



diablo  
MAGAZINE

# Artful Living

The Junior League  
of Oakland-East Bay  
Home Tour

The owners of five eclectic Lafayette homes—each of which embodies the marriage of beauty and practicality—open their doors to visitors, in support of East Bay children.





Shelter is a basic human need. Beauty is too, although less obviously so. In the five homes that comprise the 2004 Junior League of Oakland-East Bay Home Tour, responses to these two needs merge in unique and sometime idiosyncratic ways that transform what can be prosaic aspects of home design into aesthetic achievements. Without sacrificing practicality—indeed, in many instances, driven by it—each of these homes evidences inventiveness; loveliness; or both, in ways that can only be called artful.

By Darcy Brown-Martin | Photography by David Duncan Livingston





**ON THE COVER:** The bluestone fireplace in the family room of this Cape Cod home is topped with a piece of old wood located at a salvage yard. One of the two built-in cabinets that sit on top of the long hearth and frame the fireplace serves as an entertainment center, while the other holds a bar.

**LEFT:** The family treasures their peaceful surroundings. The rockers and table are from Orchard Nursery of Lafayette.



**OPPOSITE PAGE:** One wall of the family room (far left in photo)—which is the home's metaphorical center—features a series of French doors that give onto an inner courtyard, where drought-tolerant Mediterranean plantings (including masses of lavender) are arrayed in an

**ABOVE:** The barn-style vaulted ceiling and the warm, random-plank oak floor establish the family room and kitchen's country-casual tone. The kitchen counters are part granite slab, part butcher block; the tumbled marble backsplash is from Ann Sacks.

## Farmhouse Beautiful

These days, an open kitchen-cum-family room is a baseline essential for a home. But when a busy professional couple and their two now-teenage children set out in 1999 to build a casual retreat in a secluded glen not far from Briones park, they presented their architect, Heidi Richardson of Mill Valley's Richardson Architects, with a challenge.

"We told Heidi that we wanted a family room that was cozy and casual, where the family would naturally want to be together, and that would be the hub of the house," says the mother of this clan, the chief financial officer of a large San Francisco-based company. "And we also wanted our home overall to evoke the New England architecture we admire. We wanted it to be like a big farmhouse, but beautifully finished."

With these directives in mind, Richardson created an oversized, shingled cottage trimmed in white that marries the soaring spaciousness of a barn with the quaint charm of a small Cape saltbox. Set between a manicured formal garden on one side and a more natural wooded area on the other, the double-height family room features two levels of windows that frame a succession of green views and fill the house with light. As far as the family is concerned, the room has been an unqualified success. "Everyone always ends up there," says the matriarch, "even if we try to do something in another room."

