

A Palm Beach Poolhouse Gets a Stylish Upgrade from Ellen Kavanaugh Interiors

Bifold doors open up one whole side to the sunny exterior.

BY ALLISON DUNCAN PUBLISHED: APR 7, 2023

The perfect poolside moment, according to designer [Ellen Kavanaugh](#)? "Opening up the sliders, mixing a cocktail, and relaxing on the sofa—that's what living in sunny South Florida is all about." That's exactly the vibe that Kavanaugh, principal at [Ellen Kavanaugh Interiors](#), sought to create in the backyard of this historic 1920s Mediterranean home in Palm Beach.

A detached 1,200-square-foot guest residence on the property was her focus. "The homeowners always enjoyed the guest house and guests loved staying in it, but the living space was underutilized," she explains. "We wanted it to feel more like a relaxed cabana off the pool."

To build a space both for visitors and guests, Kavanaugh turned the existing sauna into a bar, complete with high-gloss custom cabinetry with brass mesh details, smoked lucite hardware, and a vintage flamingo tapestry. The Palm Beach-based designer brought the outdoors in by installing expansive bi-fold sliders that open to the pool.

An entertainer's paradise, the guest home now features two bedrooms and bathrooms, a living room, and bar. A fresh coat of paint kept things light and bright, and repurposed furniture from the homeowner's yacht ensures the guest house still feels like home.

“The homeowners' newly married daughters and their families now have their own place to stay when they visit Palm Beach,” Kavanaugh explains. “They are close enough to the main home, but the updated space really allows them to be self-sufficient. And who doesn’t want to wake up looking out to that gorgeous pool?”

Above

Two teal console tables were once a lacquered linen game table of the homeowners. They cut it in half to create symmetry in the living space. A vintage French tiger panel from Devonshire of Palm Beach draws the eye. The vintage sofa has upholstery by Associated Interior Designer Service.

Kavanaugh installed bi-fold sliders to create an indoor-outdoor living space that opens to the home’s pool.

Vintage urns from Devonshire of Palm Beach were repurposed into lamps. Kavanaugh added lampshades from Massimo Frank Lighting with Samuel & Sons jute fringe. The pair sits atop lucite shelves. The coffee table is vintage.

What was once a sauna is now a fully functional bar.

A vintage French flamingo panel, sourced from Devonshire of Palm Beach, gives the flamingo bar its name.

Q&A

***House Beautiful:* What were you hoping to achieve?**

Ellen Kavanaugh: We wanted to create a fully functional space by adding comfortable and inviting furniture in the living room and creating a designated bar area. We replaced the floors throughout and painted the walls and ceiling.

***HB:* What’d you do to get crafty?**

EK: We kept the walls in the living room as is and added a fresh coat of paint. The ceiling’s grasscloth was still in great shape, so we painted it Benjamin Moore Opal Essence. Our clients, who are also dear friends, are creatives as well and collaborated with us a lot on this project. We repurposed furnishings from the homeowner’s yacht that we were lucky enough to also work on years ago. The vintage sectional with lucite legs and teak accents, swivel chairs, and lucite and brass coffee table were all from their yacht.

***HB:* What’s a special moment in the space?**

EK: The homeowners came up with a genius idea to cut their teal lacquered linen game table in half to make two console tables. The wall lamps are vintage urns we had made into lamps that sit on top of lucite shelves to make them appear as though they are floating. The lampshades were custom made with a fun Samuel & Sons jute fringe.

***HB:* What’s your favorite part of the guest house?**

The flamingo bar. It’s always open!
