



BY KATHERINE OWEN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAUREY W. GLENN

A

s Michelle and Nick Spiva's three boys left home and headed off to college, the Nashville couple knew they needed to start rethinking their space. And so the planning began. They took notes on everything they loved or regretted about

the house they were currently in, like the wastefully expansive living room. "It took up about a third of the downstairs, and we only went in it maybe twice a year," Michelle explains. They also wanted a screened porch. "I couldn't add one at our old house, but screened porches have an easy and casual comfort that's hard to replicate inside," she says. After a few years, the list stacked up. "It wound up being about 10 typed pages of notes," Michelle says. When the time came to build their new house, the Spivas turned to their list.

In addition to a smaller, simpler design, they wanted their home to blend seamlessly into the older neighborhood. They recruited architect Ron Farris to help build a new house that looks like it's been

on this street forever. Next, the couple called on interior designer Rachel Halvorson to create a design plan that played to the architecture and made it feel fresh and clean while incorporating some of their old furniture. Halvorson and Farris turned the Spivas' wish list into a perfect home with lots of natural light, a zero-waste layout, and a dreamy porch. Read on for eight smart design ideas used by this downsizing duo.

I Disguise the Newness

THE KITCHEN

At the top of Michelle's list was a sunny kitchen, so they skipped upper cabinets and installed an 11- by 6-foot steel-framed window, mixing it with other metals like the zinc light fixtures. "I wanted it to feel like they didn't buy everything at once," says Halvorson.

THE MODERN EMPTY NEST

WHEN THIS NASHVILLE COUPLE DECIDED TO DOWNSIZE, THEY SPENT YEARS PLANNING BEFORE THEY BROKE GROUND

STYLING: BUFFY HARGETT MILLER



Light and Airy
Minimal decor and walls painted in White Dove by Benjamin Moore (OC-17) let the architecture in the entry take center stage.



2 Make a Grand Welcome

THE ENTRY

The Spivas' front door is about a foot wider than a typical one, a trick Farris says he loves to borrow from older homes. "This is not just an off-the-shelf door," he says. "It's larger, which entices people to come in." It also helps expand the foyer. "How do you make a small entry hall feel bigger? Use a large door to get into it," he says. Once inside, visitors get an immediate sense of the home's layout because they can see straight to the back. "I like to walk in the front door and be able to see through to the outside," he says.



Size It Just Right

THE EXTERIOR

3

"We wanted very clean lines, nothing ornate," Michelle says. So Farris designed a home that stands at a story and a half with what he calls "very simple cottage character." He reinforced that idea by using basic materials that call on vernacular style: a handlaid stone foundation, wood siding, and a cedar-shake roof. "Though there are much bigger houses around it, this home's materials help keep it in character with the rest of the neighborhood," Farris explains. Michelle wanted to have a white cottage, so they painted the exterior Simply White (OC-117; benjaminmoore.com).



4 Waste No Space

THE LIVING ROOM

Michelle felt that having a single, comfortable family area was key. "I really wanted to make sure we had only one living room and that it also served as the home's TV room, the sitting room—everything," she says. "A TV room can look really nice if you hide the electronics." Slide open the large, windowed doors, and the living room quickly almost doubles in size as the space extends directly onto the expansive screened porch.





5 Edit Your Furniture

THE DINING ROOM

"We wanted to keep the pieces that meant a lot to us and our families, but we didn't want our new house to be overwhelmed with our old stuff," says Michelle, who whittled down her furniture to about 10 meaningful antiques. "She wanted it to be light and fresh—not heavy," Halvorson says. Here, the designer paired an antique dining table with new skirted chairs.

Accent Well
This painting from the old house was "just the right size," says Halvorson, who used grass cloth on the wall to complement the art.



Halve Your Kitchen

THE "DIRTY" KITCHEN

6

Just off the main kitchen sits what the Spivas call their "dirty" kitchen, which (quite appropriately) is where they can hide dishes and unsightly countertop clutter behind salvaged sliding doors. "Keeping the main kitchen entirely open is great, but it's also tricky," Halvorson says. "When the windows take up all of your storage space, you have to put it somewhere else. So we made this mini kitchen to house all the things no one wants to see, like small appliances."



7 Shrink Rooms

THE MASTER

"I think so many master bedrooms today are too large, and they end up losing some of their warmth," says Michelle. "I wanted ours to feel cozy." To achieve that, the couple settled on a small space with direct access to a private porch outfitted with a daybed for reading and napping alfresco. Michelle and Halvorson focused on using a warm, neutral palette to create a comfortable retreat. "Different materials—such as linen, velvet, mohair, and shearling—help give a neutral palette more interesting layers," Halvorson says.

8 Live Outdoors

THE SCREENED PORCH

"Being outside creates a much more relaxed gathering space, which is how our family enjoys living," Michelle says. To make this a year-round room, they took the porch to the next level with fans, heaters mounted in the ceiling, and a cozy stone fireplace. "During our first year in the house, we hosted my birthday dinner, which falls at the end of December, out here," says Michelle. "Even in the peak heat of summer, guests take their coffee on the porch. I honestly think we use it 12 months of the year."

Comfort Is Key
Halvorson plumped up the outdoor furniture with indoor accent pillows and throws.



5 SECRETS TO STEAL

Small design touches and space-saving tricks make a big difference

1. THE BAR

Michelle had these deeper-than-average drawers custom built to fit the tallest bottle in their liquor cabinet. (She measured!)



2. THE DOGGY DOOR

Evie, the family pooch, comes and goes as she pleases through this easy hidden exit from the "dirty" kitchen to the porch.



3. THE OFFICE

Situated in the front of the home, the office is Michelle's personal space for working and reading. In a house full of boys, this area was designed with a subtle feminine—but not too frilly—vibe. "A room with some softness feels feminine to me," explains Halvorson.



4. THE BUNK ROOM

"The plan is for this house to transition into the future," says Michelle. "Right now, partying college kids are sleeping in here. Hopefully, at some point, it will be used for grandchildren."



5. THE MASTER PORCH

Salvaged shutters conceal the master bedroom's private porch, which can also be accessed via the main porch. [SL](#)

