rolls outside."

Architecture: Peter McDonald Architect  
 Construction: Cape Associates  
 Landscape Architecture: Kimberly Mercurio Landscape Architecture  
 Interior Design: Jill Morelli  
 Pool: Custom Quality Pools  
 Photography: Michael Conway, Means-of-Production.com  
 Text: Sandy Giardi

Top: The largest screen is custom and rides on barn door hardware, while the smaller openings use a material like mosquito netting. Come nightfall, the copper screens glow with a warm light. Cape Associates recycled the beams of the former barn to create patio furniture designed by the homeowner. Lower, from left: A loft space with hanging hammock chairs is a second-story hangout for the kids. The exposed cement floor was stained and waxed to match the bluestone terrace, and went through many rounds to get the right color, texture and look. Middle: Cape Associates installed shiplap on an open rough frame and built the painted wood kitchen around the soapstone sink. The screen door slides into the slot on the end of the cabinetry. Right: McDonald is a big believer in proportion and feels they got it right with the oversized openings and windows. "When you walk into that space, it kind of uplifts you a little bit."

