



Clockwise from top left: Vintage pieces include this reupholstered Eero Saarinen Womb chair; the faux crocodile coffee table doubles as a drink tray; a striking slab of turquoise agate is the dining table top.

As an interior designer, Michelle Gerson (michellegerson.com) is no stranger to makeovers. “All I do is renovate homes,” says the vivacious design maven. So when it was time for Gerson and her husband, Rob Wartell, to purchase a home in the Hamptons,

she wanted a turnkey place they could move into without any fuss. “I wanted something really easy,” she says. As it turned out, she had no such luck. The Southampton home that ticked most of the boxes on their wish list—a 3,800-square-foot, four-bedroom ranch on an acre of land close to the

Accent on Comfort

DESIGNER MICHELLE GERSON RELIED ON INGENUITY AND A MIX OF MIDCENTURY AND CUSTOM FURNISHINGS TO TURN A DATED RANCH HOUSE INTO A FAMILY COMFORT ZONE.

BY JEAN NAYAR

beach and close to town—needed a complete interior gut job. “We bought it on Mother’s Day, and my husband said, ‘Here’s your gift.’” With gift in hand, she embraced the task of making the house an inviting getaway home for herself and her husband, their young son, Finn, and their bubbly dog, Bernice.

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“We were living in the city in a box on top of somebody else’s box, so we needed more than a summer house; we needed a place to really get away, spread out and light a fire in winter,” says the designer. The inspiration for her decor, she says, revolved completely around one word: “comfort.” She started by ripping out and redoing the kitchen, reconfiguring a laundry, two baths and a couple of bedrooms, and replacing the floors throughout with 10-inch-wide planks of oiled European white oak. She then proceeded to turn each room into an easy-care comfort zone with a mix of custom and midcentury furnishings.

Among the vintage highlights are two Eero Saarinen Womb chairs, which Gerson reupholstered in sheepskin in the living room, and some Hans Wegner hoop chairs in the den, which is separated from the living room with a new sliding barn door. “My husband likes to watch football on a ginormous TV in the den, so the door is really good for our marriage,” says Gerson with a smile. Custom pieces, like the faux crocodile skin coffee table that doubles as a drink tray in the living room and the stunning slab of turquoise agate that serves as the dining table top in an open dining space beyond the kitchen, are as artful as



they are pragmatic. And a few bold gestures, such as the dramatic Fornasetti wallpaper in a powder room or the bright apple-green grasscloth wallpaper in a guest room, enliven the otherwise neutral spaces with shots of pattern and color.

So content were the family with their new home after Gerson applied her creative touches to the interiors that they ultimately opted to spend their summers there. “It’s our happy place,” she says. “We love it here.” ■



Clockwise from top left: The bright apple-green wallpaper seen in the guest room complements the otherwise neutral palette in the home; gorgeous tableware doubles as decor in the kitchen; unique wood furnishings topped with modern decor in the guest room; Gerson wanted “comfort” to be the driving force of the family’s summer home.