

AND SO, THEY BUILT A HOUSE THEY LOVED

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Ashlyn and Austin Harvey are high school sweethearts that prove with hard work and perseverance, focus, and a little hustle, life might just lead you to a perfect black cabin in the woods. As newlyweds, they lived in a modest duplex and set their sights on saving money to build the perfect starter home. They set a goal and a budget and began looking for just the right place to call home. "We lived in a super-duper cheap duplex in Nash. And we pinched pennies for two or three years to save up enough to have a decent down payment," Austin said. "We almost gave up even. We had to work so many extra hours and when we started looking at all the work and the whole process of construction, we thought maybe we should just buy a house in town.



But then we would go look at houses and be like, goodness, for \$250,000 you're still just getting a brick 1980s home that isn't what we wanted, and we were like, we can do this, and we'd just keep pushing."

The Harveys both knew they wanted the house to be tucked away in the woods and in 2018, found the perfect wooded location. At that point they started clearing the future house site, doing dirt work, and really focusing on the design of the house. The Harveys spent a lot of time together researching every detail. "I really love modern minimalistic. I obviously really wanted big windows everywhere. That was my main focus," Ashlyn said. Since they wanted the house to be unique, they began searching for inspiration. "We looked a lot on websites from other countries. They have really cool architecture," said Ashlyn. Austin added, "Germany has a lot of the black house, big window style we were drawn to; that's something that we definitely got from there." The Harveys used this inspiration from other countries and their own inclination for modern design, to sketch out the idea for their house. Then they took their ideas to Pate Easterling, who drafted their floorplan and helped them make sure every detail was just what they envisioned.

When you drive up to the house, the black exterior with warm wooden timber accents is eye-catching. Matter of fact, the exterior is so strikingly handsome that it's hard to imagine anyone would object, but they said several of their friends and family tried to discourage them from painting the house black. Even their contractor, Steve

McGough of Custom Woodworks, seemed apprehensive about this choice but was pleased in the end. "Think about it..." said Austin, "You have this young couple, who have never built a house before, never even owned a house before, and they're telling you they want to paint it all black." They admitted they were nervous about the decision and almost changed their minds but decided to go with their plan and they are very glad that they did.

Welcoming, wooden French doors invite you inside the living area of the open concept downstairs. In contrast to the black exterior, the inside welcomes you with bright, white walls, a black fireplace, and an expansive two-story ceiling. You can't help but notice the amazing windows and the very important wooded view that makes the perfect backdrop to their modern style. The Harveys continued the fresh white look by painting most of the kitchen cabinetry white, accenting it with bleached wooden shelves, and adding visual weight with matte black appliances and a black island. The beautiful marble countertops were a splurge item but really tie the space together. Another standout touch in the kitchen is the matte black farmhouse sink and the backsplash. For the backsplash, Ashlyn chose a rectangular subway tile with a handmade feel and subtle variation in the color, adding just a bit of texture to the space. She also chose to turn the tiles vertically, which she says seemed to make her tile installer nervous, but he indulged her vision and did an excellent job with the installation. The simplicity of the kitchen also allowed Ashlyn to highlight her china, which is very

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special to her. The set originally belonged to her grandparents. Her grandfather actually selected the china as a special gift for her grandmother when he was in Vietnam. "The pieces are so beautiful, and since they're all white, I really thought that's going to match perfectly. So, [after I set up the dishes] I brought them out here, and they started crying. It was so sweet. It was very special for them and for me," Ashlyn said.

To complete the downstairs, there are two additional bedrooms, a guest bath, and a laundry room. The laundry room is small, but the space is cleverly used and even includes a built-in drop zone, making it perfect for this stage in the Harvey's life. The guest bath is the same rich black paint as the fireplace, making the space warm and moody. To keep the dark walls from making the room feel small, they repeated the white marble counters from the kitchen, the same marble-look wall tile from the master bath and used glass shower doors. For the cabinetry, Ashlyn chose to white-wash the wood and use cane webbing in the doors. The caning adds a high-end Scandinavian feel to the space consistent with the rest of the house.

Austin and Ashlyn took a slightly unorthodox approach and reserved the upstairs for the master area. As you leave the downstairs, you will head back towards the front door and an amazing set of floating stairs. The black metal stringer and bleached wood steps add an industrial tone to the home. Austin even said, "My favorite part [of the design process] was thinking about the stairs. I thought about that and thought about that. We knew we didn't want a traditional staircase with sheetrock closing up the space below. We wanted something modern and cool looking. It was fun trying to figure out how we were going to do that."

The master suite features more gorgeous, oversized windows, ample space, and a low-profile metal platform bed. The bed itself was probably the only thing that the couple had a hard time deciding on. Austin was afraid it would be too low and hard to get out of, but he said that he went with the old adage of "happy wife, happy life" and even admitted, "...it's actually really comfy." Another key feature of this space is the vaulted ceiling. It comprises

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two vaults meeting at a 90-degree angle. It was another decision that the Harveys were nervous about because they knew it was a more complicated feature, but their framers were able to execute the look perfectly. Also, in the master space is a sitting area for which Ashlyn is still searching for the right pieces. The bath features dual sinks, a seated vanity space, an oversized glass shower, and beautiful decorative black-and-white floor tile. The flooring and custom tiled shower are both upgrades that the Harveys added during the process and are really glad they did.

Ashlyn and Austin put a lot of thought into the house while staying focused on the

budget, which I find very admirable. It's not much fun to say no to eating out or to skip out on a trip or the purchase of the next new thing. But a beautiful space to come home to each night is certainly the reward for their hard work. They are currently dreaming up ways to enhance the outdoor areas with a covered back patio and landscaping. There is no doubt these final touches will be perfect, nor that their ability to work as a team will continue to strengthen the most important foundation of their home: their relationship with each other. 🏡



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