

An eco-friendly lifestyle is no enemy to creature comforts. Just look at Julia Louis-Dreyfus and Brad Hall's gorgeous beach retreat

GREEN HOUSE

BY AMANDA GRISCOM

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MICHAEL WESCHLER

The open accordion stairway is centrally located and makes the two floors feel interconnected. Opposite: The terrace off the master bedroom.





Simple design works best in a beach house. A found work of art adorns the wall above the fireplace, and beach glass (in foreground) the family has gathered is placed in bowls throughout the house. The colors in the rug, which rests on a bamboo floor, evoke a rippling sea.

Like Elaine, the high-voltage New Yorker she played on *Seinfeld*, Julia Louis-Dreyfus has all the energy of Times Square at rush hour. "I tried meditating," she says, wincing. "Can't do it. I tried yoga. Couldn't stand it. I kept thinking, Let's pick up the pace!" Given her city-girl moxie, it's surprising that her oceanfront home just north of Santa Barbara is as tranquil as a Japanese Zen center. The elegant wood-box bungalow exudes an East-meets-beach vibe.

The house is a two-story, 3,000-square-foot cottage that was built in the thirties. Louis-Dreyfus and her husband, writer and producer Brad Hall, renovated it this year. Now it has rooftop solar panels to supply electricity and hot water, a chemical-free hot tub, and other high-tech, environmentally sound details. They even purchased a pair of his-and-hers hybrid electric-gas cars to put in the driveway next to the Mercedes and the Porsche Roadster.

As Louis-Dreyfus, 42, gives a tour of the house, wearing pink floral surf shorts and a juicy hoodie, Hall, 45, who has written and produced TV shows including *Watching Ellie* and *The Single Guy*, shows up bare-chested in swim trunks, fresh from the ocean. With his frequent grin and an array of beaded necklaces (handmade by their sons, Henry, 11, and Charlie, 6), it's clear that Hall, a Santa Barbara native, is at home by the ocean. "I've been surfing since I could walk," he says.

The couple bought the house seven years ago to use for weekend retreats from their main residence in Los Angeles. They commissioned their friend David Hertz, an architect who owns the ecologically aware Santa Monica design firm Syndesis, to do the renovation.

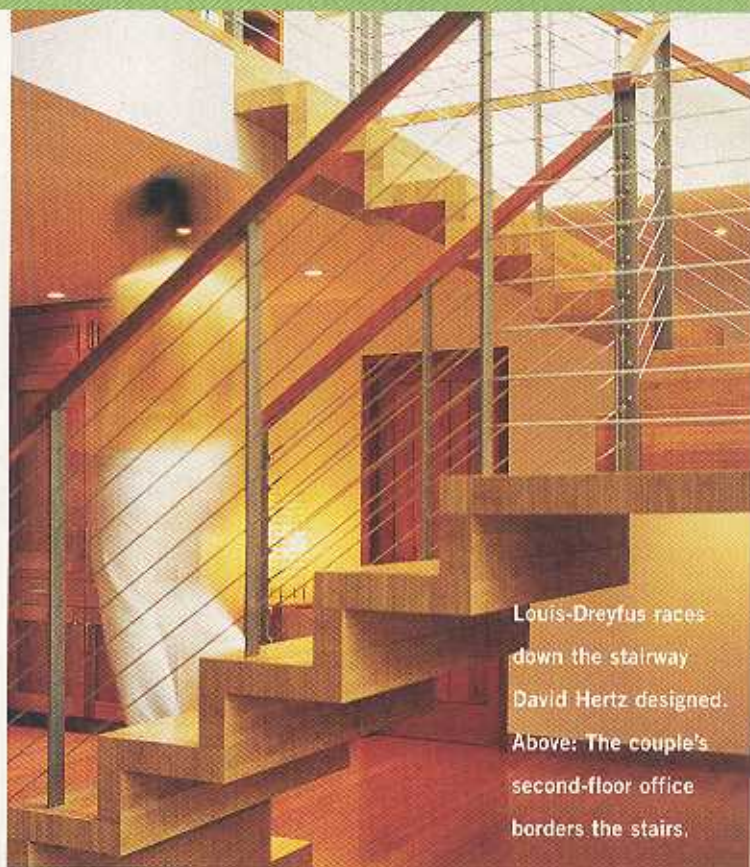
"David's house is an extraordinary mad-scientist laboratory," Hall says. "I walked in and it was like I was staring the future in the face." Hall was impressed with Hertz's cross-ventilation system. Sunshine floods the home through vast glass walls. And for the sinks, mantels and outdoor tables, Hertz used Syndecrete, a lightweight concrete alternative to wood and stone that he developed using recycled carpet fibers and ash.

Louis-Dreyfus, who was used to the coziness of their Spanish-style house in L.A.—with its English antiques and Persian rugs—says Hertz's home presented a new way to look at contemporary design. "I'd never felt comfortable in modernist spaces—they're too bleak and institutional," she says. "But when I saw David's house in Venice Beach I could imagine myself in it. It has soul." The warmth of the light, the texture of the wood, and the stucco caught her eye.

There was no question that Hertz was the man for them. Hall and Louis-Dreyfus have been active in the environmental movement since they met at Northwestern University in Illinois more than 20 years



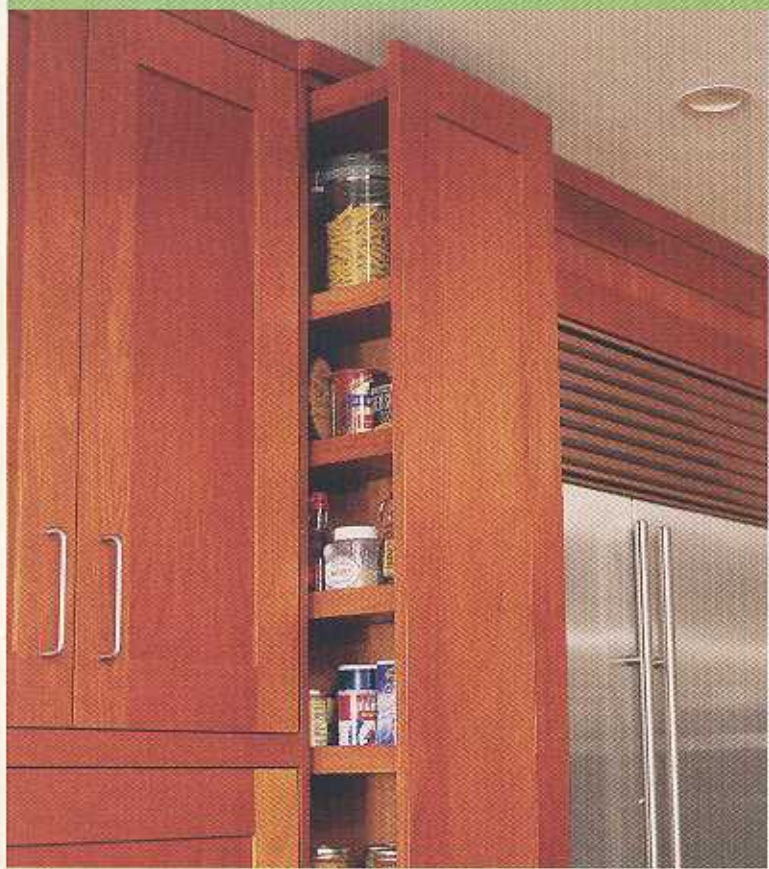
"Isn't this hilarious?" Louis-Dreyfus says, opening the retractable roof. "I mean, is this 007 or what?"

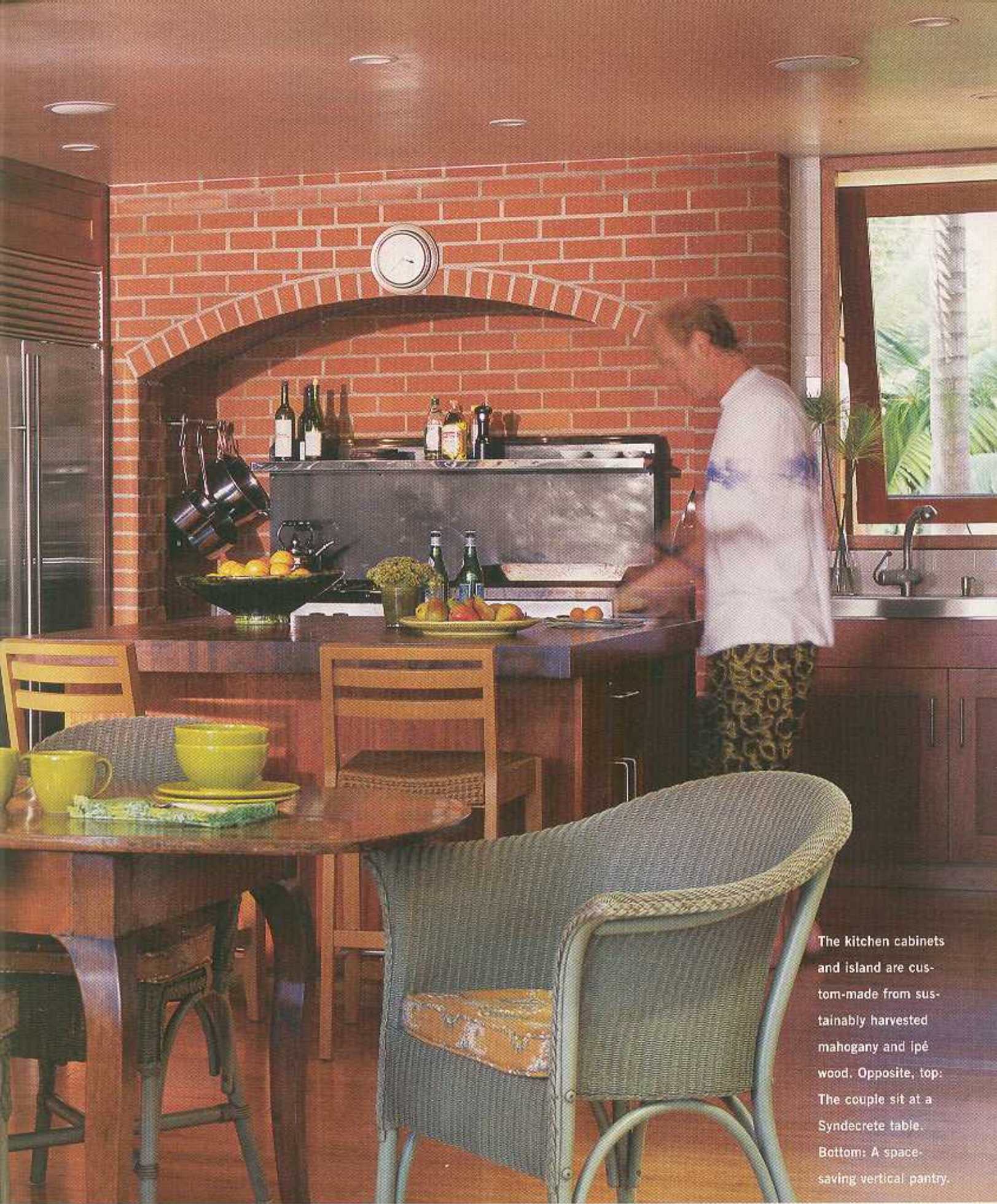


Louis-Dreyfus races down the stairway David Hertz designed. Above: The couple's second-floor office borders the stairs.



"I love living with less," Louis-Dreyfus says, "but I need my hot water, Prada and cappuccinos."





The kitchen cabinets and island are custom-made from sustainably harvested mahogany and ipé wood. Opposite, top: The couple sit at a Syndecrete table. Bottom: A space-saving vertical pantry.



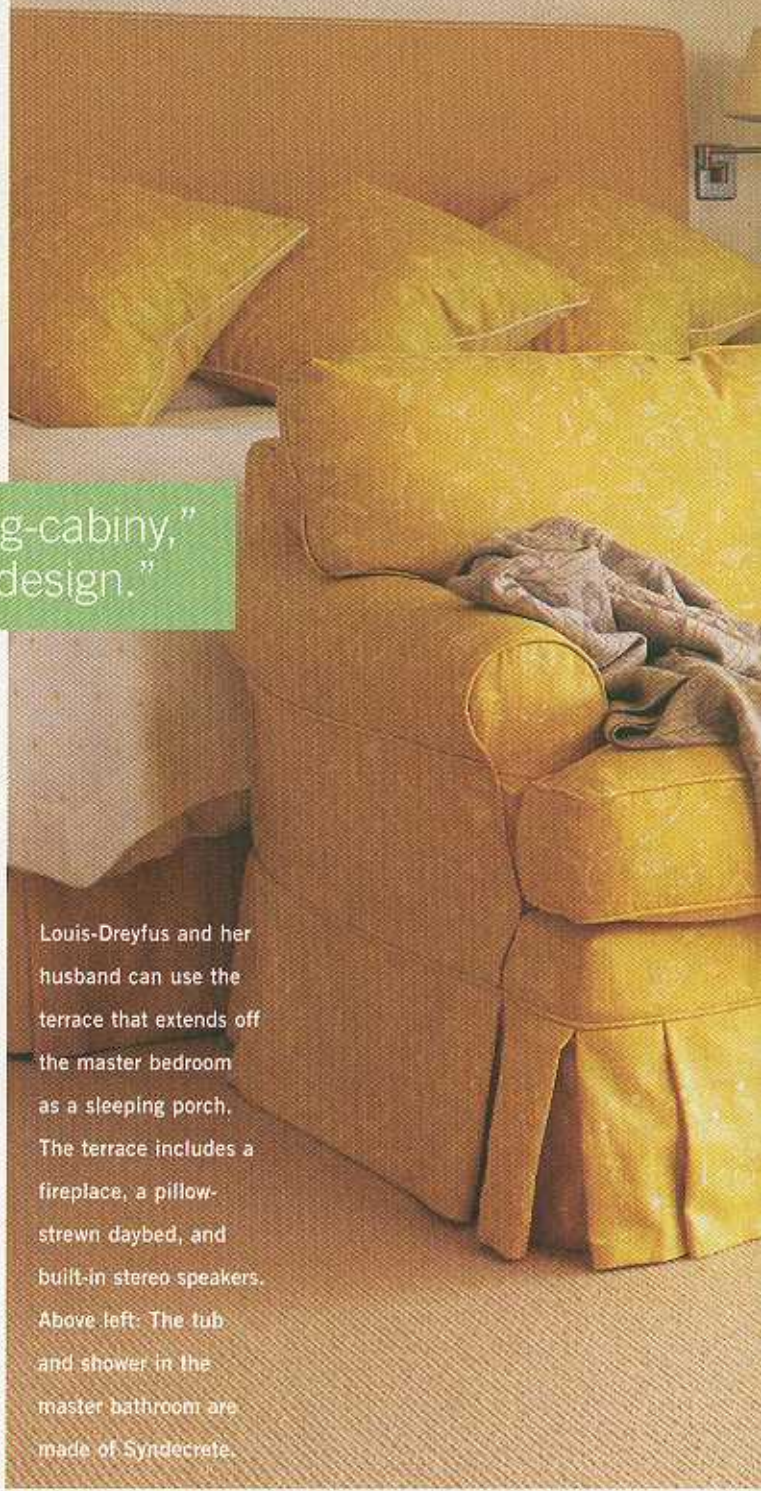
"People expect green houses to be log-cabiny," Louis-Dreyfus says. "This is elegant design."

ago. "This is not just a Hollywood pet cause," says Louis-Dreyfus, who has been involved with nearly a dozen environmental groups.

The couple's remodeling plan was modest at first: to add a bathroom and two bedrooms for the boys, who'd been bunking with their parents. Over time, the plan grew to encompass a four-bedroom, three-bathroom home similar in construction to Hertz's. It is designed to consume less than half the electricity of an average house its size.

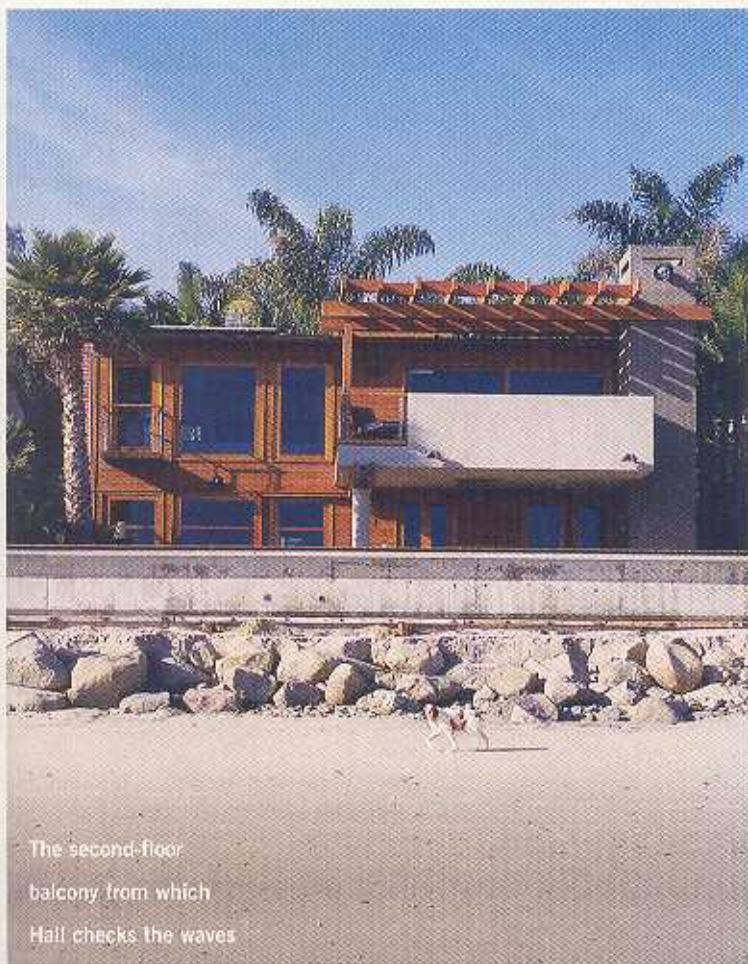
The resulting structure is a boxlike house fronted by a Japanese fountain and a small garden of tropical plants and backed by the beach. The broad teak front door leads to the open living and dining area, with its plush but simple American beach-style furniture. Beyond the living room's sliding glass doors—which were laminated for temperature control—there's an outdoor terrace with a stucco fireplace and a Syndecrete banquet table. The kitchen features a brick archway and connects to the central living space.

Bridging the two stories is a bamboo staircase that seems to rise from the floor, also made of bamboo. Above the stairway, a vaulted skylight slides open at the touch of a button to draw in cool breezes and push out hot air. On the second floor the bedrooms and office



Louis-Dreyfus and her husband can use the terrace that extends off the master bedroom as a sleeping porch. The terrace includes a fireplace, a pillow-strewn daybed, and built-in stereo speakers. Above left: The tub and shower in the master bathroom are made of Syndecrete.





The second-floor balcony from which Hall checks the waves

have sliding doors and balconies overlooking the living area.

Both the architecture and décor share the simple goal of bringing the outside indoors. Hertz included flourishes that make the house resemble a ship. For example, there are stainless-steel cable railings around the stairwell and balconies. He also chose bronze light fixtures and tropical hardwoods because they weather well in the seaside climate. (Plus, the woods are certified by the Forest Stewardship Council as sustainable, meaning they were harvested according to ecologically conscious practices.) "Each material was chosen for the lovely patina it will develop in the salt air," Hertz says, "so the house will get better with age."

The ocean also inspired interior designer Kathryn Ireland, who employed organic hemp and linen patterned with vegetable dyes that can handle heavy sunlight exposure. ("You also can use flea-market finds—they're inherently recycled," Ireland says.) Nearly every fabric in the house is a sea-green, sky-blue or tawny yellow, all muted shades like those of the beach glass Louis-Dreyfus and her sons collect and display around the house. "The interior décor plays second fiddle," Ireland says. "The architecture is such a bold and dramatic statement, almost a sculptural piece. And of course the beach—the view—makes its own dramatic statement." ■

Rattan chair, Ikea, \$40 (seen with Rachel Ashwell Shabby Chic pillow, far right); 800-434-4532



Stainless-steel flatware with acrylic handles, Garnet Hill, \$40 per setting; 800-622-6216

eco-chic on the cheap

It's easy living green, according to architect David Hertz and designer Kathryn Ireland.

■ **lighting** Replace incandescent bulbs with energy-efficient compact fluorescent ones. They cost more up front (\$7-\$15 each) but can last up to 10 years. GE,

Phillips and Sylvania make the bulbs, which are available at Home Depot, Lowe's and similar stores.

■ **appliances** Household items, including your dishwasher and your DVD player, can be found in energy-efficient models. Look for the EPA's Energy Star label.



Steel-and-glass pendant
light, Progress Lighting,
\$240; 864-599-6000



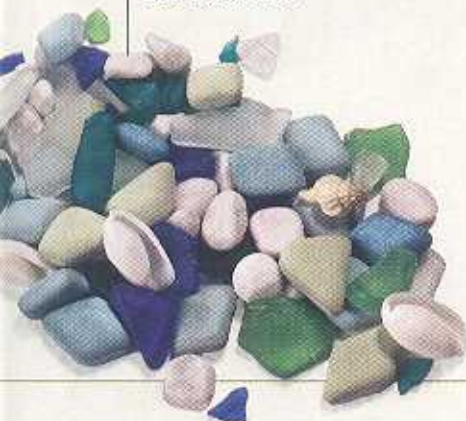
get the look

*Soft colors and natural
materials add up to comfort*

Chair cushions, Rachel
Ashwell Shabby Chic, \$70
each; 212-274-9842



Scented ceramics,
Esteban, \$29 per box;
866-578-3226



Amber etched glass,
\$12; Anthropologie,
800-309-2500

■ **fabrics** Organic cloth tends to cost more than other types, but you can find reasonable prices at envirotexile.com and hempsupply.com. Ireland's fabrics can be found at her Web site, kathrynireland.com.

■ **building materials** If you plan to build an addition to your house, ask your contractor and the

local lumberyard if you can use recycled building materials. Protect endangered, slow-growth trees by buying sustainable-growth woods; check earthsourcewood.com or ecotimber.com. Bamboo, which makes durable flooring, grows back quickly and costs about the same as maple; see

greenwoodflooring.com.

■ **solar power** It's still more expensive than electricity generated by fossil fuels, but solar power is getting more affordable every year. For more information, visit homepower.com and greenmountain.com.



Architect David Hertz and
designer Kathryn Ireland