

make it home

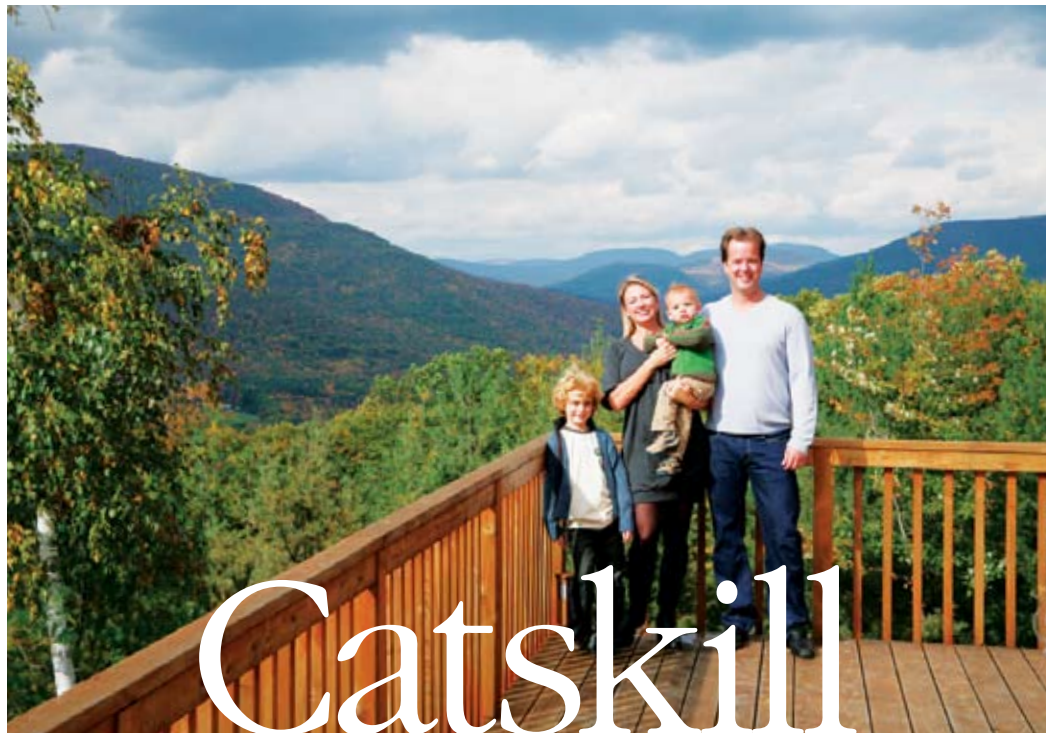
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PHOTO: DIEG MARCH

AS FEATURED IN

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Catskill Mountain High

In a forest upstate, the Andersons have built a home that has something for everyone

When guests arrive at Phil and Leigh Ann Anderson's home in the Catskill Mountains, the first thing they're shown is its spacious back deck. Phil stands at the railing and reels off the names of his neighbors: Slide Mountain, Wittenberg, Cornell and Panther Mountain.

At that moment, the Catskill High Peaks unfold in a nearly unbroken panorama—only a glimpse of a trestle bridge and a single mowed meadow serve as reminders that other people might live down there somewhere.

A grove of white birches edges the property, mottling the deep greens of hardwoods and pines. There's wild mountain laurel that blooms in the springtime and red sugar maples that blaze in the fall. The constantly changing beauty has given the house its name: Quattro Stagioni, Italian for "four seasons."

"The deck is probably the most used part of our house," says Leigh Ann. "A lot of wine-drinking goes on out here." A lot of good living of every sort, it would seem: The deck also sports three sunbathing chaises, a barbecue grill and a tricycle. There is something for everyone.

"Everyone" includes Phil, a hedge fund manager in Manhattan; his wife, Leigh Ann, a Continental *continued*

Story by **Nina Shengold** | Photography by **Oleg March** | Styled by **Cathryn Sachs**



Rising to 26 feet at the center, the great room's glass and wood prow is a showstopper.

Opposite: The Anderson family enjoys panoramic views of the Catskill High Peaks from the deck.



The dining area shows off the house's exposed beams and an eco-wood table from ABC Carpet.



Leigh Ann Anderson calls this view from the master suite's balcony "what I work for."

Airlines executive; her son Hudson, 7; and the Andersons' 3-year-old, Cole. There could be a few more guests during weekends, as the Andersons enjoy having friends stay over.

Of course they all get to know the story of the house that's shaped like an arrowhead, pointing toward sunset. Even at noon, stepping through its front door evokes gasps. The great room's angled prow, a soaring, magnificent structure of cedar and glass, welcomes the vista so fully that the furniture seems to be nestled in mountains and sky.

Phil wanted to build his getaway house on a hillside with southwest exposures and wraparound views. Though most of the Realtors he contacted said his dream property didn't exist, Phil found a private developer, Steve Orbach, who was willing to sell some prime acreage next to his own hilltop home.

"It was all dense forest back then," recalls Phil, who bought the land in 2001. "You couldn't see the mountains at all." Except from two places: Orbach's driveway, and a jutting boulder near what would soon be the Andersons' home.

"That boulder has a lot of history," Phil says. "Leigh and I got engaged on that rock."

Leigh Ann, a self-described "city person" with a yen for tropical beaches, was not completely taken by Phil's idea of a dream house. The first time Phil brought her to the site, on a cold, drizzly day with low fog obliterating the mountains, she refused to get out of the car. But Phil was in love with the land, and she was in love with him. So she agreed to return on a sunnier day, and the view from their so-called "Engagement Rock" sealed the deal.

The house is a magical place for the couple. Just after construction was finished, in June of 2006, Phil and Leigh Ann were formally married in their very own great room, with Hudson and Cole in attendance.

"I knew that was the kind of home we wanted: big decks, post and beam construction, open floor plan, a lot of big windows," says Phil, referring to a Lindal Cedar home he saw advertised in a magazine.

He and Leigh Ann contacted Lindal distributor Ridgetop Builders Inc. and met Ulrike Wundrack-Lippner, a German-born designer and general contractor who oversaw the design and building of their home.

Phil and Leigh Ann sketched the house they envisioned on the back of a napkin. One feature they both loved was Lindal's trademark prow, with its twin walls of windows and vaulting interior space. They had other requirements as well: an open, flowing space for entertaining, an eat-in kitchen where two or more cooks could collaborate freely and guest rooms with privacy and outdoor access. They also wanted childproof cabinets and soundproofing to accommodate classical music (hers) and Metallica (his).

To accommodate the Andersons' love of entertaining and cooking for a crowd, Leigh Ann and Wundrack-Lippner designed a hidden pocket door between the kitchen and dining area. "After we cook, I can pull it closed and pretend there are no dishes in there!" says Leigh Ann.

If their families and friends gush over their stay in the Andersons' home, it is because Leigh Ann and Phil planned the house with hospitality in mind.

Overnight guests have the whole lower floor to themselves, with convertible couches for additional children. (The house can sleep 12.) There's a home office designed to multitask as an accessible ground-floor bedroom for aging parents.

"They were excellent clients," says Wundrack-Lippner, who is known to the Andersons as Rea. "They could make quick decisions,

continued



The sun-flooded "Bali room" (at left) and the kitchen island offer informal options for family meals.



From the Four Seasons in Bali to Quattro Stagioni in New York, a vintage-styled tub offers a luxurious soak with a view.

they knew what they wanted, and I could work with their vision.” Since her background includes interior design as well as contracting, Rea knew how to harmonize options like exposed hardware, modern and Craftsman-style trim.

The engineering challenges were considerable, as the house’s three stories are cantilevered out over a steep, rocky hillside. Rea engaged local contractors Harmony Builders, and the construction process took 15 months. The Andersons drove up every few weeks to check on the progress of the 6,200-square-foot structure.

“We really got to know the builders,” says Phil, detailing a virtual army of carpenters and craftsmen. Local stonemason John Loiacano assembled the towering bluestone fireplace piece by piece. Jerry Stehlin of Jerry’s Wood Floors hand-finished the hardwood flooring. At one point, a high-end lighting designer came up from New York City to consult on fixtures and placement, including a cluster of

George Nelson bubble lamps in the great room. “Everyone did such beautiful work,” says Leigh Ann.

As soon as construction was finished, the Andersons threw a catered housewarming party for the whole crew and their families. “I thought the floor guy was going to have a heart attack,” Phil laughs. “He’d just finished all these mahogany floors, and a week later, there were 75 people walking on it, kids were running everywhere.”

That joyous occasion, and the wedding that followed, apparently marked only one phase of the Andersons’ evolving dream. A swath of land below the hill has been cleared for an infinity-edge swimming pool, which they

hope to put in by next summer. Someday they’ll get around to building a pagoda-style pool house, and after that, who knows?

For now, Leigh Ann is preoccupied with decorating their house with her personal touches. Last year, she collaborated with Milford, Pa.-based designer Cathryn Sachs to pull everything together.

The Andersons like to travel, thus a sunroom off the kitchen features a coconut-shell table they found in Bali. The Italian ceramics were bought on their honeymoon on Italy’s Amalfi coast and a painting in the master bedroom from Buenos Aires.

The master bath is palatial, with a double-sided marble fireplace, a skywall glass roof, and an extra-deep Kohler bathtub. “I had to have that,” grins Leigh Ann, who fell in love with the tub at the Four Seasons Resort in Bali.

The master suite also features a small balcony with a café table for two. Leigh Ann keeps a photo of it on her desk in Manhattan. “This is what I work for,” she says. “My goal all week is to be on that deck, drinking my Italian red wine.”

Her husband agrees. Though neighboring Woodstock has plenty of restaurants and cultural life: “We come up here and don’t want to leave the house.” Unless it’s right after an 18-inch snowfall, when he and the boys like to sled and ski down the front yard, a steep, breathless run.

“This will be our retirement home someday, so we built it as our dream home, everything we want in life,” Leigh Ann smiles. “It excites me to drive down my driveway.” ■

Resources

Site Evaluation, Design Services, General Contracting, Materials
Ridgetop Builders, independent distributor for Lindal Cedar Homes
Ulrike Wundrack-Lippner
 973-728-7944
lindal.com/ridgetop

Construction, Subcontracting for Local Artisans
Harmony Builders
 845-688-7145
harmonybuilders.com

Interior Decoration
Miss Money Penny
Cathryn Sachs
 570-686-1714
missmoneypenny.us



Above: Some weekend guests favor the “Jungle Room”; others, the Mediterranean-styled guest room that Leigh Ann calls “sort of La Dolce Vita/St. Tropez.”

Below: Bold colors and recessed lighting bring big drama to a small space.

