

**IT'S GAME ON**  
The former dining room was transformed into a technology-free zone for reading, board games, and puzzles. Chairs by Gabby Home, bookcase by World Market. One of the twins near Lorraine Catalon's command central.



BY MEGAN SMITH-HARRIS // PHOTOGRAPHS BY JANE BEIELES

# Play House

A PUTNAM COUNTY COUPLE FINDS HOME





**AT THE SEASIDE** With a palette of grays, ivory, and sand, and punctuated by an array of blues, the house evokes seaside tranquility. The airy kitchen boasts three ovens, the dining room seats 14, the foyer sets the visual tone, the living room aka “the pub room,” and the informal eating area off the family room.



**G**et in the house and tell me ‘yes’ or ‘no,’” said Tony Catalano with a sense of urgency. His wife Lorraine was calling from the side of the road to give him important news. She had just driven past a stately Ridgefield house that the couple had admired, and noticed a discreet For Sale sign in the front yard. It hadn’t been there the day before. Tony was away on business. The Catalanos were living in a local short-term rental with their six-year-old twins, and facing a time constraint to move before their current lease was up.

The couple had been smitten by Ridgefield’s charming small-town vibe and decided to relocate here from Mahopac, New York. They’d been searching tirelessly for a home that would be a good fit for their family but kept coming up empty-handed. So when Lorraine glimpsed the For Sale sign, she was excited. “It wasn’t really what we were looking for,” she recalls. “We wanted more of a Nantucket-style house, but this one had such presence.”

After her husband’s impassioned directive, Lorraine quickly got in touch with their realtor to line up a viewing. But when she walked through the home’s imposing front door, it wasn’t an instant love match. She called Tony. “It’s a maybe,” she said matter-of-factly.

The reason it was a “maybe” and not an emphatic “yes” was because of the overly formal layout and dated interiors. It wasn’t simply refreshing that was required, but a complete re-imagining of the interior to more accurately reflect the Catalano’s laid-back, family-centered lifestyle. Between the two of them, Lorraine and Tony had already survived four major home renovation projects, and both swore they would never do it again. And yet the house beckoned.

“We didn’t want to renovate,” says Lorraine with a shrug. “But you know, unless you build it yourself, you’re never going to find





**COLOR WHEEL**  
The six-year-old Catalano twins had direct input into the colors and design of their individual bedrooms. A playroom that connects the two spaces, is a joyous explosion of color.



a house that's ideal." The couple purchased the property and immediately got in touch with Tina Anastasia of Mark Finlay Architecture and Interiors. "They called on me to start this house with them from scratch," says Anastasia. "Having previously designed the couple's lake home, the designer knew their style well. "A house of this size can be intimidating," admits Lorraine, "so our goal was for guests to feel at home the minute they walked in. People live here, people drink here, our kids play here—this is our home, it's meant to be lived in."

Lorraine, a self-described "math person," collaborated with their designer on the overall space planning, but she gives her husband full credit for many of the creative decisions. "Tony has an artistic eye, and was directly involved in selecting the décor and color schemes. He's very confident. He knows what he does and doesn't want. It works."

The palette is a synergy of blues. "Soft in the comfortable areas and more energetic in the more formal areas," says Anastasia. Today every room in the 10,000-square-foot house has been refurbished to create a modern, welcoming home that manages to be both hip and elegant. But achieving the end result was by no means a cakewalk. Like any renovation project, there were challenges. (Don't even ask about the horror story of the floors, or the time the basement flooded.) Construction began in March, but by August the project was still months away from completion. Their apartment lease was up, so the Catalanos reluctantly decamped to the basement of their new home. "There were no windows. It was like living in a casino," Lorraine recalls. "We had a toaster oven, a microwave, and a little fridge. I washed dishes in the pedestal sink in the one full bathroom we all shared."

The couple made a vow not to move upstairs until the house was completed—every wall painted or papered, every custom cabinet installed, every new doorknob in place. After three months as basement dwellers, the family finally "emerged into the light" just before Thanksgiving to take up residence in their stunning, newly appointed home. It was worth the wait.

The Catalanos love to entertain friends and extended family often, so the kitchen had to be functional and open to the other living



**MEET ME AT THE BAR**  
The Catalanos turned the former family room into an elegant "pub room," with a wet bar, couches, and a grand piano. The master bedroom and bathroom are as inviting and sumptuous as any luxury hotel suite.



spaces so no one would feel isolated from the action. And Lorraine had to have three ovens. "The contractor told me I didn't need that many and I said, "You've never been at my home during the holidays!"

A light-filled family room with an adjacent eating area flows off the kitchen and has French doors leading out to a slate patio and pool area. There are two access points to the unconventional living room dubbed "the pub room"—one from the kitchen through custom sliding barn doors, and the other directly off the foyer. The space has the aura of a lounge at an upscale Manhattan boutique hotel or exclusive club.

The home's original living room has been transformed into a magnificent dining room with a table that comfortably seats fourteen. The former dining room has been repurposed into a game room for kids and adults alike, where no electronics are allowed.

Even the children had input into the design aesthetic of their rooms. Their daughter loves unicorns and the color purple, and their son is a fan of superheroes, bold colors, and wanted two beds. The twins are very close, so their rooms are connected by a shared playroom decked out in vivid orange, lime green, and turquoise.

The Catalanos are thrilled with the outcome of their home renovation, but perhaps more importantly, they are genuinely happy to be living in Ridgefield. "This town has provided such a sense of community and so many great family opportunities," says Lorraine with a smile. "It's a very special place." ■



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