

# New England Home's Cape & Islands

CELEBRATING FINE DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

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## Light, Elegant and Exhilarating

HOME DESIGN AT ITS SUMMERY BEST  
ON CAPE COD, MARTHA'S VINEYARD  
AND NANTUCKET

### NATIVE GIFTS

A Martha's Vineyard house that gives a contemporary first impression finds its design inspiration in the dwellings of America's earliest inhabitants.

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Abundant natural light casts a warm glow in the quietly dramatic roundhouse. Furnishings harmonize with colors and textures of on-site flora and fauna. **FACING PAGE:** The wood and stone exterior is designed to recede into the landscape.





# NATIVE GIFTS

*A Martha's Vineyard house that gives a contemporary first impression finds its design inspiration in the dwellings of America's earliest inhabitants.*

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## Along with all the comforts and

aesthetic pleasures Linda and Darby Campbell's Martha's Vineyard home offers is another, more playful, one. That is trying to pin down its elusive style. Is it contemporary, cutting-edge or something else entirely? "Actually," says architect Mark Hutker, "people are usually surprised when I tell them that the Campbells' house is the most traditional one we've ever designed." | No doubt the source of the confusion lies in the clean, modern look of the structure, with its distinctive geometry and expanses of glass. Nevertheless, the house's influences are actually quite old. As Hutker explains, "The design is inspired by traditional Native American dwelling places—roundhouses, long houses and ramadas." | Like its venerable prototypes, the Campbells' house is constructed of natural materials and blends easily with the surrounding landscape. Located up-island in a remote section of Martha's Vineyard,

The soaring, four-sided fireplace, viewed from the roundhouse sitting area. FACING PAGE TOP: Menemsha Pond provides a brilliant backdrop. FACING PAGE BOTTOM: Woven cedar built-ins that separate kitchen and dining areas hint at Native American basket-weaving traditions.

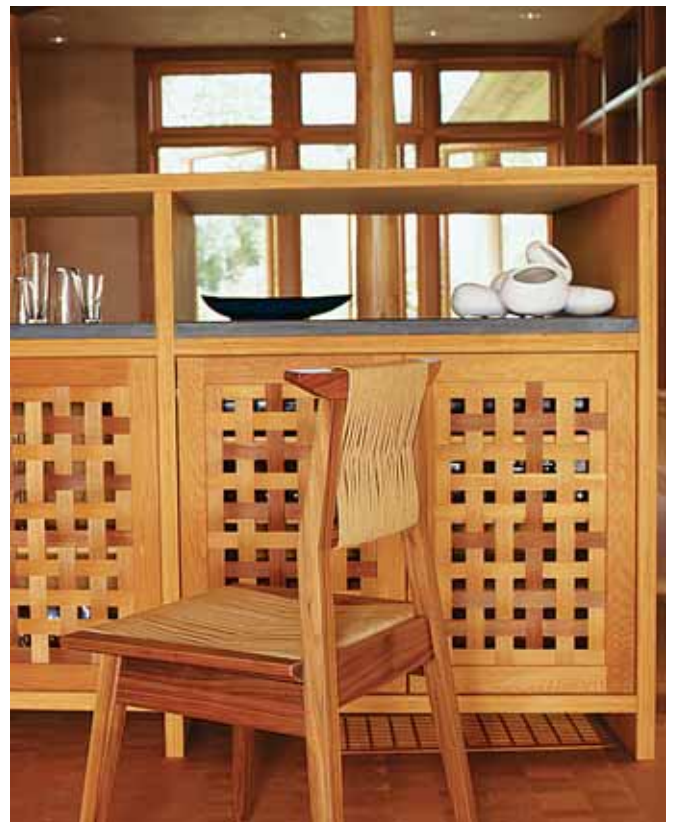




it sits on an idyllic site: a rolling meadow overlooking Menemsha Pond, where pristine farming, fishing and hunting grounds attracted Native American settlers long ago.

**The house's unique** styling pays lyrical tribute to the island's original settlers. More poetry than prose, the goal was to evoke age-old forms and materials rather than strive for historical accuracy. Customarily, round houses—or wigwams—were the center of communal activities, while the long houses contained sleeping quarters and the porch-like ramadas acted as warm-weather shelters. Hutker links the design's genesis to an offhand chat he had with Darby Campbell about the Vineyard's Native American settlers. "That conversation," says Hutker, "triggered my concept for the house."

The Campbells' initial charge to Hutker focused mainly on generalities. "We felt strongly about three things," says Darby. "We wanted a feeling of bringing nature and sunlight inside, low upkeep and a contemporary, open floor plan." High ceilings, a screened porch, four bed-



The dining area's furniture was custom-designed. FACING PAGE: Sunrise takes center stage in the east-facing kitchen, a magnet for informal gatherings. "The light here is magical all day long," says homeowner Linda Campbell.





rooms and a tower or cupola made the wish list, too.

Hutker presented the couple with models of three potential houses for their consideration. Two had a traditional look; one had a colonial facade, the other a gambrel roof. The third mockup displayed Hutker's creatively re-imagined round house and longhouse themes, with separate, conical and barrel-vaulted rooflines, and a screened porch representing the ramada. "It was fabulous," Linda recalls. "I loved it."

Of their eighteen-month-long collaboration, Hutker says, "Linda and Darby are rare clients—very alive and visionary and open to different criteria for building a house."

For his part, Hutker is a master at choreographing architectural moments. "The way to experience the house's meandering approach," he says, "is with your car windows down so you can smell the ocean and the scrub oak and pine forests, and hear your tires crunching the shells of quahogs that came from the pond below and were just shucked and eaten."

Screened from view until the last possible moment, the house is visible only after leaving the car in a parking court,

turning a corner and completing the journey on foot under a canopy of maple trees along a bluestone path.

Beneath its two roofs, the house is simply laid out, neatly divided into public and private zones, "with a connecting zipper right down the middle," says Hutker.

**The interior's visual** impact contrasts dramatically with the exterior's. The same wood and stone that forge a quiet link between the facade and its site repeat. However, rather than receding, their effect inside is bold and dynamic.

In the round house, which contains living, dining and kitchen areas, twelve massive, debarked Alaskan cedar columns define the unique circle-within-a-square plan. At the hub of the twenty-foot-high room, an open, four-sided granite fireplace with a woven cedar, lattice-like frame surrounding the flue-pipe soars to the ceiling's apex. "The way it's stacked reminds me of my daughters' old Jenga games," says Linda. The hearth's symbolic value as a source of light and heat is underscored by the four additional cedar



columns that encircle it, supporting a 360-degree clerestory window above. Floors are springy and comfortable, made from end-block fir recycled from a factory, and the walls are soft gray, low-maintenance pigmented plaster. A cone-shaped ceiling caps the room in naturally fragrant western red cedar.

According to builder Andrew A. Flake, who fondly recalls his collaboration with the Campbells and Hutker, “Getting the building materials onto the island was a major complication.” But correctly fitting the twelve-sided round house roof to the walls presented the greatest headache. “A guy on my crew was a boat-builder, very familiar with working on curved surfaces,” says Flake. “On this house, the layout was everything. Very challenging.”

Hutker concurs: “I describe this house as a 4,000-square-foot piece of furniture.”

For the homeowners, designing the house to capitalize on unfettered views of Menemsha Pond was paramount. “We were looking for a place that had a certain feel,” says Darby. “The first time we came here, it reminded me of the west coast of Ireland, where I lived as a child. There is something about the vista, with the rolling hills, the sense of being remote from everything but accessible, the severity of the weather, the way the land slopes down to the water that I immediately responded to.”



**Blurring the** line between inside and outside was another goal. The transparency created by the abundance of windows combines with natural materials to create the impression that inside and outside are harmoniously linked. The interior color scheme builds on the theme. Hutker says, “We collected shells, lichen, plants and bark right from the site. The colors were crucial.”

As in its historical prototypes, bedrooms are in the west-facing long house, where light and energy ebb along with the setting sun. Bedrooms flank the space at either end, and a small tower overlooks the pond. In the master bedroom, a tree-branch canopy—a whimsical evocation of Native American dream catchers—hangs above the bed. Like the house itself, it is a modern riff on an ancient tradition, designed to encourage stargazing and pleasant dreams. **NEH**

**RESOURCES** For more information about this home, see page 101.





In the master bedroom, yacht-like elegance combines with a whimsically rendered Native American dream-catcher canopy. FACING PAGE TOP: A guest bedroom opens to the roundhouse. FACING PAGE BOTTOM: Simplicity reigns in the master bath.