

M A D E *for living*

Balancing the push-pull of a homeowner's and her designer sister-in-law's tastes, this Texas home is primed for a modern family.

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opposite: The makings of a fresh farm breakfast and a bouquet of lush flowers are just a glimpse into the relaxed mornings in this Tomball, Texas, farmhouse. *this photo:* Homeowner Grace Laird measured a local restaurant's booth to get the exact close-but-not-too-close dimensions for her family's breakfast nook. It's intentionally an intimate opposite to the 10-foot Pennsylvania farmhouse table in the dining room. Grace and interior designer Ashley Moore selected the light fixture for its industrial look.

WHEN GRACE LAIRD STANDS AT THE APRON-FRONT SINK

of her Tomball, Texas, farmhouse, she's able to see the kids (plus a dog, six ducks, and 12 chickens) play in the picturesque hayfields she fell in love with when she and her husband discovered this former horse pasture. Their new home, designed and constructed by Mill Creek Custom Homes, was built to fit the land, the couple's long-desired simple living, and this very moment.

The Lairds' dream farmhouse is a smorgasbord of others' farmhouses, as Grace gathered inspiration from a floor plan here and a color palette there. Her greatest muse, however, was the home of her sister-in-law Ashley Moore of Moore House Interiors, who would later spearhead the interior design of the Lairds' home. Once the floor plan was set (a two-story style that gives the family plenty of square footage), Grace and Moore aimed to create rooms for modern family living without sacrificing a sense of rusticity.

Moore bridged the gap between styles with gentle push and pull. "There were a couple of choices that I had to push back on just because of functionality or longevity of the design," the designer says. The kitchen has country features—reclaimed wood beams, a wood vent hood, and shiplap—and more function-focused choices, such as a gathering-friendly island and open shelving. The living room is cozy with a towering fireplace, built-ins, and plush leather furniture to withstand the children's wear and tear. Durable antiques accent the room. "All of the furniture we use daily is on the modern side," Grace says. "But case goods can be antique as long as they're sturdy."

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opposite: The Lairds' farmhouse includes a covered driveway separating the garage from the house. **above:** New furnishings in classic looks, like leather and plaid, keep the living room in conversation with the rest of the home without introducing precious pieces to a heavily trafficked space. The coffee table was custom-made from reclaimed wood and metal. The sofa's side table is an old cobbler's bench Grace found for \$40. "My kids sit and stand on it," she says. "I've lucked out with a lot of antiques being sturdy."

Grace and Moore debated which style to choose for the island's stools. Moore championed clean lines that wouldn't distract from the simple appeal of a relaxed, country kitchen. When it came to the island's 2-inch-thick barnwood countertop, however, Grace won despite Moore's sanitary concerns. "But it works really well in the house," Moore says with a laugh.





• LESSON 5 •
farm made
MODERN

Building from the ground up? Homeowner Grace Laird and designer Ashley Moore recommend two characteristics to nail a contemporary-meets-rustic look: high ceilings and a multitude of windows.

Antiques are a subject Grace knows well. As an avid collector with an affinity for New England collectibles, Grace has filled her home with pre-loved textiles, art, and furnishings. Some are family heirlooms, others are sourced from her various hunts. “She would literally be antique shopping, take a picture, send it to me, and ask, ‘Does this work here?’ ‘Do you think this will go in my house?’ Sometimes, I would say, ‘You’ve lost your mind.’ But then we’d make it work,” Moore says. The sprinkling of finds pushes the farmhouse toward a homespun look—but it’s just right. “It feels like we belong here,” Grace says.

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above: A hutch at the edge of the living area is filled with some of Grace’s most prized antiques, including a china collection she uses for tea parties with her daughters. “I try not to buy an antique if I am not going to use it,” she says. **above right:** Rather than find a wood range hood, the Lairds opted to construct their own. **right:** The decision to install several windows meant space for fewer upper cabinets. Enter open shelving, which keeps the family’s dishware collection to just what they use but also serves as a collectible display. **opposite:** The apron-front sink and kitchen window were the starting point of the entire house. Grace wanted enough windows to watch her children as she cooked and cleaned. “Nature should flow in,” she says. “I needed windows and natural light everywhere.”



“COLLECTING ANTIQUES IS NOT FAST-PACED. WHEN YOU WANT TO ADD IN THAT CHARM, YOU’RE NOT ABLE TO GO TO AMAZON AND FIND IT.”

-interior designer Ashley Moore



opposite: “The claw-foot tub is beautiful and old,” Grace says. “It just made sense.” Her vision for a sweet bath is rounded out by a Windsor chair (scored for just \$100), a café curtain, and a landscape oil painting. *above right:* A wood shelf brings a sense of luxury to Grace’s simple sanctuary. *right:* Taking notes from Moore’s own bedroom, the Lairds’ primary bedroom cozies up with quilts and keeps things simple with wood furnishings. Despite its newness, a Pottery Barn bed frame blends with the room’s antiques, which include the century-old blanket hutch at the foot of the bed and the Civil War-era quilts folded on top.



left: When Grace wanted to paint her kitchen island in a bright blue, Moore gently guided her toward considering the bold color for the laundry, where she might not grow tired of it because she wouldn't see it as much. *below:* Grace hunted for a bench that would fit perfectly between the walls in her home's narrow entryway. A dainty piece she purchased off Etsy from Ukraine was a match. A peg rail shelf, oil painting of a dog, and the ever-evolving homespun decorations that are either hung or placed atop complete the look. *opposite:* The Laird family wanted a home that allowed them to have a relaxed, simple lifestyle. A porch with ample and comfortable seating (and generous views of their surrounding hayfields) was imperative.



ON THE HUNT

Collector Grace Laird sources antiques for decoration, furniture, and just about anything. Here, she shares a few tricks of the trade.

ARTS ALIVE. If you can't find the right vintage art for your space, consider downloading and printing (free and high-resolution) artwork from a museum's fine art archives. You'll likely save money and find exactly what you want.

THE POWER OF NEW UPHOLSTERY. If a piece of furniture has strong bones and a perfect silhouette, don't let faded or stained fabric deter you. Re-covering it gives you functionality with "all of the lines of an antique piece," designer Ashley Moore says.

LOOK BEYOND LOCAL. Classic pieces might cost more at your neighborhood antiques shop than if you scour Facebook Marketplace (with a wide distance range), auction sites, or tag sales where sellers aren't experts and may not know an item's worth.