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SUNNY OUTLOOK

A SAN FRANCISCO FAMILY CREATES A PARED-DOWN WEEKEND
RETREAT IN THE VINEYARDS OF SONOMA COUNTY.

WRITTEN BY JENNIFER SERGENT / PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER STARK



ARCHITECTURE / **STEPHEN SUTRO**, SUTRO ARCHITECTS
INTERIOR DESIGN / **CLAUDIA JUESTEL**, ADEENI DESIGN GROUP
HOME BUILDER / **DANNY BERNARDINI**, UPSCALE CONSTRUCTION
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / **GRETCHEN WHITTIER AND KATE STICKLEY**,
ARTERRA LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS



On any given summer day, the mercury can soar to more than 90 degrees in the vineyards of Dry Creek Valley, while it hovers steadily in the 60s in San Francisco. Those extremes help explain why a San Francisco couple and their three children sought a minimalist weekend house in the wine country—the polar opposite of their traditional color-drenched Edwardian in the city. “The house is an extension of the landscape and vice versa,” says landscape architect Gretchen Whittier, who collaborated on the project with Kate Stickley, both partners in the firm. “It was very much about the activity on the outside coming inside and blurring the lines between the two.”

With Whittier and Stickley on the job outside, the couple turned to the same team—architect Stephen Sutro and designer Claudia Juestel—behind the renovation of their city house to work on the country concept. “In our San Francisco home, the rooms have bright, rich colors to counterbalance the foggy weather,” the wife says. “In this Sonoma County home, the drama and excitement are all outside, with the view and the vines and the changing seasons. We wanted to build a place that would celebrate the outdoors.”

Modern architecture, with its clean lines and lack of ornamentation, was the natural choice to achieve that goal, says Sutro, who worked with the firm’s studio director

Jenai Medina Bourke. “The owners wanted the design to be minimalist and clean, with natural materials, so it wouldn’t compete with the site,” says Sutro. But first, the duo had to figure out where on the 32-acre vineyard property to place the house. Using a 3-D model study of the land, they finally found what they were looking for: a hill in the northwest portion of the property. “There’s a wonderful view to the north, which was fantastic because the northern light is so beautiful,” says the architect. “Having that view is also the best because we’re not too worried about heat gain on that side.” That was important since the owners’ top priority was to build a passive house, with a design that would naturally keep cool. Sutro achieved this with elements such as deep overhangs, soaring ceilings clad with warm cedar, heavy insulation and plenty of cross ventilation.

The architectural team positioned the house on the middle of the hill rather than on top, so that it would be more integrated within its surroundings and meet the area’s planning regulations. That option proved more complicated to construct for builder Danny Bernardini and superintendent Jeff Wollmer, as they had to remove 300 dump trucks’ worth of earth and build 15-foot-tall retaining walls to create a terraced niche for the two-level house and grounds. “We benched the site to nestle this home and patio area within the vines—it was a cool challenge,” Bernardini says.

Above: Architect Stephen Sutro designed a weekend home in Dry Creek Valley with open living spaces that flow outdoors. The structure, built by Upscale Construction, features cedar ceilings, reclaimed barn wood siding and concrete flooring, installed by Intentional Contracting.

Opposite: Designer Claudia Juestel kept the focus on the views with a muted interiors palette. In the living area, she integrated walnut accents, including a custom Christina Hilborne coffee table and end tables by Anton Maka Designs. Artwork by Gioi Tran hangs near the fireplace, and the vintage wing chair is from De Angelis.





Verellen's Duke sofa and chairs from SummerHouse anchor the living area, which showcases *Zeitlos* by Udo Nöger and Ann Weber's cardboard sculptures, all from Dolby Chadwick Gallery. The dining table, made by Urban Lumber Company, can be wheeled inside or outside.



Left: A chandelier by The Light Factory hangs over the custom dining table, which Juestel paired with indoor-outdoor teak chairs by Eco Outdoor. The setting overlooks the 32-acre vineyard property.

Opposite: The kitchen's walnut cabinetry by Brilliant Furnishings displays tableware by Heath Ceramics. The handblown-glass pendant shades were custom-designed by Adeeni Design Group and hover over concrete countertops by Bohemian Stoneworks.

Boy Event by Danae Mattes from Dolby Chadwick Gallery sets a serene tone in the master bedroom. Adeeni Design Group created the headboard upholstered with a hemp-and-yak fabric, and handblown-glass pendants by Siglo Moderno hang over walnut nightstands by Tyler Casey Design. The bench is from Design Within Reach.



Wollmer notes that they used the excavated soil to build a wide path for the construction vehicles; the vineyard maintenance crews still use the path to harvest grapes that are sold to local wineries. "It was important that all the material remain on site," Wollmer says.

The property played an equally important role for Juestel in designing the interiors. "The house has amazing views in all directions," she says. "Our goal was for the interiors to be understated viewing rooms for the beautiful nature outside." To do so, Juestel worked with a restrained material palette and kept color accents to a minimum. Inspired by "the changing hues of the leaves in the vineyards," she says, "we narrowed the colors down to a fresh green and a yellow-orange." Because the main public spaces are in one open area—marked by expansive sliding and folding glass doors—the curated palette keeps the design feeling cohesive. When it came to furnishings, the designer chose "simple sculptural shapes" and included vintage pieces and organic surfaces. She echoed the walnut kitchen cabinetry, for example, in the live-edge black walnut end tables and walnut coffee table in the living area. Wheeled dining tables (so they can move between the indoor dining area and the terrace outside at a moment's notice) were locally made from reclaimed barn wood similar to the home's exterior

cladding. The fabric used for an outdoor pillow comes inside to cover a fireside bench, while a creamy linen upholsters the living area's sofa and armchairs. "Nothing is jarring," Juestel says. "Everything flows."

That flow is always pointed outward, where Whittier and Stickley used grasses and other native plantings to frame the breathtaking views, making sure that none of the selections attracted pests or diseases that would threaten the surrounding grapevines. The wife also asked the duo to plant masses of roses and lavender "instead of a lot of different things." The roses are especially appropriate because they are used in vineyards all over the region. "They're the canary in the coal mine," Whittier says. "They're susceptible to the same pests as the vines, but they show damage much sooner."

The whole house encourages a connection with the landscape and a sense of relaxation, one that is encouraged by the couple, who mostly discourage their three children—and their houseguests—from using electronics while they're visiting. "We wanted a simple getaway for our family," says the wife. And that's what it has become, as the pool, the surrounding gardens and long bike rides are the main forms of entertainment. The house, she says, has become a perfect base camp—"no muss, no fuss." **L**

Above, left: Draperies made with Galapagos linen by Ferrick Mason accent the master bedroom. The Hans Olsen chair is from De Angelis, and the Artemis ceiling fan is by Minka-Aire.

Above, right: As a nod to the family's love of cycling, Juestel hung a mirror made from a recycled bicycle tire in the powder room. The backsplash tile is by Pratt & Larson, and the sconces are vintage; the bronze pulls are by Ashley Norton.

A pergola shades Regatta chaises by Crate & Barrel near the pool, which was installed by Stan Johnson Pool Construction. Gretchen Whittier and Kate Stickley designed the hardscaping and plantings, which were installed by Gardenworks.



Sutra designed the pergola to provide shade just off the saltwater pool, which offers sweeping area views. Whittier and Stickley bordered the pool with concrete pavers and then designed the terrace to step down to a planted bed a few feet below so a railing wouldn't impede the vista.