



Radiant-heat concrete floors and a custom fireplace create year-round comfort in this Dabob Bay weekend home. Extensive glass and sliding doors that open to a patio keep the outdoors close at hand. Comfortable and casual furnishings suit the homeowners' family.

Olympic Escape

Seattle architect Greg Bjarko crafts a family-oriented weekend home that can serve as a quiet escape or can host a crowd. With a view of Dabob Bay, the home includes extras such as a third-floor perch and an outdoor wood-fired pizza oven

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For two Seattle physicians, a second home is a quiet place where they can relax with their two boys, enjoy a weekend with no television or other distractions, and take advantage of kayaking, crabbing and shrimping just yards away.

Of course, life is even better when the second home was designed by Seattle architect Greg Bjarko, of Seattle's [Bjarko Serra Architects](#). Working with the clients—whom he has known for many years—Bjarko devised a compact and comfortable home that takes full advantage of its scenic but topographically problematic site overlooking Dabob Bay, a finger of water that extends from Hood Canal near the town of Quilcene.

The clients purchased the five-acre parcel—one of 30 or so lots in a remote, wooded area—in 2002, with the idea of perhaps letting it be for a number of years before building something small and rustic. "But we started to get excited about the parcel and decided to build something a little more substantial where we could take our two boys (now 11 and 14) and they could bond with it," says the client, a thoracic surgeon at Group Health. "And we wanted a place that would be big enough for the whole family at Thanksgiving and times like that. So we moved ahead with it."



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Construction began in 2003, starting with a small outbuilding where Bjarko and the builder—skilled jack-of-all-trades **Korben Mathis**, who built virtually the entire house himself—could test some of the design and construction principles that would later appear in the main structure.

From a design standpoint, the biggest challenge was the site. The only feasible place to build on the five acres was a narrow ridge with deep ravines on three sides. But Bjarko turned that challenge into an asset, using the curved surface of the ridge to shape the home's basic floor plan, which articulates in two places to wrap along the ridge like a Metro bus.

Echoing the three-part rhythm of the floor plan, the home in turn steps up in three phases. From a low-slung entryway, residents and guests enter a large great room with a kitchen that features soapstone counters, a dining area with a rustic large wooden table and a sitting area at the west end centered around a stone fireplace. Glass on the north, south and west walls creates expansive vistas to water and mountains as well as intimate views of the surrounding forest of whitebark pine, hemlock, alder and bigleaf maple. A four-panel door slides out of the way to open a patio area to the living room. Prominent on the patio is an often-used wood-fired pizza oven.

The middle part of the house rises to two stories, with the second story containing a bedroom and bath for the two boys as well as a large multipurpose room. Bjarko capitalized on the airy nature of the site by capping the western end with a glass-enclosed third-story cupola, reached by a stairlike ladder. It creates the feeling of a Forest Service lookout tower—a favorite of the Montana-raised husband. "I'm kind of a country guy," he explains. "I love Seattle but crave something a little wilder."

The materials Bjarko employed throughout the home reflect its woodsy location and a desire to make the home as natural as possible. Inside, fir walls are matched to cherry stair railings and built-in cherry cabinets. Outside, cedar shingles stained a muted red add a warm counterpoint to the silvery roof made of Zinalume steel. Pavers of warm-gray Tenino sandstone—quarried south of Olympia—create a durable and natural-looking surface for patio areas. And large basalt blocks splash rainwater that drips from the ends of shaped-steel gutters, a more picturesque solution to runoff than traditional downspouts.

Still, the house combines its natural elements with a distinctly modern feel. Its exterior forms are crisp and geometric, providing a foil to the wilder terrain that surrounds it. The house fits in with the landscape but also is clearly something that's not native.

And while not large, with about 1,800 square feet of interior space, the house is designed to handle a crowd. It has two large bathrooms and plenty of



A third-floor perch with expansive views over Dabob Bay toward the Olympic Mountains is reminiscent of Forest Service lookouts.



The kitchen features commercial-grade appliances and slab-soapstone counters, which are tough and easy to maintain while adding an attractive warm-gray tone to the main floor.



Throughout the house, natural Douglas fir and cherry add to the home's woodsy appeal, as they do here on the second floor.



The centerpiece of the cabin's large view patio is a



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room for tossing out pads and sleeping bags. "We can accommodate a lot of people without it being a big house," the client says.

Since most of the construction wrapped up in 2008, the owners have made extensive use of their second home. A nearby beach reachable via a short drive or hike is a perfect put-in point for kayaks and small boats. The house itself invites quiet activities such as reading or simply admiring the view. And it's close enough to Seattle—about two hours of ferry and drive time, depending on ferry traffic—to make getting there easy. "I'm happy just to come out for the day," the client says. "I like to go out there and putter around on projects or chop wood. I just love being out there."

Douglas Gantenbein lives in Port Townsend.

Design Details

Architect

Greg Bjarko, [Bjarko Serra Architects](#), 1050 N. 34th St., (206) 545-1443

Builder

Korben Mathis, [Korben Mathis WoodWorking, Inc.](#), P.O. Box 1083, Poulsbo, (360) 297-7087

wood-fired pizza oven. "Pizza made with shrimp from the bay is one of my favorites," the owner says.



From the low-slung entrance the house steps up toward the back; stained shingles add durability

during Northwest winters.



In summer, an outdoor shower lets family members and guests hose off after swimming or crabbing.



The master bedroom on the ground floor opens directly onto the patio. "We didn't make it very large because all we do in there is sleep," the owner says. "But we wanted it to have access to the outdoors."

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Carpenter Korben Mathis filled the house with well-crafted touches, such as fitting a wooden bench to the shape of stone behind and building a ship's-ladder stairway to the third-floor aerie.

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