

# MODERN RUSTIC

Jennifer and Wesley Thomas's Shreveport house is part barn (for him) and part transitional cottage (for her)

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PHOTOS BY CRAIG MACALUSO

## ➤ HUSBAND AND WIFE BUILDERS

Jennifer and Wesley Thomas of Wesley Thomas Inc. both wanted a house that looked like it belonged in its beautiful Shreveport, Louisiana setting. For the Thomases, that meant a timeless Creole cottage with a Hays Towne flavor. Beyond that, the couple's vision diverged a bit. While Wesley wanted to create the rural ambiance of a barn using reclaimed materials and simple design elements, Jennifer wanted a more transitional flavor — particularly on the inside — that allowed for on-trend furnishings. The answer is a compromise they call Modern Rustic.

The Thomases, who've run their custom home building business together for 10 years, are well versed in the finer points of design and building. In addition to building homes for clients, they've renovated two and built four for themselves. They say their commitment to quality sets them apart.

"We like to work with clients from the beginning and we believe in a good design team, interior designer, architect and quality over quantity," says Wesley.

The couple called in architect Scott Payne of Farmer Payne Architects and interior designer Alison McKenzie of Medina Interiors for their own home.

"I knew Scott and Wesley could nail down a good layout and I could work with Alison on the interior and get what we wanted," says Jennifer.

Inspired by the surroundings, which include a private lake, the couple wanted to be able to see through the house in order to take advantage of the views. With three kids and two dogs, they wanted outdoor spaces for living, dining and cooking.

"It's important to both of us to eat every night as a family," says Jennifer. "We wanted [dining] options inside and outside."





▶ (Top) Outdoor living spaces were a must for the active family. The patio has an outdoor kitchen, a dining table and chairs and a sitting area with fireplace. The brick from Vintage Brick of Louisiana is reclaimed from an old church in Mansfield, La.; reclaimed cypress frames the windows. (Bottom) Wesley, Charlotte, Jennifer, Morgan, and Dean Thomas at home. (Right) The outdoor hearth has a bluestone ledge and a recycled beam shelf. Wesley found the elk shed on top of the Continental Divide while elk hunting in Colorado.



▶ (Top) The family room overlooks a lake. Furnishings through Alison McKenzie of Medina Interiors. (Middle) An open post and beam construction allows visibility through the house. The iron of the coffee table echoes the iron stair rail by Custom Fab & Welding. Reclaimed pine beams are from an old saw mill in North Carolina. (Bottom) The kitchen combines quartzite, limestone and stainless steel with metal and glass pendant fixtures. The window enables Jennifer to watch the kids play in the front yard. (Right) The family room's white oak cabinets were chosen for their organic feel. The brick is from an old church.

Because they enjoy cooking and entertaining, a large kitchen that functions as the heart of the home was also a must.

The 4,000-square-foot house, a beautiful amalgam of all of those things, features an open post and beam construction, natural Louisiana-inspired materials such as old brick and reclaimed cypress, and modern touches like step-downs between rooms. To keep the



space from veering too far into rustic, Jennifer and McKenzie tempered the organic elements with a soft palette and current furnishings that would be equally at home in an urban setting.

“We furnished it with lighter clean-lined pieces that would break up some of the rustic-ness and make it all blend,” says Jennifer.

Despite having a busy family life that includes recreational activities like fishing and

paddle boarding, the house is uncluttered and minimal. The kids’ bedrooms and playroom are located upstairs away from the public spaces.

The Thomases say that getting the itch to renovate or build is an occupational hazard that goes with the territory.

“The ability to create again is always on the table,” says Wesley. But for now, they are happily ensconced in their modern rustic.

“There’s a nice scenic background,” says Wesley. “That’s really why we’re here. We can look out at the canopy of trees and the water. We love it.” ■