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This page: 32-foot-high cathedral ceilings and random-width antique heart-pine floors make the great room appear larger than it actually is. **Right:** Inspired by agricultural-style architecture, the house comprises a series of connected structures.



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lofty plans

Inspired by a potato barn, a couple builds a contemporary farmhouse in the middle of Long Island

HELAINÉ AND JACK FISCHER STARTED out their life together living in a converted potato barn in a woody area of Bridgehampton, New York, located near the eastern tip of Long Island. They loved the barn's airy feel but longed to build a house of their own on more open land. Since Helaine is a local real-estate agent, she was easily able to scout out the perfect piece of former farmland for their new home—a narrow lot only 150 feet wide and 400 feet long that felt spacious because of the lack of trees and unobstructed

vistas. Best of all, the views they fell in love with are protected, since a scenic horse farm lies on one side and a 32-acre nature preserve on the other.

Finding the right architect was a fairly effortless process, too, since well-known Hamptons architect Bruce Nagel was Jack's landlord at his law office. The Fischers had a few requests for their new house; they wanted to recreate the open, airy feeling of their potato barn, and they wanted the place to have just one story to avoid the hassle of stairs. With plenty of involvement

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK SAMU STYLING BY LUCIANNA SAMU

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from the Fischers, Nagel designed a clever single-floor house plan, a light-filled space with a roomy, 3,000-square-foot interior on the narrow lot. The house is essentially a series of three small structures connected to a main structure, reminiscent of agricultural-style architecture. The main structure holds the great room, kitchen, dining room, and master suite, and a sunroom. It connects to the other buildings through hallways lined with windows. One of the adjoining structures holds the private master suite. Another has two bedrooms and a bath, and the third has yet another bedroom

and bath, powder room (convenient to the pool), and a two-car garage. "The design gives visual and acoustic privacy since the structures are completely independent," says Nagel. It's the perfect set-up for accommodating frequent summer guests.

The single-story design also ensures that many rooms are accessible to outdoor areas. The master bedroom, for instance, has French doors that open out to the patio, giving the Fischers easy access to the hot tub and the pool. The guest bedrooms in the adjoining structures also have outdoor access.

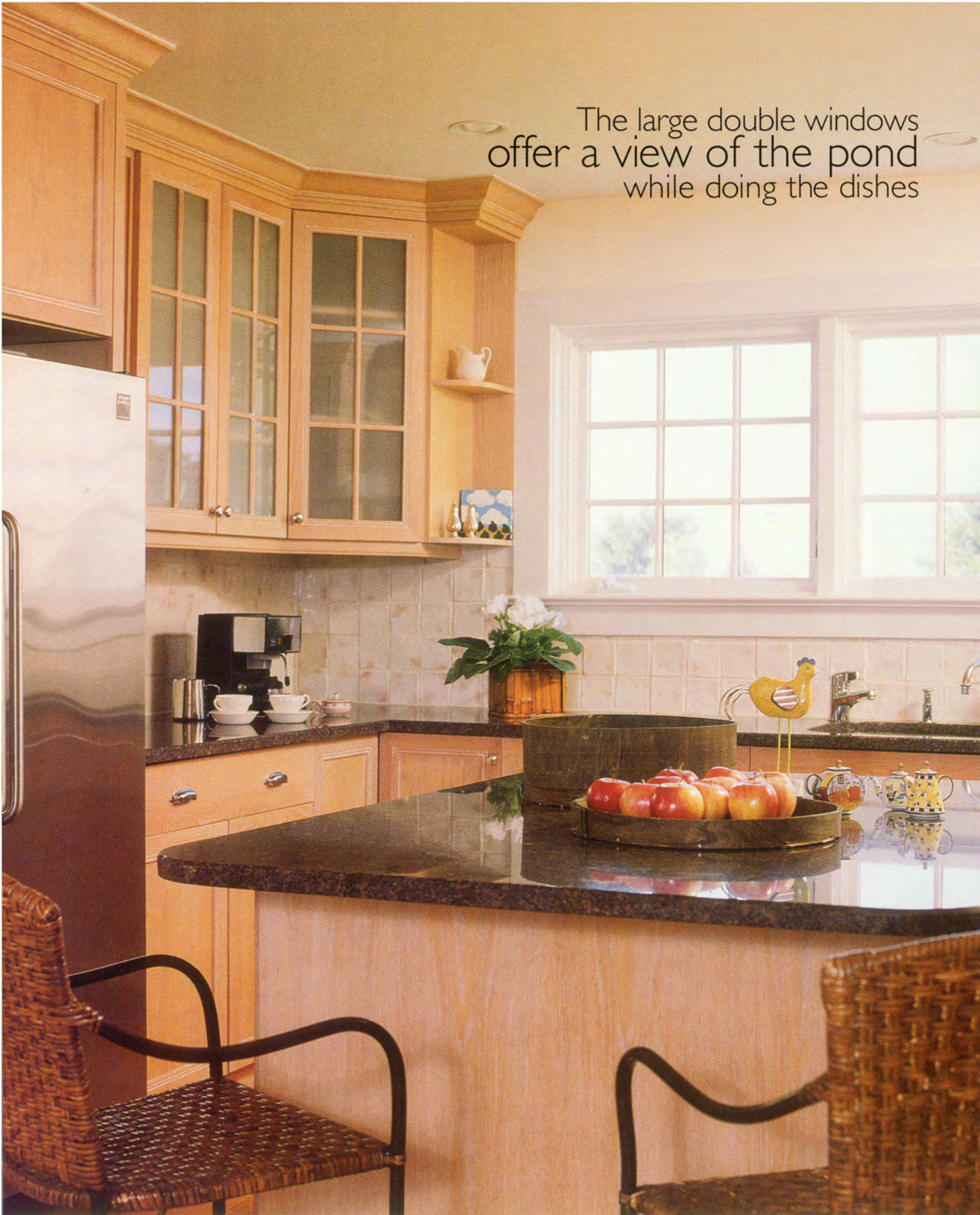
Above: The sunroom provides a perfect spot for enjoying the outdoors while providing warmth during Long Island winters.

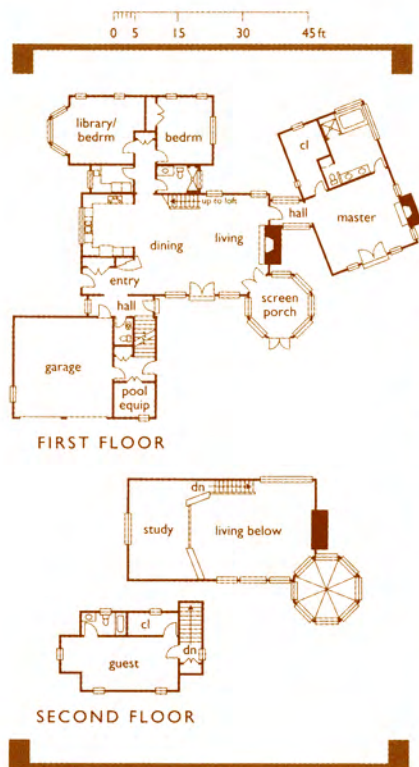




Owner and designer Helaine Fischer used white matelesse on the sofas and cotton duck slipcovers on the dining room chairs for a relaxed, easy design. She repeated the white palette in all the rooms for a unified look throughout the house.

The large double windows offer a view of the pond while doing the dishes





Above: The steps lead to a small sitting loft that looks out over the dining area. **Top right:** The granite work island also has drawers for storage and doubles as a sideboard during dinner parties.

The Fischers held tight to their single-floor ideal, but they did acquiesce to one set of stairs; the steps lead to a cozy sitting loft that features a picturesque circular window. This small compromise enhances the overall lofty dimensions of the great room that make the house seem so much larger than it actually is.

The result of all this careful planning is a residence fully designed to accommodate Helaine and Jack's lifestyle. The main structure boasts 32-foot-high cathedral ceilings, abundant windows, and an open floor plan that's a perfect setting for frequent entertaining. The kitchen was kept on the small side since Helaine and Jack both have grown children and didn't need a large kitchen for the two of them. It doesn't actually appear small, however, since it opens

unobstructed to the dining room and great room beyond. The perfect set-up for gatherings, the kitchen has a smartly placed island, that keeps guests out of the work triangle while allowing the chef to mingle during cooking. Helaine's favorite feature: a bank of wide windows above the sink that allow her to look up over the pond.

For the winter months when the great room is hard to keep warm, the Fischers hang out in the master bedroom. It was designed with plenty of room to lounge in, not just sleep. "They wanted their bedroom to be a more intimate living room," says Nagel. "More than just a sleeping space, it's also a room where they can sit by the fire, read, or watch TV together." The spacious master bath gets plenty of hang-out time, too—especially the soaking

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KEEP IT CLEAN

Designing an open, airy, uncluttered bathroom is not as easy as it looks. Here are a few of Helaine Fischer's ideas for making any bathroom bright and organized:

- Keep cabinets, tiles, and towels white for a unified palette.
- Vary your built-in storage solutions; provide drawers as well as cabinets to accommodate different types of items.
- Limit items that are on the sink or in the shower; store toiletries in drawers.
- For a cleaner look on the walls, don't use curtains on the windows.
- Use glass doors on the shower to make the room appear larger.



Top right: Wood on the floor and surrounding the tub makes the space warmer, says Nagel.

Above and bottom right: The Waterworks shower head and fixtures are French style with exposed hardware. The shower is surrounded by glass so that the bathroom also reflects the open design of the rest of the house.



tub tucked under a corner window, kept free of the muntins that adorn the other windows in the house. Best of all, no window treatments are necessary in the master bath, since it's on a private side of the house, which means plenty of sunshine.

Helaine designed the interiors herself to make sure they were a reflection of their own

easy style. "I wanted the interior to be simple and comfortable," she says. Antique heart-pine floors and white walls set the stage for the fuss-free design. Helaine unified the house with an all-white palette of soft, comfortable upholstery and linens that flows seamlessly from one room to the next. "I like the palette to be neutral and have the accessories and flowers provide the color and mood," she says.

Many of Helaine's design decisions were inspired by her experience as a real-estate broker. "I look at houses all day and in the process of planning the house, I got lots of ideas—from flooring to tiles." Now we can get ideas from this clever house. ■

The roomy master bedroom has the bed, sofa, and chairs all positioned to face the fireplace.



“Keeping the palette white allows me to change the mood with furniture, accessories, and art,” says Helaine

a perfect fit

design to fit

Plan a house that blends in beautifully with your neighborhood

WRITTEN BY SARA BLISS

WHEN YOU START TO PLAN YOUR DREAM HOME, YOU have dozens of different factors to consider, from its size to where to place the house on the land. But one of the most crucial decisions comes early in the process: how to create a home that fits in with its surrounding environment. Consider the climate (a log home on the Florida beaches? a clapboard beach house in the mountains?) and look to the other houses in the neighborhood. Ultimately, you'll want a place that nestles in with its surroundings. Here are a few ideas to get you started.

■ Pay attention to other houses in your neighborhood. Builder Michael McLaughlin always suggests that his clients tour the area and get to know the local architectural styles. He then has them photograph the houses they like, which gives him and his clients a starting point.

■ Make sure your place will enhance your experience in your environment. Whether you add extra windows to get a better look at beautiful ocean views or perch your mountain house so you can ski out the door, let the design complement and celebrate your choice of habitat.

■ Take cues from historical design. If you are in a historic neighborhood you probably chose it because you like the particular style that is represented, so let the older homes inspire your new one. McLaughlin suggests studying nearby historic homes so you can design a new version with modern elements that complement the historic design.

■ Use materials that look natural in the environment. For example, fir logs look perfect in the mountains but wouldn't work for a house by the beach. ■

Top: A log home with rustic interiors is perfect in mountain settings. **Bottom:** Unadorned windows and fuss-free decorating is just right in a contemporary farmhouse.

