

Party Barn

A new barn goes up in Pennsylvania to host family gatherings and celebrations.

BY CHARLOTTE SAFAVI

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT RADIFERA FOR STYLISH PRODUCTIONS
STYLING BY CHARLOTTE SAFAVI IN COLLABORATION WITH KRISTI HUNTER



Black wall sconces add a layer of lighting to the main level for more nuanced lighting. They work in concert with the double iron chandeliers and canned lighting on the ceiling beams in addition to the kitchen pendants and chandelier. A pair of armchairs provide a place for a corner chat.

There's no better setting for a party than an open barn. When interior designer Stephanie Kraus of Stephanie Kraus Designs was invited by repeat clients to work on their brand-new bank barn, her face lit up at the prospect. "It was such a unique project," she says. The bank barn was an addition to the Paoli, Pennsylvania, residence for a family of five. "It was so special to create a space for celebrating monumental family moments and special holidays, as well as for entertaining year-round," she says.

BANK BARN

A bank barn is a traditional barn built into the side of a hill, with walkout access on two levels. Originally livestock would live on the lower level, with feed and equipment storage on the top. "It made sense to go with a bank barn design, because they're popular and common in the countryside of Pennsylvania," says Stephanie, who collaborated on the project with custom barn builder King Barn and Engel Architects.

The party barn fits into the property with Spanish Cedar barn doors, sidelights and an overhead transom window. Winding flagstone paths connect the structure to the main house and the parking area for easy access. "There are a couple of paths that connect the main house to the party barn, so when the homeowners have events, people can easily go back and forth," says Stephanie.

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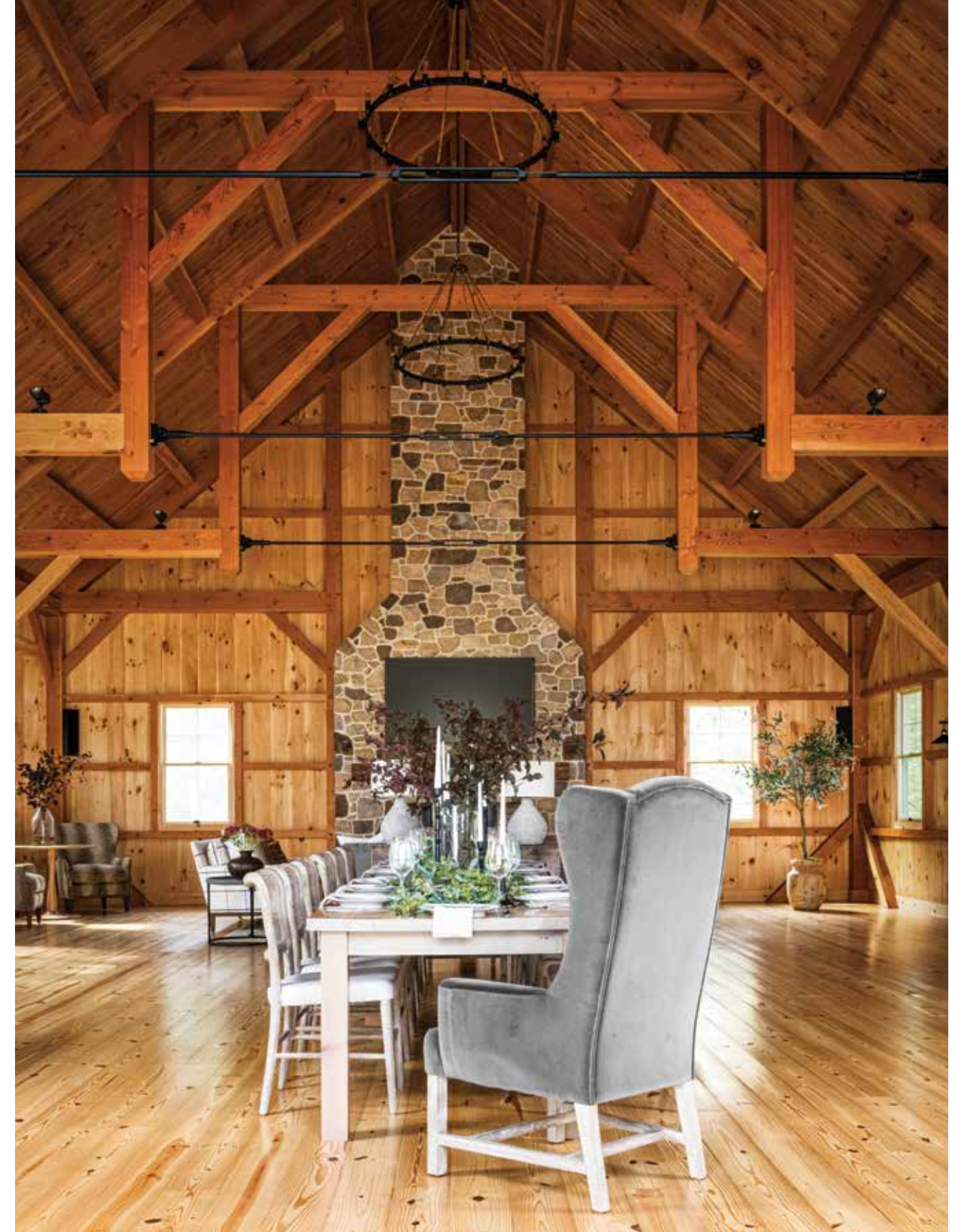
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Tapestry, leather, linen and wool all come into play in the sitting area on the top level, creating a quiet riot of neutral texture and interest. Overhead, the exposed wood architectural details are stunning.



In keeping with creating intimate sitting areas, Stephanie added a couple of bar stools and a tall café table near the kitchen as another place to sip some wine-for-two.

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The result is 3,100 square feet of wood and stone, with a cupola on the roof. The barn contains two floors connected by a stairwell: the top level is all exposed timber and beams, with soaring 25-foot ceilings and an open floor plan. The lower level is a cozier, more polished space with shiplap walls, two guestrooms and more entertainment space. “The idea of the first floor was to be very open, with movable furniture to easily host large events like big dinner parties or graduation dances,” Stephanie says.

ENTERTAINING SPACE DESIGN

This party barn was specifically designed to entertain. Here are some of designer Stephanie Kraus' tips for building a space dedicated to entertaining.

- **LOCATION.** Find the best spot on your property and scale the structure to work well on the grounds, with paths to the main house and parking area.
- **ACCESSIBILITY.** For a space that can host large gatherings, make sure it's accessible for everyone. "Keep in mind that if you want to build a multigenerational space, you want to plan so that everyone at every age feels at home and comfortable," says Stephanie. Include a ramp if there are stairs, and a bathroom that's large enough for a wheelchair with a handrail by the toilet.
- **TRANSITIONS.** Pick furniture and other elements that can convert and move for different types of parties. For example, make sure the dining table isn't too heavy, so you can move it if you need to. And design plenty of cabinet or laundry storage space for entertaining essentials like cutlery, platters, tongs and water and coffee dispensers.



"We made three custom dining tables that can be used individually or together as needed," says Stephanie. The clean-lined wood tables are paired with velvet host-and-hostess chairs for a touch of elegance, along with a multitude of woven-back dining chairs.



The living room area connects the kitchen and dining room, yet all these pieces can move if the hosts are preparing for a larger gathering that needs more floor space.



(above) In the lounge room on the lower level, a sofa table with double ottomans for extra seating separates the sectional and TV area from the wet bar. “The lower-level is designed for lounging and watching TV,” Stephanie says. All the textiles are family-friendly for easy cleanup.

(right) At the front entry, a staircase takes you down to the lower level, while the seating bench and poufs create a sense of foyer. All the pieces can be moved around easily for extra seating or to make way for more tables or dancing, depending on the occasion.

OPEN FLOOR PLAN

The challenge of barn homes is that the space can feel a little too open. Stephanie solved this by dividing the floor plan into a U-shaped kitchen in front, a wide-open central space the family can also use as a dining area, and a seating/TV viewing layout around a ceiling-high stone fireplace. “The idea of the dining furniture, which is essentially three custom-made tables and lots of chairs, is that things can be adjusted as needed,” she says. “When the tables are pushed together, you can host up to 22 people for a large sit-down dinner.”



3 TIPS FOR LARGE SPACE DECORATING

Large spaces can be a challenge to decorate. "When working with a large open space, planning well is key," says Stephanie. Here are some tips and tricks.

- 1. BREAK IT DOWN.** Spatially break down the space with functional furniture groupings. Even though it's a single room, think of "rooms" within the space to help you plan. Use rugs and overhead light fixtures to help differentiate areas.
- 2. BIGGER IS BETTER.** At least, when it comes to large spaces. Buy larger furniture that fills the 'rooms within the room' to a suitable scale. This also includes elements like rugs, lighting and art.
- 3. CONSISTENT COLORS.** Keep the color palette consistent over the whole room. This will create better flow throughout the space and help with cohesion.



A stunning stone fireplace anchors the seating on the top level. Stephanie decided to mismatch a pair of sofas for a curated look, alongside two leather chairs for ample seating options. "It's all about adult conversation and gathering up here," Stephanie says.



(above, right) A striking overscaled caned lantern adds spatial definition to the U-shaped main kitchen, which features contrasting brass hardware and a farmhouse apron sink. "We picked green for the cabinetry color inspired by the evergreens and greenery outside," says Stephanie. Above the attached island, a pair of low pendants make the bar enticing, while providing task lighting. Bar stools make the island a place to perch for a while.

On the lower level, the set-up is more intimate for smaller gatherings. Here, there's another seating area with a sectional for watching TV, but also a chummy cocktail area with four armchairs and a dry bar. "There's the glass garage door, which opens onto a graveled patio outside, really connecting the indoor and outdoor spaces when the weather is nice," Stephanie says. The lower level is perfect for smaller multigenerational gatherings, where kids can watch a movie and adults can enjoy a glass of wine. Stephanie also made sure to integrate a bunkroom for sleepovers and a second guest bedroom into the layout, as well as a bathroom and an area for doing laundry.

In addition to the glass garage door, the lower level also has a Spanish Cedar side door and transom windows for access to the exterior. If it's raining or snowing, a second entrance was necessary so the garage doors can stay closed when needed.



Throughout the whole barn, the palette is mostly drawn from nature, with a range of neutrals inspired by the native stone, along with a punch of dark green. The materials are natural and textured, from wool boucle and wrought iron armchairs to leather pieces. Stephanie chose all the furniture for being user-friendly and comfortable, making the party barn the favorite place to be. "It's really a space the family and their friends will enjoy now—and in the years to come," Stephanie says.

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(below) "The glass garage door brings in natural light and connects the space to the beautiful views outside," says Stephanie. It's on the barn's lower level, and connects the wet bar and adjacent lounge area to the outdoors on pretty days.



(right) The green wet bar has the same color and hardware as the main kitchen, but a butcher block countertop instead. To the left is a black barn door that leads to the storage area. "It was a stylish way to cover up the storage area behind it, as well as the washer and dryer," Stephanie says.



Deep green shiplap siding makes this bathroom on the lower level a cozy, stylish space. Stephanie put in a double vanity, knowing that several guests might be staying at the same time. “The bathroom was designed for hosting multiple overnight guests, so a double vanity made perfect sense,” she says. A walk-in shower is simple, unfussy and efficient. Hooks on the wall make labeling towels easy.



(above) The custom bunkroom was a must-have for hosting sleepovers, families with kids and, the family hopes, one day grandkids. The bunks can comfortably sleep six. “We are known for designing multigenerational homes,” Stephanie says. She added carpet on the floor in this room for comfort underfoot.



(top, above) The primary bedroom has a single shiplap accent wall finished in the warm gray as the rest of the room. Between the leather-wrapped metal headboard and the organic wood-base lamps, this room is all about nature and texture.