

atHome

A magazine for Upstate living

Spring 2018



New Beginnings

Awash in cool hues, this waterfront home was built for comfort

lake forecast

/ by Allison Walsh / photography by Wayne Culpepper





Yin and yang with a killer view. This is what Charlie and Gayle Croom got when they enlisted architect Brad Wright to design their retirement home at The Reserve at Lake Keowee.

Wright brought builder Will Hines and interior designer Cynthia Masters on board, and together they created a lakeside sanctuary that seamlessly blends Gayle's ultra-feminine Old World style with the decidedly masculine preferences of her husband, a retired Air Force lieutenant general.

"The challenge here was to marry masculine and feminine without either of them looking out of place," Masters says. "We added a lot of feminine

elements, with the tufting and the fabrics and the floral drapery, the ornateness of the candlesticks. Those were things Gayle liked that we added in moments so that Charlie would still be comfortable and it would still feel masculine."

Masters chose a warm, neutral palette of taupe, beige, almond and eggshell, mixing in some charcoals and bronzes and accenting with watery blue pulled from what amounts to a 270-degree view of the surrounding lake. Charlie's taste for solid structure was addressed through the architecture, with chunky exposed beams and thick, arched casings. He also has a plum office space on the mezzanine level, with windows lining both walls and a dedicated wet bar and lounge area tucked into a corner.



The decidedly masculine feel of chunky beams and thick, arched doorways is balanced with more feminine elements - the tufted sofas, ornate accessories, and floral draperies and centerpieces. The walls in the main living area are true Italian plaster, meticulously hand-mixed to achieve just the right warm, neutral hue.



The Crooms put a great deal of trust in their design-build team, but came to the table with a few items on their wish list, chief among those being windows on top of windows and a fireplace in the dining room. The fireplace is echoed in the kitchen with the limestone range hood.

The sunny second-floor study is where Charlie spends most of his day. The built-in shelves were designed by Americraft based on a photograph of a Gothic arch Gayle provided. Cynthia Masters of Panageries worked with the cabinetmaker to repeat the arch in the vanity of each guest suite.



“What I love about this house is in ten years you’re not going to know when it

was built, you’re not going to know when it was designed and they’re not going to have to start over,” Masters says. “There may be things over time they’re going to want to tweak here and there, but all the things that are attached are timeless.”

The Crooms couldn’t be more pleased with the results.

“We wanted something that was a little classic that would last through time. Something that really looked good but was also comfortable,” Charlie says. “I think Cynthia delivered in spades for us and our architect did a good job on the dimensions of the house. It doesn’t look overwhelmingly large. It’s cozy and comfortable and it’s been serving us well.”

The Crooms are an active, outdoorsy sort, so they always knew they would retire South once their D.C. days were done. “As much as I tried, Gayle did not want to retire in New Jersey,” says Charlie, a New Jersey native.

For many years they assumed they would land somewhere along the coast, both being avid golfers. But the threat of hurricanes and the general wear and tear a coastal climate can inflict on a home drove their search inland. They scheduled a visit to look at properties in surrounding lake communities and quickly found them to be outside their price range.

“We were going to be here a week but we discovered that in the first two hours, so we were wondering what to do with the rest of our time,” Charlie says. “We decided to just tour around the lake and see what’s here. We happened to turn down this road and bump into The Reserve.”



Gayle's feminine flair won the upper hand in the master bedroom, an ethereal space awash in eyelet, lace, embroidery and beading.



Brad Wright of Wright Design selected the materials for the home's exterior, choosing a mix of brick and limestone accented with copper elements and a slate tile roof. The Crooms dine al fresco whenever possible, which is fairly often thanks to a third fireplace on the porch.



The first thing they saw was the sprawling Great Lawn and from there discovered the quaint Village Center with its dedicated market, chapel and post office.

The Crooms quickly fell in love with the little community. They met with an agent that day and, impressed with his no pressure approach, kept in touch and continued looking at property over the next five years. "We probably saw every property here," Charlie says.

When they learned a new section was opening they made one more trip to see a lot perched on top of the hill and everything fell into place.

Charlie and Gayle have two grown children and two small grandchildren who they anticipate seeing quite a bit of in their new digs.

"We built it to entertain our children, to provide a place where they'd come to us," Croom says. "And what more could you ask for, with golf, tennis and a lake?"

Building a house is never without its headaches (particularly in a challenging landscape) but this project seems to have gone off without a hitch and everyone involved counts themselves lucky to have been a part of it.

"The best part of this project was working with Charlie and Gayle. We couldn't have asked for nicer clients," says Wright. "They truly respected our talents and were very open to our ideas."

Masters agrees. "It was just a dream project because the Crooms trusted that we had their back and the end product was going to be what they would want."

Charlie says he and Gayle are still pinching themselves over their new reality. "We had a dream team and we never had any issue through the build of the house. It was just a total pleasure," he says. "We recognize it every morning when we wake up and ask ourselves if we're really living here." [ah](#)