



photographs by JULIA LYNN

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SIXTEEN YEARS AGO, VANDERHORST PLANTATION, BUILT in 1803 on South Carolina's Kiawah Island by wealthy planter Arnoldus Vanderhorst, was rescued from a century-long slide into dereliction by Charleston developer Buddy Darby. Darby's preservation efforts helped land the property on the National Register of Historic Places. But recently a new chapter has begun with the completion of a modern outbuilding on the fifteen-acre historic site, catapulting old Vanderhorst into the twenty-first century.

"We call it Creek House," says Darby of the structure that began as a wish for a place to relax away from the formality of the plantation house. The cedar-clad pavilion, nothing more than "an open-air shed paneled in screens," he says, sits on pilings a stone's throw from the water and takes in a miles-wide panorama of Lowcountry marsh. Respecting the history of the place, he secreted it from the old house behind a scrim of live oaks and palmettos.

Architects Reggie Gibson and David Thompson of GTG Architects in Charleston were a natural fit for an unconventional project. After all, their previous projects include both a historically reproduced drawbridge house that overlooks the Ashley River and a twentyroom avian hospital at the Center for Birds of Prey in Awendaw, South Carolina.

Casting about for the creek house's personality began with a location search that led around the bend from the old house to a natural indentation in the tidal creek. It was here that an earlier archaeological survey had revealed the ruins of a kitchen. "We decided to stabilize what was left of its brick foundation and build the creek house in an L shape hugging the old site," says Thompson.

The style of the creek house, Gibson says, is "no style, really... just a porch on the water with a big fireplace and lots of prep space for cooking." Rough-sawn, unstained cedar plank walls inset with panels of bronze screening face the creek. South American ipe tree trunks stripped of bark provide in-ground posts for long spans of cedar beams. The combination of so many rustic elements—two bar tops are halves of a live-oak limb that fell on the property—convey the simplicity of a Lowcountry fish camp. Even the pendant lamp shades over the dining table are hand-woven from kudzu. It's a laid-back look Charleston designer Ginger Brewton supplemented with furniture and fabrics that she chose, she says, "not just for the weather exposure but to hold up to sixteen children."

Under a roof canted high to catch the creek breeze is the state-of-the-art stainless steel kitchen Darby requested. "We clean, cook, and eat what we catch here and afterwards wash down the floor with a hose." A three-by-sixteen-foot poured concrete table is not just for food prep and feasting. Its rebar-reinforced legs extend through the floor into the ground. "We needed a table strong enough to dance on," Darby says, laughing. **©**

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Open Air This page, clockwise from top: The creek house; a copper sink in one of the bathrooms; a view from the creek house dining room; from left, architect Reggie Gibson, designer Ginger Brewton, owner Buddy Darby, and architect David Thompson. Opposite: The three-by-sixteen-foot poured concrete table seats up to twenty.

