

OUR FAMILY GETAWAY

Wanting a cosy rural retreat, Matt and Jane Martino transformed a kit home in Daylesford, Victoria, with flair, humour and love, writes **Hande Renshaw**.

Jane Martino with her eldest son, Tom, five. The benchtop is robust enough for family living and a bold contrast with the rest of the kitchen benches.





Above: The light-filled dining space is full of eclectic vintage market finds, creating a warm family interior. Below: The bay window banquette in the living space is the perfect spot for reading a book, or simply a cosy place to relax for all members of the family.



FOR MATT AND JANE Martino and their young family, the weekends provide a chance to escape inner-city Melbourne for the tranquillity of rural Daylesford. After travelling to the area for regular weekend getaways with their three young boys, Tom, five, Henry, four, and Sonny, three, in tow, the family fell in love with the area's natural beauty and artistic community, purchasing two blocks of land in 2007.

"We loved the fact it was just over an hour's drive from home; it's close to town and surrounded by a lush green outlook," says Jane.

Creativity is not in short supply for this family. Jane runs a media company, while Matt is an artist and designer. When it came to construction of their new home, Matt drew on his creative skills, playing a major role in the design and development of the house.

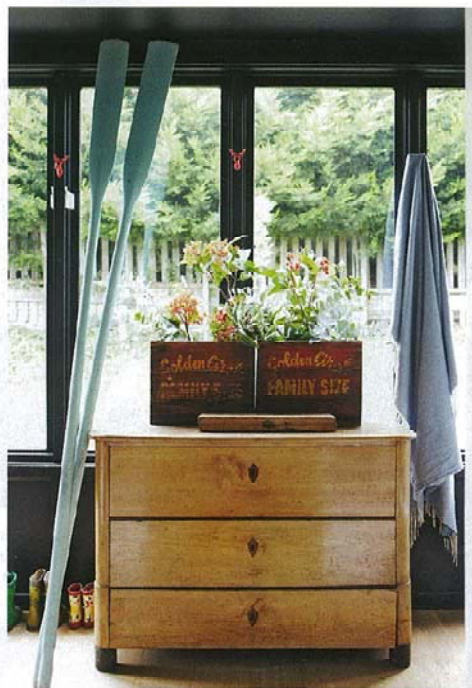
The home, purchased from Country Lane Homes, was a simple kit house that arrived on-site in buildable components, leaving Matt and Jane free to design the internal layout and choose their fixtures, colours and fittings. "The company gave me free run on the design," says Matt. "I was able to modify their standard as long as it kept within their structure."

The most important design decision for the couple was creating a home that looked as authentic as possible. "We wanted to build a house that looked like it had always been there, inspired by the homes of Connecticut and New York State," says Matt.

The construction of the home took a mere three months, with an additional three months for the fit-out, furnishing and landscaping. The result is a cosy four-bedroom family home with an understated elegance, decorated with a mix of modern and vintage finds.

Named Comma, reflecting a pause or rest, the property also has separate stables accommodation, which is ideal when the family has guests.

When the Martinos can bear to stay away, it's available to rent as a holiday home. "Daylesford has a real attraction," says Jane. "It's a beautiful area with great food and creative, kind locals." ■



Clockwise from left: White-washed shutters on the window interiors create a rustic touch; a pair of oars makes an imaginative decoration; Matt's artwork adds vibrant colour to the living space; a contrast of bold black and crisp white in the kitchen.

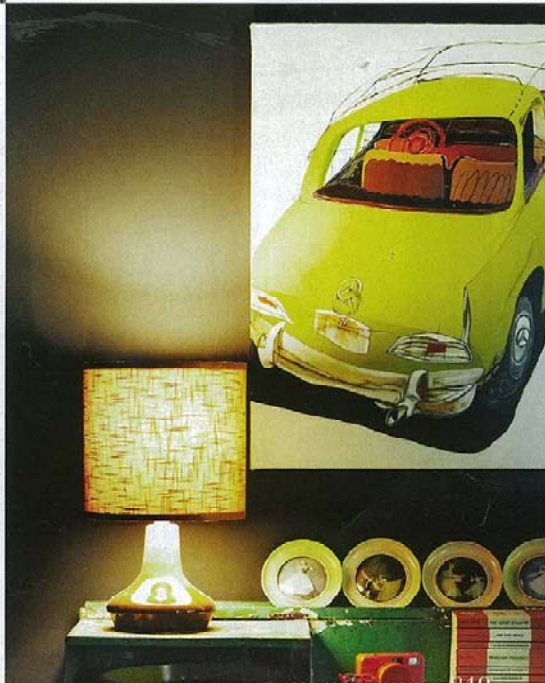
COLOUR AND CONTRAST

"Colour can be used to great effect. Be brave – if you like something, make it work," says Matt. "I read lots of design magazines, not just house ones – fashion is also an inspiration."

The colour palette for the sitting room (above) was inspired by a pin-striped suit. The room was always meant to be a library or retreat. "What every country house needs," says Jane.

The walls and ceiling are painted in a deep navy blue, creating a cosy space – the ideal backdrop for a winter in Daylesford.

In contrast to the dark room, the floors are a pale oak timber, picking up on the New York State theme.





Above: An opulent king-sized four-poster bed, complete with decadent netting, has pride of place in the master bedroom. A bird cage is used as a light fixture. Right: A free-standing bath adds another touch of luxury to the master bedroom. Below: The Martinos enjoy an alfresco lunch in their courtyard.



THE MARTINOS' DESIGN SECRETS

1 EMBRACE COLOUR Choose a neutral palette for your home, then paint just one room in a bold colour, such as deep navy blue, to add instant drama. Selecting a bold colour for the walls and ceiling will create a cosy and warm retreat ideal for the colder months.

2 MIX OLD AND NEW Vintage finds add personality and give a new home character. This doesn't mean using bulky items of furniture – subtle touches, such as rustic vintage scales in an otherwise modern kitchen, are all you need.

3 HAVE FUN WITH IT A sense of humour gives warmth and personality to a new home. The Martinos have decorated theirs with whimsical pieces, such as vintage toys as ornaments, bird cages as lamp shades and a set of canoe oars leaning against a wall.

4 KEEP OPTIONS OPEN Designing an interior to a strict theme can make it look contrived and forced. Decorating a new interior doesn't mean forsaking old possessions. Combine your new purchases with old ones for a space full of character and memories.

Matt and Jane's favourite vintage haunts: The Mill Markets in Daylesford and The Vintage Yard Sale in Kyneton, Victoria.