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**The Pros
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Leather and chenille mix in the great room (opposite), where French doors open to a deck overlooking the riverfront. The Venetian-plastered dining room (this page) centers on a burled cherry table and chairs under a transitional chandelier.





Mayer, provides views of the tree-lined riverfront through large windows and French doors opening to ipe decks. "The water is the wallpaper of the house," says Chris Ventura.

During the construction process, the couple tapped Annapolis designer Arlene Critzos of Interior Concepts to help shape the rooms and ensure they would be practical as well as attractive. "Some designers are limited to selecting furnishings and finishes, but what makes Arlene so unique is her strong architectural sense," says Ventura.

Between the entrance and main staircase, Critzos defined a foyer with pedestals and carefully placed chairs. She transformed a small space on one side of this vestibule into a music room for the couple's piano and Waterford crystal chandelier—the only two items recycled from their first house. On the other side, she designed a built-in buffet topped by granite and paired columns to frame the dining room. A burlled cherry dining table and chairs are set below another crystal chandelier that's more transitional in style.

In contrast to these formal spaces, the back of the house was turned into a casual living/family room open to a kitchen on one side. Sofas and chairs upholstered in earth tones are arranged into two groupings, both with a view of the flat-screen TV over the stone fireplace. "The look the

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Built into a hillside, the new home (above) is nearly double the size of the original structure. Meals are prepared outdoors on the deck (top) or in the kitchen next to a limestone-topped dining table and woven leather chairs (opposite).



PORTFOLIO

homeowners wanted was eclectic and a touch elegant," says Critzos. "So there are a lot of mixed materials, from steel and copper to leather and rattan."

Design elements echo the water views outside, from a table filled with oyster shells to a sofa's aqua-blue upholstery. In the kitchen, Ventura notes, cabinets of figured cherry and a glass-tiled backsplash "complement the movement and reflected light of the water and bring them inside."

Next to the granite-topped island, a round table and chairs made of woven leather provide a place for everyday meals. Another dining area on the side deck takes advantage of an outdoor kitchen where Ventura says she grills steaks "even with four feet of snow on the ground."

In rebuilding on their property, the Venturas made sure the house would support their hobbies as well as their habits. A small putting green in the attic allows Jim to practice his golf swing while a room over the garage provides a place for the kids to play video games.

Chris Ventura's favorite space is the small conservatory off the dining room where she tends her tropical plants. "It is a retreat, allowing me to garden year round. During the winter blizzard, I had orchids and a gardenia blooming." On one side of the space, windows set into the cabinet above a granite sink allow the homeowner to admire her flowers from inside an adjacent office. The plants are supported on one wall by curving metal brackets inspired by similar designs in the orchid room at Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania.

Downstairs in the walk-out basement, the Venturas paid homage to their African safari trips with murals of elephants and lions painted by Virginia artist Jeffery Stockberger. "It recreates a favorite family memory for us," says Ventura.

For Critzos, developing spaces around orchids and safari imagery in the riverfront home led her into uncharted territory. "They were certainly unique, creative opportunities," she says. "It was fun to design something you haven't done before." ♦

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Windows above mahogany cabinets and a granite farm sink (pictured here) provide views into the orchid room. In the basement, murals painted by Virginia artist Jeffery Stockberger flank the bar (below).

