

a new kind of
FAMILY ROOM



When their lakeside cottage gets a bit cramped, Emily Griffin and Norman Howe (with children Max, Grace, and Oscar) slide open the gray-green doors (Coplay Gray by Benjamin Moore) to the backyard barn.

With three teenagers in tow, a Canadian couple keeps the peace (and, sometimes, the quiet) with a barn tailor-made for game nights, guitar sing-alongs, and cousins-by-the-dozen sleepovers.

photographs by VIRGINIA MACDONALD styling by MEG CROSSLEY AND MORGAN MICHENER

keeping the peace
NO-FUSS FABRIC

"Everything in the barn is essentially indestructible, like our timeworn rugs and sectional slipcovers," says homeowner Emily Griffin. "You can enjoy the house more when you aren't worried about stains or breakages." The colorful pillow assortment, including a few made from vintage kilims, pops against the two-story-high white-washed pine walls. "It keeps it light and airy but still feels rustic and charming," she says.





keeping the peace
FUN ON CUE

When the couple started to play around with the barn's design, they knew they wanted a pool table smack-dab in the center of the action and drew plans accordingly. But there was one miscue: Instead of a standard 8-foot pool table, Norm found a vintage 12-foot 1950s snooker table on Facebook Marketplace, so they had to make some adjustments, like moving the staircase from the center to the side in order to leave ample playing room. The rework was worth it: "There's a game of snooker played almost every day," says Emily.



Sometimes you need a vacation from your vacation.

At least that was the case for designer Emily Griffin (griffinhoughton.com), whose summer cottage—a small 1950s Pan Abode on Canada's Balsam Lake—was bursting at the beams as soon as her kids Grace, Max, and Oscar turned into teenagers. "We were constantly competing for early, quiet evenings (us) with loud rap music and late nights (them)." So, Emily and her husband, Norman Howe, decided to build a barn on the property that could serve as a large open area for daytime family gatherings and late-into-evening friend hangouts. Made from a mix of salvaged and new materials, the 1,600-square-foot structure has "truly transformed how we live here—now we can cohabit in peace!" says Emily. That cohabitation includes summer reading, word games, and minimal screen time, which anyone raising teenagers can recognize as something truly otherworldly, a feeling that's reinforced come sundown. Says Emily: "When the light hits the birch trees at dusk, they look like they're lit from the heavens."

keeping the peace
MEMORY LANE

Emily is the fifth generation to call this property home. "My great-great-grandfather bought the land in the late 1800s, so adding historic photos of my ancestors felt like a lovely nod to this history," she says. Her trick to keeping it cohesive: "I like for frames to either all be the same or all be different with the caveat that if you go with all different, make sure they are patinaed."



**THERE'S A GOOD STORY BEHIND THAT...
*Pine Staircase***

Emily's grandparents, who lived until ages 99 and 104, passed away about a year or two before the barn construction, and their former cottage was being renovated at the same time. "Their old stairs were on the way to the landfill when I literally grabbed them off the truck," says Emily. "I think of my grandparents, who walked these stairs for 60 years, every time I go up and down."

Keeping the peace

COUSINS BY THE DOZEN

The barn can sleep almost 20 people courtesy of the living space's sectional (built from old barn boards and three IKEA mattresses!) and a whopping eight double mattresses in the loft. Emily dressed all the beds with cotton block-print duvet covers from her bedding line, *Imli* (mli.ca). "The kids all have their favorite spot and raise hell if anyone takes their specific duvet!" she says.



Reading lights (ikea.com) mean the young cousins can devour the barn's stash of vintage Archie comics well into the wee hours.



Emily turned an old washstand into a bathroom vanity by adding a hammered sink.