

beachy keen

After years of living in the thick of it, this Kapiti Coast couple craved seclusion and serenity by the water

Text by **Sharon Stephenson**. Photography by **Nicola Edmonds**.



**"We decided it was time
to be close to the ocean"**

Opposite This little patch of paradise is just the thing after a lifetime of overseas adventures. This photo Fergus and Renny enjoy the fruit of their labour with a glass of wine on the deck.

It's no surprise that they chose a secluded spot in which to build their dream home



it's no surprise that Fergus and Renny Brown chose a secluded spot in which to build their dream home. For six years, Fergus' job with Tourism New Zealand relocated the couple to Hong Kong and Singapore, two of the most densely populated places on the planet. That was followed by several years in Masterton, where they ran a busy motor lodge.

"We eventually decided it was time to have some privacy and be close to the ocean, and this five-acre [two-hectare] section ticked those boxes. It's a 15-minute walk to the sea," says Renny.

No matter that the Peka Peka property was just a hilly paddock with a few grazing horses when they first saw it. Enter architectural designers Nathan Rooney and Tushka Glintmeyer of Space Architecture, who brought to fruition the couple's desire for a "big beach house" that was casually elegant, environmentally sustainable and blended into its surroundings.

Fergus and Renny originally had their hearts set on a single-storey home, but

Left The beach-house concept is evident in the light and airy open-plan living room, in which a blonder plywood ceiling and exposed beams engender a casual vibe. **Inset above** After years spent living overseas, the couple wanted to celebrate a relaxed Kiwi lifestyle. 'Privacy', 'tranquility' and 'seclusion' were the buzz words for the look and feel of their Peka Peka home.

in a nutshell

Who lives here? Renny Brown (project manager for Ruth Pretty Catering) and Fergus Brown (CEO of the Holiday Accommodation Parks Association of New Zealand), with Klaus the dog.

Renny, why do you love living in Peka Peka? Our area is 'rural for beginners': big enough to have a lot of fun but not so large that you need stock and a farming degree. We're only one hour from Wellington when we need our city fix. With improved train services, a new airport with direct flights to Auckland, and a new highway on the plans, the area is our little bit of heaven.

What was your best bargain? The deck, because we've ended up with another room.

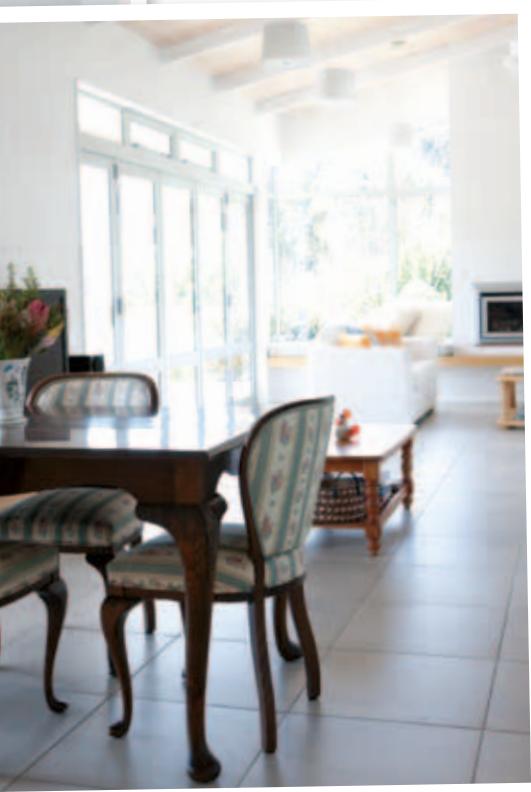
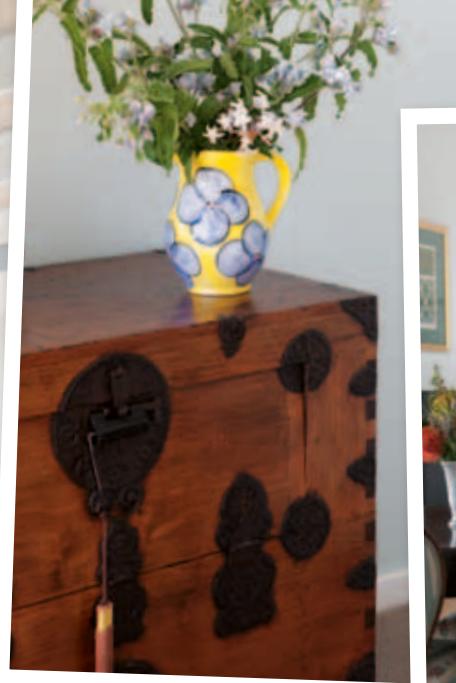


it wasn't a hard sell for the designers to convince them to bump things up a level and position the master bedroom on the top floor and the living area on the ground floor. The resulting 248-square-metre home provides privacy for both the couple and their many guests, who are given the run of the home's lower level.

Winter or summer, the kwila decking is the heart of the Brown's home. Comprising three levels, the deck is the perfect place for entertaining, and the couple says their barbecue has never had so much use. "Even in a howling northerly, the deck is protected," says Fergus. They didn't plan to have such a large deck but say council regulations meant they had to extend its reach over the water.

When it came to landscaping, they envisaged a small pond. What they got was an acre of lake! "Our landscape architect's husband was a water expert who discovered an underground river, so we ended up creating a lake with an island in the middle," says Renny. The peat that was removed was used to form hills behind the lake.

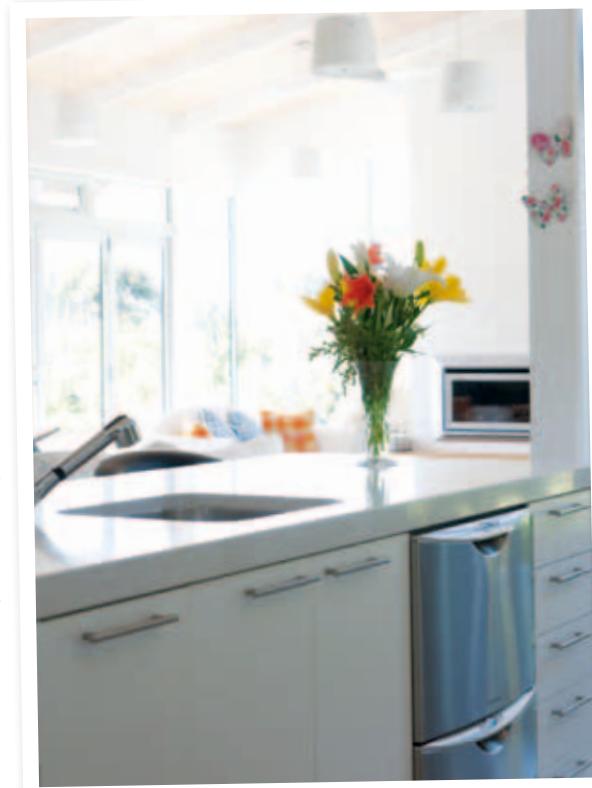
Left Fergus' job means he's often away on business, so his idea of bliss is to chill out on the couch with a good book. **Inset above** The dining room table and chairs belonged to Fergus' parents and have been in the family for years. The large white floor tiles are another nod to beach-style living.



"We liked what our neighbours Peter and Adrienne Dale had done with the wetland on their property, Pateke Lagoons, and wanted to recreate that on a smaller scale," says Renny. Many a weekend was spent planting flax and other natives, which now attract birdlife such as tui, kingfishers, paradise ducks and pukeko.

The downstairs bedroom and office overlooks the lake and Renny says it was a no-brainer to keep the decoration to a minimum. "We didn't want to detract from the view," she says. One exception is the antique wooden chest Fergus picked up while on a work trip to Korea: "I managed to take it as carry-on luggage back to Hong Kong!"

The design of the home also incorporates ample storage, a relief after years of living in small apartments. Hence the large room at the bottom of the stairs that houses the wine cellar and the laundry, complete with laundry chute. The built-in shelving is also the ideal spot for Renny's impressive



Top As project manager for caterer Ruth Pretty, Renny was keen to have a large kitchen that included a butler's pantry that could be closed to hide clutter. **Inset above** She also opted not to have cupboard doors, making items a cinch to find when cooking.



clever tricks

- Choose a designer who shares your values and understands what you're trying to achieve. Being on the same page from the outset will ensure a smoother ride.
- Engage a project manager to take overall responsibility for the build. "We were lucky that our architectural designer Nathan took on this role, which saved us many hours of worry as decisions could be made quickly while we carried on working," says Renny.
- If you have a large section and can work it into your budget, employ a landscape architect. The initial outlay will be worth it in the long run and you'll have a plan to follow well into the future.





QUICK TIP Glass adds subtle colour and an interesting surface to a white-on-white space.

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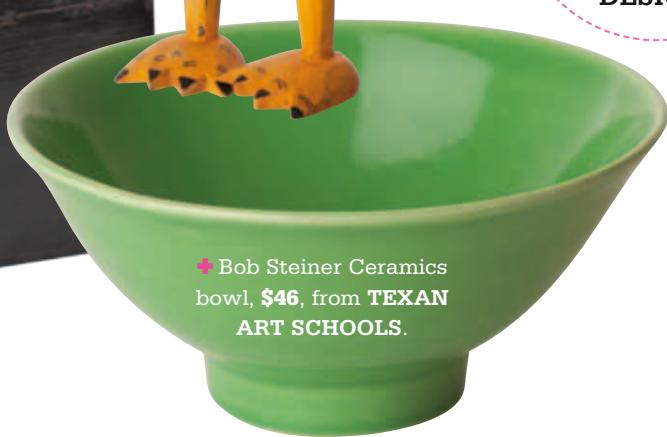
chicken little

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Like what you see? Turn to pages 144 and 152.