

by DONNA CORNELIUS • photography by JEAN ALLSOPP • styling by MISSIE NEVILLE CRAWFORD

the simple life

*This busy mom and Birmingham decorator takes
us on a tour of her stylish Lake Martin vacation home*

Interior decorator Wendy Barze of Marjorie Johnston & Company loves to recall her youthful summer days at Lake Martin. “I used to go with a friend and her family, and we always had a great time,” she says.



Wendy’s all grown up now, with a husband, three boys and a thriving design career (some of her work was showcased in this year’s Decorators’ ShowHouse, page 26). She’s still having fun at the 44,000-acre lake, making new memories at a rustic retreat.

The Barzes’ getaway is a cabin rented from Russell Lands, an Alabama recreational real estate developer. “The company built two or three hundred cabins here in the 1940s,” says Wendy. “A lot of developments and private homes, some way over the top, have been built here, too.”

But the Barzes love the simplicity of their compact cabin, which they rent for year-long stretches with Wendy’s brother and his family.

“We had been in another cabin but outgrew it as our family grew,” she says. “This one had a million dollar view but was really dated and tired. They let us make changes. We made the kitchen white, crisp and clean. We used inexpensive Formica countertops, got cabinets from Lowe’s and put in new track lighting to add brightness.”

Wendy started with a red and blue color scheme, adding white accents. “I keep that in mind when I’m buying anything, from



FACING PAGE: Every member of the Barze family—Wendy, Brian and sons Henry, age 10; Jay, who's 8; and Edward, age 5, plus handsome golden retriever Charlie—finds plenty to do at their Lake Martin cabin. “The boys love to go tubing, and we all like sunset cruises in our boat,” says Wendy. THIS PAGE, TOP: Henry, Jay and Edward take a break from outdoor fun to gather in the kitchen, while Wendy prepares a picnic. “I love to cook, and the kitchen is tiny but works well,” she says. Overseeing the kitchen is this white “deer head,” which is actually a puzzle from Birmingham Botanical Gardens’ gift shop. Wendy’s sons put it together. The cabin’s pine paneling—on walls, floors and ceilings—is original. THIS PAGE, RIGHT: Chocolate brown synthetic wicker furniture came from Blackjack Gardens, as did a bamboo chair in eye-catching red. THIS PAGE, BOTTOM RIGHT: Even the sleeping quarters are swathed in casual sophistication. In this room, an antique iron bed with white linens pop against paneled walls. THIS PAGE, BOTTOM LEFT: Wendy keeps things simple in the living area, with easy-care fabric on the sofa and minimal accessories. Baskets, like the one stowed under the coffee table, add extra storage space. This bookcase from West Elm is multi-functional, with room to store games, towels and books. “Also, it hides two really ugly air vents,” says Wendy. “It has an open back so it doesn’t stop the air flow.”



THIS PAGE, TOP: Wendy has prepared a picnic complete with fresh from the garden summer veggies. For summer fresh recipes from the Junior League of Birmingham, check out our special alabamaDISH section on page 18. THIS PAGE, RIGHT: Wendy's sons—Henry, age 10; Jay, who's 8; and Edward, age 5, enjoy the outdoor hammock while golden retriever Charlie watches on.



The lake look

Wendy's an interior decorator who works with her mother, Marjorie Johnston at Marjorie Johnston & Company. Both know that often the sky's not the limit, budget-wise—particularly when it comes to decorating second homes.

- **"IT'S OK TO USE ITEMS YOU ALREADY OWN,** but buy some new things, too," Wendy advises. "You don't want the house to look like a garage sale."
- **BE PRACTICAL,** she adds. "Choose furniture and accessories that require little maintenance and are forgiving. A lake house is about recreation, and people are going to be wet and dirty."
- **SAVE MONEY** by catalog shopping at the right time. "You probably want summery things for a lake house, so buy in October, when those items are on sale," Wendy says.



fresh flowers to accessories," she says. "With a place this small, too much color and pattern could be tacky."

The large living area includes a kitchen and eating space, but most of the family's time, when they're not outdoors, is spent on the screened porch.

The "bunk room," with two sets of stacked beds, is just right for her boys, while the other room is her nieces' sleeping spot. "There, we used blue and red coverlets with an abstract floral design to make things a little more feminine," she says.

Sea grass rugs from Pottery Barn and furniture from IKEA and West Elm proved smart buys. But her smartest buys were two red wicker picnic baskets found at Target.

"Lake Martin has lots of undeveloped shoreline, so we love to go out with a picnic, find a spot and beach our boat," she says. "I can't count the times those baskets have been emptied and refilled." ●

resources:

MARJORIE JOHNSTON & CO.

2710 Culver Road • Birmingham 35223
205.414.7800 • www.mhjinteriors.com

furniture and accessories:

BLACKJACK GARDENS 5549 Derby Drive • Birmingham 35210 • 205.836.2933
• www.blackjackgardens.com

Wendy found great buys at: **WEST ELM, IKEA AND TARGET** www.westelm.com • www.ikea.com • www.target.com

FOR MORE ON LAKE MARTIN AND RUSSELL LANDS: www.russellandsonlakemartin.com