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# Urban Home Island Home

After finding the perfect vacation home on Peaks Island, David Cohan discovers it's all that...and more.

**T**en years ago, Bostonian David Cohan felt the itch to find a vacation house in Maine, and scratched it. Following a water-cooler suggestion at work, he decided to investigate Peaks Island.

The kitchen and great room are oriented toward the rear of the house to catch the southern sun.



David Cohan's Peaks Island vacation retreat became his year-round residence.

"I'd visited Maine while camping as a teenager," he says, "so the state held a spot in my heart." What he found on Peaks was a traditional island cottage in a setting that reminded him of a very appealing "Norman Rockwell village."

After some scouting, he discovered that the new homes he most admired were all designed by architect William Winkelman, then of Whitten Architects in Portland. He contacted Winkelman.

"I had strong opinions about what I wanted to do with the house," Cohan says, "since I'd been living in a *basement* apartment in Boston."

Requirement number one, then, was air. "I craved light and space and openness," he says. "I also hoped for the clean look of an urban loft, with mostly hard surfaces that would help me control my allergies."

The previously summer-only cottage he'd bought had been winterized, but the downside was, the measures taken to winterize it had just "turned it into a rabbit warren of dark, introverted rooms," just what Cohan opposed. Much effort was needed.

For his part, Winkelman looks intuitively "for the center of gravity" when transforming a home. "Where is the comfort zone?" he asks. Once that zone is located, "you build walls about you. That defines the space."

But in this extreme case, Winkelman gutted the interior. "We were aggressive," he says. "We oriented the kitchen and great room toward the sunny, south-facing rear of the house. New window openings on the rear wall of the second floor created a clerestory below which we cut a large hole

in the second floor, allowing sunlight to flood in everywhere."

From the second-floor bedroom on the west side of the house, there's a view of Casco Bay.

"Running an imaginary line perpendicular to this line of sight creates an angle that gave us our design theme. The new staircase is positioned along

this angle, which allows a greater opening between floors through which light can pass. It also creates an interesting nook below the steps that David uses as a home office," Winkelman says.

The guard rails are paneled in sand-blasted glass, evocative of beach glass found around the island. Winkelman sees the staircase as "a piece of floating sculpture that helps orient the space."

Baltic birch plywood is laid along the same axis for flooring, "placed in factory-sized sheets and sealed with a clear finish to produce a beautiful blond tone." The sheets are secured with exposed fasteners.

Another material adding to the urban feel is the perforated metal Winkelman chose for kitchen cabinet-fronts.

Cohan wondered at first if this material would create the interesting texture he was seeking and still shield the cabinet contents from view. Testing a few samples with holes of varying diameters, "I discovered a solution in layering together two sheets, each with different-sized perforations," he says.

The delighted Winkelman built on this inspiration and used it as a signature surface throughout the house.

While the exterior retains its traditional cottage appearance, the interior is all *Metropolitan Home*. "Each day, when I leave my job [at Coastal Enterprises] on Portland's waterfront, when I board the ferry and leave the crowds downtown, I breathe easy when I come home." ■

Owner: David Cohan. Architect: William Winkelman, Winkelman Architecture, Portland.