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A serene palette gives the family room an elegant yet comfortable vibe. A painting by Hunt Slonem above the mantel is a focal point.

## Going Home

**Courtney Cox of 2 Ivy Lane builds a nature-inspired house in the neighborhood where she grew up**

Courtney Cox experienced an idyllic childhood in the Alexandria neighborhood of Belle Haven—and even then, she had a designer’s eye. “As a girl,” she recalls, “I always loved this one property because the house had a pink door.” Ironically, the home she’s referring to came on the market at a time when Cox and her husband



The dining room houses a painting by Hunt Slonem, and an antique table and chandelier.

were house hunting. Cox’s parents still lived in the neighborhood, so she and her husband jumped at the opportunity to buy there.

Unfortunately, the house had too many problems to salvage—pink door notwithstanding. So the couple enlisted architect Stephanie Dimond to design a classic, red brick house on the site that would work well in the traditional neighborhood.

For the new house, Cox and her husband chose a Colonial-style exterior with an open plan inside. “I had to plan ahead,” explains the designer, who now has a boy and a girl under four. “At the time, we didn’t have any kids, so I was trying to envision what I would need with children running around. An open floor plan seemed to me the perfect way for a young family to live.”

The first floor features high-ceilinged, light-filled rooms that connect via expansive case openings. A circular traffic pattern on the main floor leads from the foyer to the living, family and breakfast rooms, then to the kitchen and dining room and back to the foyer. French doors, glass-paned windows, understated moldings and random-width, old-growth heart-of-pine floorboards abound. “I’m inspired by nature,” says Cox, co-owner of 2 Ivy Lane with partner Alex Deringer. “I wanted my home to be soothing, fresh and light. Simplicity and clean lines matter to me. I also didn’t want anything jarring with respect to color or pattern.”

Cox achieved her vision by sticking to a palette of creams, grays and tans for large furnishings; case goods are either left natural or painted in her favored light hues. Mirrors reflect space and light. Upholstered pieces are mostly of linen, with silk curtains in the formal dining room and cut-velvet armchairs in the living room.

“The palette may not seem realistic with kids, but it works,” says Cox. “I use a lot of indoor-outdoor fabrics. Everything is stain-resistant. And the slipcovers on the kitchen benches are machine-washed every week.”

The kitchen design was very important to Cox. “Whether we entertain or not,” she says, “everyone gathers there so I wanted it to be really beautiful. I also wanted to bring in as much natural light as possible.”

She commissioned a stunning kitchen skylight by the British company Marston & Langer, a designer of greenhouses and conservatories. “Whether it’s sunny

skies or pouring rain, I get such a good feeling working or sitting beneath the skylight,” says Cox. “I feel so connected to the outdoors.” Other highlights in the crisp, white kitchen include double bell jar light pendants and a rosewood island countertop that exudes organic warmth.

In the adjacent breakfast room, the chairs have chevron-patterned embroidery on their linen backs, while the seats are covered in easy-to-wipe pleather. Cox, who formerly owned a clothing boutique, applies her fashion sense to décor. “I put people in great dresses with clean lines. Then I added punches of interest through earrings or a pair of shoes. My house is the same,” she says, “simple, with small doses of color and pattern through its accessories.”

In the dining room, rays of sunshine peek through in the colors of the wingback chairs and settee. The living room blooms with blush and pink-dot accent pillows, and the family room carries ripples of blue and gray. Barely-there patterns are updated versions of their traditional cousins, from leopard prints and oversized paisleys to soft geometrics or botanical motifs.

“I don’t have an enormous backyard, so I brought the garden inside,” says Cox, explaining her use of glass lanterns and hurricane lamps as ambient lighting indoors. Wrought iron, often painted, finds its way into chandeliers, sconces and curtain-rods. Stone statuary, woven baskets and ceramic garden stools are other outdoor-inspired elements. Potted plants and cut flowers abound. Contemporary paintings of wildlife or antique-framed botanicals hang in groups.

“I love our home,” says Cox. “As the children are growing, I know we made the right decisions. They’re lucky to have grandparents up the street. Everything we need is right here.”

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