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SUMMER LIVING





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A scenic view from a balcony overlooking a body of water. In the foreground, a wooden slatted chair is partially visible on the left, and a dark wooden balcony railing runs across the bottom. The water is calm, reflecting the sky and the surrounding landscape. A white sailboat with a tall mast is docked at a pier on the left. In the background, a wide expanse of marshland with golden-brown grasses stretches to the horizon under a clear, light blue sky. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene, typical of a coastal summer setting.

Leisurely afternoons. Backyard games. Sunshine. Adventures on the water. Dining alfresco. Lounging at the beach. These elements make up the best of summer living. The homes featured on the following pages embrace the spirit of summer. Enjoy this peek into each of the four residences and allow them to inspire you in your own aesthetic dreams for your home.



ISLAND DREAMS

STEVEN HERLONG OF CHARLESTON'S HERLONG & ASSOCIATES TURNED A CHALLENGING PROJECT INTO A DREAM HOME

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No matter how the real estate market is faring, it's rare that a marshfront home goes up for sale on Sullivan's Island. The location is ideal—the exclusive, high-end beach community is located about fifteen minutes from downtown Charleston, South Carolina. So when a husband and wife were running on the backside of the island early one summer morning in 2002 and came across a marshfront property that had literally just gone on the market, they were stunned. “We stopped and said we have to see this house,” says the husband. “Back then—during the height of the real estate market—homes weren't staying on the market very long.” Plus, the timing was right for the couple—with two-year-old twin boys and a one-year-old son, they'd recently decided they needed to expand. And the location was perfect, as the family lived just three blocks away in a smaller, older home.

Within the hour the couple had put in a call to their friend and neighbor Steven Herlong of the architecture firm Herlong & Associates, which designs residences throughout the Southeast coast. “Once he saw it he said, ‘If you don't buy it, I will,’” says the husband.

The couple purchased the home and lot in 2002 and began working closely with Herlong to create a home that accommodated their growing brood. Instead of trying to renovate and add onto the existing structure, the couple and Herlong decided to tear down the home and start anew. But the

unusual lot shape—a rectangular lot that sat horizontally across the marsh and Cove Creek, which leads out to Charleston Harbor—presented some challenges for the homeowners and Herlong. “I think a challenging piece of property is always going to give someone the most interesting house plan,” says Herlong. “Those challenges give us something to work around.” Herlong and the homeowners opted for a plan that resembled a barbell—larger on the two ends and narrower in the middle. The result: waterfront views from nearly every room in the three-story, 4,165-square-foot home.



Because of the minimal yard, Herlong decided to have guests enter on the first floor in lieu of the traditional stairs and large porch often found on beach properties. "All of those things take up valuable real estate property," says Herlong, "and we just didn't have it to give it up." The first floor has a small foyer that serves as a tunnel of sorts, drawing guests' eyes to the back of the home to a view of the water. Two enclosed screen porches—one with a Ping-Pong table and the other with a hot tub—round out the first floor. On the second floor, the homeowners opted to add a playroom for the boys, a laundry room, a study, a guest bedroom, and the boys' bedroom—a dual bunk-bed setup with a playful aquatic aesthetic.

Up the stairs to the main level features the living room, dining room, family room, master bedroom, and the impressive screened-in porch, which runs the length of the house. The kitchen was one room, though, that the wife was concerned with initially. "From a square-footage point of view," says Herlong, "we had limited space. I did have to say to her, 'Trust me, this is going to be very functional.' And it's certainly not a conventional kitchen. You have to walk through the kitchen to get to the living area." In spite of the concern, the wife was ecstatic with the result: a kitchen that features Silestone counters, baking area, spice area, snack drawer for the boys, and walnut flooring, which runs throughout the entire home. "I love the kitchen because of the evenness," says the wife.



“WHEN WE WAKE UP EVERY MORNING,
IT FEELS LIKE WE’RE ON VACATION.”







The master bedroom, though smaller than most master suites, is impressive. The bed is placed against a wall covered in mirrors to create the illusion of a bigger space. The bed boasts a direct view to the water. "It took us a year to get used to that view, that this is our house," says the wife. "When you take a shower, you can see the sun rising in the morning. You can see the marsh grass. Steve really positioned things just right."

Adds the husband, "We have windows across the back of the house, and some days you'll see dolphins or fish coming in to feed on the grasses," he says. "Or you can see the bridge downtown. It gives you a great exposure to the outdoors." Herlong outfitted the threshold from the bedroom to the bath with antique Chinese doors the homeowners had found in a store in Charleston, instantly giving the room a more transitional look and feel, a departure from the traditional interior in the rest of the home.

The family room, says Herlong, is yet another great space.

Two large chandeliers from local lighting store Candelabra hang from the room's vaulted ceilings. The trusses, seemingly placed simply for aesthetic reasons, are actually support beams. "We had to disguise those trusses," says Herlong, "so we housed lighting in them. We made them serve a purpose."

And while the musically inclined family loves practicing and playing their guitars and other instruments on the third-floor space, it's the screened-in porch that truly captured the family's heart. "We live out there a good portion of the year," says the wife. "There's a tremendous breeze and the views are just spectacular." So comfortable and relaxing is the porch area that the homeowners ate Christmas dinner out there this past year. "It's truly an extension of our indoor living space," says the wife. "It's like we live outdoors most of the time. Steve really maximized the view."

"When we wake up every morning, it feels like we're on vacation." ■