

# taylor made

This summer home suits  
the active lifestyle and open-door policy  
of a Mobile family.

TEXT AND STYLING BY  
ELIZABETH RAINES BEELER  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEAN ALLSOPP



when people say, “It’s 5 o’clock somewhere,” they must be referring to the Taylors’ waterfront home in Orange Beach, Alabama. On the average evening, crab claws, oyster shells, and shrimp tails barely outnumber the friends and family drawn to their dock overlooking Perdido Bay.

Mary and Richard Taylor discovered this area when they started looking for a getaway within an hour’s drive of their Mobile home. They didn’t want anything showy, just a house that blended with its setting and exuded a sense of history. “We like original things and always wanted the charm of an older house,” Mary says. After searching for more than a year,

In the living area, exposed trusses conceal track lighting. “We didn’t want recessed lighting because it would have looked too new,” says architect Pete Vallas.





Concrete countertops, stainless appliances, and retro bar stools lend the kitchen an industrial feel. To make clean-ups a cinch, Pete installed a commercial-grade floor drain. “After messy seafood boils, we literally just hose down the floors,” Richard says.

“The house takes advantage of a coastal lifestyle. Designed to fit

in rather than stand out, it will always belong here.” —architect Pete Vallas

the Taylors came up empty-handed. “Everything we found was either too dilapidated or not suited to our needs,” Mary says.

Then they approached longtime friend and renowned Mobile architect Pete Vallas, who said, “Let’s build! We’ll create the feeling of a house

that has always been there.” So history took shape out of thin air.

“The idea was to keep the sentiment of a small, early-1900s cottage that would have been present in this area,” Pete says. To lend the authenticity of an older structure, he designed a house that looks as

though it grew with several small additions. “We modeled it after the renovations an original two-bedroom home would have endured over time,” Pete says. “To further the aged feel, we used as much salvaged wood as we could find.” Interior windows and doors reinforce the

idea that the house was not completed at once. “We didn’t use dry-wall,” Pete says. “Instead, we went with wood boards—some turned horizontal, others vertical—and decided against caulking the joints. We liked the cracks.” The haphazard effect works.

The completed plan seems surprisingly ordered. The windows and doors align along a single axis to permit views from one room through another. (Historically the arrangement improved ventilation; now the configuration affords each room more light and a water view.)

On the design front, the Taylors looked no further than their circle of close friends. While Mary has a keen eye for style, dressing the home’s interiors wouldn’t have been nearly as fun without the help of her friend and Mobile-based decorator Trini Bryant. With a glass of wine in one

In the master bedroom, Trini and Mary went with an all-white palette accented with a delicate shade of sea blue. Oyster shell- and coral-theme accessories add understated coastal appeal.



“We like original things and always wanted the charm of an older house.”

—Mary Taylor



hand and swatch books in the other, Mary and Trini set out to create a comfortable, stylish home. They coated the floors, ceilings, and walls in white, allowing the water views and vibrant artwork to take center stage. In the living room, chic, slipcovered furniture stands near an all-masonry fireplace constructed of salvaged brick. Nearby, sleek red leather chairs, a Barcelona stool, and an oversize drum shade make a contemporary statement without diminishing the laid-back charm. “We thought we’d throw in a few modern pieces just for fun,” Trini says.

Even mishaps added to the worn-in look of the cottage. During transport to Orange Beach, the red

Ideal for friends and sleepovers, the children’s bedrooms are practical yet fun. “Each child has a sleeping space, but no matter where they start out, the kids end up all piled into this one room,” Mary says.

leather chairs toppled from a pickup truck. No one in the Taylor family seemed concerned. Richard shrugged it off with a grin and said, “Oh well, it’ll just make the pieces look older.”

So maybe the cracks in the walls, quirks in the boards, and imperfections in the furniture satisfy nostalgia. Maybe the floor plan alludes to a fictitious past. But the open door and the friends on the dock keep the Taylors’ eyes firmly on the future. 🌿

More info: [page 173](#)