where the boys are

Kid-friendly rooms and elegant style come together under the deft hand of designer and mom of three Wendy Barze.

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Catalog-order chairs mimic the shapely lines of an antique wood bench at the breakfast table. Contemporary prints on toss pillows add to the friendly union. OPPOSITE: A simple arrangement of daffodils and fruit creates an artful still life on the kitchen table.



Oh, boy. Oh, boy.

Oh, boy.

And husband makes four. That's a lot of *SportsCenter* and roughhousing for Birmingham, Alabama, interior designer Wendy Barze, mother of three boys ages 5–10 and caretaker of golden retriever Charlie. Thank goodness for Wendy's mom and design partner, Marjorie Johnston, who helped her create a home suited for *Monday Night Football* and afternoon tea.

Though Wendy's No. 1 rule is "no ball in the house," there are still plenty of places for playful family time—just as the house was originally intended. The 1940s farmhouse is located in Mountain Brook, a forested suburb established at the turn of the 20th century and designed around a system of riding trails, streams, and rocky hillsides. "I found some old photos when we moved in that show horses and a barn in the backyard," Wendy says.

Wendy and her husband, Brian, bought the house ten years ago from an estate—mold, mildew, quirky floor plan, and all. "It hadn't been lived in for four years," Wendy says. "Both my mother and mother-in-law were appalled!" With a little elbow grease, lots of Martha Stewart paint, and a big-box home-improvement store kitchen makeover, the house was good to go, at least for a few more years.

"We made some minor upgrades along the way, but there was still a lot we wanted to do," Wendy says. A few years ago, the craving for more bedroom and bath space for the growing family drove the family to call on Birmingham architect Debbie Simmons and contractors Twin Construction to explore possibilities and price.

THIS PHOTO: The family room, breakfast nook, and kitchen are cordoned off from the more formal living and dining areas by French doors. OPPOSITE: The home's courtyard is the perfect place for designer Wendy Barze, *far right,* and her mom, Marjorie Johnston, *second from left,* to meet or for the boys and their dad, Brian, to throw a football.

THIS PHOTO: An extension of the kitchen, the family room shows Wendy's masterful mix of old and new, masculine and feminine, fine design and budget decor. OPPOSITE: A Victorian Era demilune table exudes grace despite its marred edges—proof that age adds character.

The group determined two things: It was less expensive to build out than up for a master suite and, for cost and functionality, working within the home's existing footprint would still give Wendy the rooms she wanted without adding unnecessary square footage. "Debbie took my years' worth of drawings and doodles, incorporated her knowledge and ideas, and together we came up with a great plan," Wendy says.

It took seven months to complete the new addition and reallocate space for an extra kid's room and bath. "I wanted to keep the feel of the old farmhouse," Wendy says. "So we intentionally made some of the new spaces feel tacked on."

Updated finishes, a custom kitchen, and some new furnishings dressed out the interiors for a style that Wendy calls "eclectic, random, country, modern, classic." And as incongruent as her description seems, the elements come together for a look that is distinctly hers. "It does require a balance," Wendy says.

For a color guide, Wendy looked to a painting that was a gift from her husband. There, Wendy says she found the inspiration for the home's scheme of mostly blues as well as muted earth tones, dark accents, and spots of yellow-gold. "I created a palette for the entire house—from the marble in the kitchen and baths, to the wall colors, to the bedding, to the art," Wendy says. "I think continuity is important."

Thoughtful ideas allowed Wendy to make a home that is at once beautiful and tough enough to stand up to the boys too. Upholstery is durable, finishes are easy care, and some zones are just off-limits. And what happens when the boys cross the line? Wendy sends them outside to throw the football.

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crowd-pleaser

Homeowner Wendy Barze settled on a harmonious mix of masculine and feminine design characteristics to make sure everyone would feel at home.

STRIKE A BALANCE. Use masculine colors on furnishings with feminine lines and vice versa. In the living area, a curvaceous Victorian sofa is covered in stately herringbone tweed.

LOOK IN YOUR CLOSETS. Wendy used menswear favorites, such as mohair, tweed, and shirt stripes, for upholstery and pillows. She softened the buttoned-up look with muted florals, eyelet, and oh-so-subtle ribbons and ruffles.

GET GOOD GRADES. Not everything has to be industrial-grade fabric, but be aware that there is a rating system for durability. Wendy chose scuff-tough upholstery for seating.

"Most contemporary designers have been inspired by some part of history, so combining styles seems natural."

—HOMEOWNER AND DESIGNER WENDY BARZE

THIS PHOTO: In the formal dining room, Chippendale chairs surround a farm table, while a pine hutch holds Wendy's collection of ironstone and china. OPPOSITE: A custom kitchen suits family dinners and entertaining. The streamlined design reflects Wendy's goal for farmhouse modern with its vintage-style hardware, freestanding bureau-style cabinetry, white marble countertops, and contemporary barstools and lighting.



OPPOSITE: Wendy artfully arranges books by color and supplements with a balanced arrangement of her collection of brown-and-white transferware. RIGHT: Using the fireplace as a dividing point, Wendy split the formal living room in half. With a wall of bookcases and a pair of 1940s armchairs, one side quickly takes on a library persona. BELOW: On the other side of the living room, a conversation area features a Victorian sofa and French side chairs.





keeping house

A little bit country, a little bit modern. Here are Wendy's tips for bringing a variety of styles and periods together under one roof:

FIND COMMON GROUND. To give the house continuity, Wendy chose one color of Benjamin Moore paint—Floral White—and maintained the same, simple trims and finishes throughout.

MIND PROPORTIONS. No matter the style, symmetrical arrangements and agreeable proportions strike a cohesive look.

FOLLOW THE LINES. In the kitchen, modern chairs, a vintage lantern, and an antique bench cross design barriers with their shared characteristic of curvy lines.

SHOP FOR STURDY SEATING. Whether new or antique, check frames for lasting materials such as kiln-dried hardwood and spring coils. The heavier the piece, the higher the quality.

EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE. Even books become design tools when artfully organized by color and size, making for a striking arrangement.

THIS PHOTO: The new master suite showcases a tester bed draped with romantic eyelet panels. "The bedroom is our escape," Wendy says. "Brian and I open the door to the outside, and we feel like we're a million miles from anywhere." OPPOSITE: In lieu of a bedside table, Wendy uses an antique French desk and an armchair—perfect for creative late-night jotting and sketching of ideas.

"Most contemporary styles are minimal, while the country French is much busier. You have to edit carefully to combine the two."

—HOMEOWNER AND DESIGNER WENDY BARZE