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HOME & GARDEN

'Fuzzybutt Farm': Dream farmhouse designed by woman in East Naples



Ashley Collins

Naples

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When you think farmhouse, images of horse stables, pigs rolling in mud and grandma's home cooking may come to mind. But this farmhouse, off Golden Gate Parkway near Interstate 75 in East Naples, is far from it.

A gravel driveway leads visitors through a secluded forest of trees and up to a wooden gate emblazoned with the phrase "Fuzzybutt Farm." Beyond it, a winding walkway leads to the charming front porch of a picturesque one-story farmhouse that appears to have popped out of the pages of "Country Living" magazine.

Built in 2017, Fuzzybutt Farm has a somewhat traditional feel to it with a classic gabled roof and a front porch with several wooden columns, brick flooring and two seating areas, including a pair of rocking chairs.

The modern touches, however, is what set this farmhouse apart from the rest.

Most of the exterior is pearl white, except for the two-car garage painted black. Natural light streams in through the home's many windows. Its roof is made of energy-saving metal.

Inside, the house has a laid-back California feel to it. Light hues of pink, green, white and blue fill the house. Industrial light fixtures add a modern touch. Furniture is minimal but comfortable, some pieces are salvaged and give off a non-kitschy farmhouse vibe. Indoor plants placed in every room welcome the outside in. Board and batten-style white walls brighten the home.

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Michelle Wood, 47, lives in this custom-built modern farmhouse. She designed every nook and cranny of the 2,300-square-foot space, which includes a 100-square-foot work shed and an Instagram-worthy indoor/outdoor space.

Wood shares the three-bedroom, four-bath home with her lawyer husband, Doug Wood, 54, and their five rescue pets, two cats and three dogs, all of whom inspired the home's quirky name.

Turning a plot of land into a home

The farmhouse was just a 2.3 acre lot of grass before the Woods purchased the land in 2016. Michelle Wood envisioned a home there someday.

"We fell in love with the lot. It was a great location in town so it was perfect," she said.

The Woods had remodeled two homes around town in the past. This time, however, they were building a home from scratch.

When Michelle Wood realized what they'd done, she felt both excited and scared.

"I was like, 'Oh my God, what did I get myself into?'"

Construction started the next year, 2017, in April.

She was on-site nearly every day, making quick decisions and sometimes rolling up her sleeves to help. "I told the builder, 'Listen, I'm coming to the site every day,'" she said. "There are a lot of mistakes that can be made during the construction process and sometimes it ends up being expensive mistakes."

Gradually, the land was cleared, walls started going up and the house was taking shape.

Even though construction wouldn't be finished until spring 2018, the Woods moved in the Thanksgiving before with their pets since the lease was up on their current place.

The construction process was stressful at times and often tougher than their past remodel projects.

The first house they remodeled was a two-bedroom, two-bath home in Park Shore. In the time they lived there, around 10 years, they expanded the house with another bedroom and installed a backyard pool. They rented out their snowbird neighbor's house during

Their second house was a two-story 1980s beach-style cottage near Naples High School. They stayed there for a year and renovated the space, fixing up the overgrown yard, before embarking on the farmhouse project.

"When you're doing a remodel, you're kind of stuck with the footprint that is there. You can change some things around, take down walls and put up new ones but you're still within that confined design," Michelle Wood said.

"With our farmhouse, we had a chance to really create something for the way we live. What works for us."

She considers herself the designer and handyman in the relationship while her husband focuses on the finances.

"God love him, he's super smart and good at a lot of things but he's not good at anything to do with home repair," she said.

Doug Wood said his wife is very talented and "always ahead of the trends."

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How Michelle Wood cultivated her design style

It took Michelle Wood more than 20 years to cultivate her design style.

She grew up in the suburbs of Chicago and always loved painting and drawing. That creativity spilled into interior design when she lived on her own in her 20s. She taught herself how to sew and would make duvet covers and curtains.

Michelle Wood never went to design school. Interior design was more like a hobby to her. She worked as a paralegal for years and met her husband while working at a law firm in Naples. She moved to nonprofit work before starting a photography business for pets and humans and teaching guitar lessons.

For years, she'd research design styles and trends, spending hours on Pinterest and Instagram and following well-known interior designers like Emily Henderson, who has appeared on HGTV.

Michelle Wood said her style has evolved over the years, but now she can confidently say

She loves creating relaxing spaces using light colors and incorporating furnishings and decor both functional and pleasing to the eye.

"I like that a piece looks pretty, but it also needs to function well," she said.

In the kitchen, which spills out into the family room, exposed shelving displays all their dishes and glasses like a work of art. It's not just aesthetically pleasing, but makes the space appear larger and can also be less expensive as opposed to traditional cabinets.

"Design shouldn't be serious. It should be fun and an extension of your personality."

In the laundry room, which also features exposed shelving, Michelle Wood hides the cat litter inside a closet. Her cats walk in and out of their bathroom by entering and exiting through a tiny doorway built on the side of the closet space. The litter room even has a name — The Loo 2.0.

From the light fixtures to the indoor plants, every piece in her home serves a purpose. She doesn't try to find a random art piece in a store just to fill a blank wall at home.

"Every piece has to have meaning behind it, such as where I got it from or if it was a special trip," she said.

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Her minimalist style would make Netflix sensation Marie Kondo proud. Kondo is a tidying expert from Japan who uses her KonMari Method to help families organize their homes on the new Netflix series, "Tidying Up with Marie Kondo."

Clutter is nearly nonexistent in the Wood home. The only exception might be when they lay out their pets' pillow beds in the family room. Everything right down to their labeled "his" and "her" walk-in closets are tidy.

IKEA, West Elm, antique shops furnish home

Many of the pieces found in the farmhouse are pretty inexpensive, barring a few items, proving that you don't need to break the bank to furnish your home.

Michelle Wood found many of her furnishings online at eBay and Wayfair, big-box stores like IKEA and Target and higher-end furniture spots like West Elm.

Her favorite pieces are those found at local antique and salvage shops. The dining room and master bath feature reclaimed windows she found at Rust Never Sleeps Architectural Salvage in Fort Myers.

"I love things with a sense of history instead of everything being brand-new," she said.

"I also love taking a salvaged item and repurposing it."

Creating a garden oasis

The final project in the house was the garden, which Michelle Wood completed a couple of weeks ago.

All her hard work paid off. The Woods now have an Instagram-worthy indoor/outdoor space that comes together with a motorized retractable screen that opens and closes with the touch of a button.

"The screen is my husband's favorite part," she said.

The farmhouse's laid-back California vibe spills into the outdoor space, which offers plenty of lounge seating options. You can choose to watch TV while sitting on a large outdoor sofa with baby blue cushions surrounded by sheer white curtains or read a book in a woven hanging chair.

Walk past the screen's threshold and you'll come across a beautiful display of stepping stones. Michelle Wood spent hours creating the stenciled image found on each one of them.

The stones lead to a raised pond with a water fountain fixture and a couple of fish swimming inside. She also built the small wooden bench spotted in the zen-like space.

On one side of the pond, a memorial of stepping stones bears the names of all the pets they've lost.

Past the pond is a large expanse of open land. Make a right and Michelle Wood's modern work shed is only a couple of steps away. That's where she runs her photography businesses for pets and humans — Paws & Prints Pet Photography, LLC and MW Photo & Design.

Documenting "Fuzzybutt Farm" journey on Instagram

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Instagram to document her journey, and as a result.

Scrolling through her page, you'll find dozens of cute photos of her pets, before and after shots of the farmhouse and do-it-yourself project ideas.

A house is never entirely finished, Wood said. She's always working on small projects around the house, and while she and her husband are enjoying their beautiful space, she said she can't wait until the next big project.

Follow Michelle Wood on Instagram @farmhouseforever