



Holiday *IN*

IT'S "COME ONE, COME ALL" AT
A FLORIDA COUPLE'S VACATION
HOME IN MICHIGAN

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Snowflakes fall gently outside the window as friends and family congregate by a crackling fire. Stories and laughter echo the good cheer radiated by homey ornaments and twinkling lights. The romance of the season is so tangible, you can almost hear Bing Crosby crooning “White Christmas.”

Like the proprietors of a memorable resort, Amy and Gary Norcross wanted their vacation home on Walloon Lake, Michigan—appropriately dubbed Holiday Inn—to exude a gracious welcome to everyone they host, especially at Christmas. Originally from Arkansas and now resi-

dents of Jacksonville, Florida, Gary and Amy bring their Southern hospitality to each place they call home.

“We love ascending the road here, seeing the trees covered in snow and Christmas lights,” Amy says. “It’s like an old movie—that’s why we call it Holiday Inn. We know a great celebration is to come.”

Family Gary and Amy Norcross with their family: Kathryn, William, John Adam, and Goldendoodle Honey. **Living room** Above an old Windsor chair hangs a portrait from Gary’s childhood home. A pair of red chairs with a loose wicker weave add texture and a happy check pattern. **Exterior** The welcoming Michigan vacation house, designed by architect Gary Nance, was completed in 2014.

Preceding page The foyer, which is more like a glass-box breezeway connecting the master suite to the rest of the house, is paved with bricks and lined with French doors on both sides.

Set into the corner of the living room, the Christmas tree recalls the trees seen through the windows. Red chairs in different styles provide plenty of seating and keep the room from repeating itself.









The Norcrosses' affinity for Michigan stems from Gary's childhood summers here. A second home on Walloon Lake made sense. Gary's mother lives in her own retreat on the opposite side of the lake. And now the Norcross children have one single place that they know as home. "We moved a lot for Gary's job," Amy says. "Our kids have lived in different places, but they always know Walloon Lake. We wanted a permanent footprint here, a place where everyone would gather."

Architect Gary Nance, celebrated throughout the Midwest for his lake cottage designs, carved out all of Amy and Gary's wishes on the property they bought. In addition to the main house, a guesthouse and a hobby barn offer spaces for the family to watch movies, play pool, and house Gary's antique cars. After six months of planning, Nance advised the Norcrosses to hire a designer to tackle the interiors. Most of the tear sheets that Amy pulled were projects by Chicago-based designer Tom Stringer—whom the couple hired.

"My own vacation home is 45 minutes away, so I understood Amy and Gary and what they wanted," Stringer says. "I'm a big believer in multigenerational homes. Some families arrange a time share and divvy up the time. I think that a family home should accommodate everyone at once. That's what keeps families together. Amy and Gary felt the same way, so we knew our work together would be a good fit."

Tear sheets in tow, Amy provided Stringer with a few directives that inspired his vision for an environment that the extended Norcross family will enjoy for years to come.

Dining room Blue-and-white vases cluster on the table and mesh with the cushions on chairs from Jonathan Charles. **Kitchen** With fresh greenery and shots of red, the kitchen is home base to holiday culinary favorites including Amy's cornbread dressing and daughter Kathryn's pecan pies. The blue-painted island stores accoutrements for entertaining.



Game room A Dash & Albert striped rug in red and blue anchors a round pine table and a quartet of chairs covered in a Holland & Sherry family-friendly outdoor fabric.

Bunk room Patterned in stripes, plaid, and paisley, the red-painted beds from Maine Cottage are adorned with stockings that may someday bear the names of the Norcross grandchildren.



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ATTACHED TO IT.” —designer Tom Stringer



Order number one: the palette. With a no-apology attitude about her yearning for red (she admits that it's driven by her University of Arkansas roots), Amy wanted the hot hue strewn throughout the interiors. It's a perfect foil come Christmastime when the house is bedecked in holiday adornments. Then there was blue. Amy prefers it in a strong value. Stringer's challenge was to blend the two colors in a sophisticated way.

Red furniture pushes the living room to radiate a festive complexion. Anchored by a granite fieldstone fireplace with barn-style doors that disguise a TV, the space boasts comfortable chairs upholstered in red fabric. In a shade that mimics Santa's suit, loose-weave wicker chairs at the game table introduce texture.

Blue's quiet role in the living room—on pillows and a chair—takes a bold turn as the house progresses. A white kitchen is electrified by a cobalt island that transitions the kitchen to the dining room and is *courageous* without being *outrageous*. A similar shade shows up inside the game room bookcases, where knotty pine was stained a blue-berry shade. It's enhanced by light blue chairs around the table.

The dining room wall nods to the living room's fieldstone fireplace. Rush-seat dining chairs circle a table that expands to seat upwards of 20. When crowds gather, eight chairs from Amy's warehouse of furniture goodies intermingle. Enter rule number two: heirlooms.

Amy and Gary have always kept treasures that are meaningful to the family. A storage unit filled with heirlooms was like Santa's





workshop to Stringer, who pulled family pieces that help make his interiors intimate and real.

“There has to be an emotional connection,” Stringer says. “And that only comes through familiarity to some of the objects. A house is not home until there is a story attached to it.”

Amy checked off her final requisite—floral-pattern fabric—in the master bedroom, where it hangs as draperies. Other bedrooms were made cozy and happy, including a blue bunk room with painted red beds. The bunk room was set into motion by Amy, who hopes that grandchildren are not too far in the future.

The Norcrosses now spend summers and winter holidays in Michigan, and while both seasons load their memory banks with great stories, something extra-special surrounds Christmas.

“We already have memories here,” Amy says. “My son-in-law asked for my daughter’s hand here. We laugh until we cry, and as soon as you pull into the driveway, your shoulders drop. There’s no to-do list like in our main house. Here, it’s about what book am I going to read next. This will always be our home.” ❧

Architect: Gary Nance **Interior designer:** Tom Stringer

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Master bedroom A four-poster with turned detailing is topped with Matouk linens and crowned with Christmas greenery. “I tempered the palette so it would not interrupt the beautiful view out the window,” designer Tom Stringer says. **Guest bedroom** Simple greens give a festive touch to a handsome guest space that’s wrapped in grass cloth from Seabrook.