



BY JENNIFER STAHLKRANTZ // PHOTOGRAPHS BY RANA FAURE

Gather Together

MAKING A HOME AT SUNRAVEN





COLOR & CUISINE The Finkelsteins found the artwork for the family room (right) while visiting Michael's son in New Orleans and spotted the fuchsia chair in a shop window. "This house has a lot of colors that are deeper, darker, earth tones, and we wanted something with a pop of color," says Michael. Oakley, the family pooch, leads Robin's women's group to the pergola for lunch (below). Michael loves to cook (left) and, together with Robin, bases each day's meals on what's available in the garden.



It was their travels to Morocco and India that inspired much of the interior design at SunRaven, Michael and Robin Finkelstein's Bedford home. "Sitting low on the floor, being served tea—everything was about community," says Michael. "We were inspired by the beauty, the colors, the people, the fragrances, the rituals—the things that people did to connect." In fact, Pauline van Lynden's book *Rajasthan* on color, people, and places in India, is prominently displayed in SunRaven's meditation room and is directly responsible for the warm Indian Carnelian hue that welcomes all who enter SunRaven.

SunRaven is not only home to the Finkelsteins but also to Slow Medicine, a holistic wellness center they run onsite. Certified in both internal and integrative-holistic medicine, Michael founded SunRaven on his Guard Hill Road farm in 2005, and this is where he and Robin, a psycho-spiritual counselor, now offer an extensive array of Slow Medicine services, treatments, and programs.

When he began looking for a home for his practice and his life, Michael says "it was particularly important to find a home that had a history and a connection to the land and to the town." The c. 1929 barn that he chose was built as a carriage house and eventually remodeled as a private home. After rezoning the property as agricultural, Michael set to work on developing a community garden. "I had the idea of inviting friends over to see if they wanted to work with me in the garden here," he recalls. "I called it the SunRaven Mindful Gardening project at the time. We had an operating CSA with a unique model that involved the members experiencing farming and living in a community around a garden." Over the past decade, the garden has grown in complexity and productivity and is now managed by a master gardener, Xenia D'Ambrosi, who educates and guides the garden members. At the same time, SunRaven's programming has expanded to include educational and support programs, astrology, pot-luck lunches, and meditations—offerings that



EASTERN INFLUENCE Souvenirs from the couple's travels provide inspiration throughout the home. The guest bedrooms and breakfast area (right and left) were decorated by Bedford designer Deborah Spiro. Michael's office (above) has views of the gardens and includes a fire feature. "In our fast paced world, it's good to take the time to sit, for instance around a campfire; and this sculpture brings that message home," says Michael.

make it clear that SunRaven is not only about farming but also about healthy living and healing. Robin soon joined Michael as both a business and life partner, and together they wanted a home that felt like it was lived in and had an energy to it. "It feels good which is why we bring our clients in through the kitchen—the heart and the hearth of the home," says Michael. "It opens people up to the experience where they can get themselves back into alignment."

"Robin and I decided to get married after being together for nine years," explains Michael. "We realized that our home was the best place to have that ceremony, and we had to get it in shape." While they had made some aesthetic changes over the years, they decided to ask their friend Debbie Spiro, a Bedford designer, to help them upgrade a few areas of the house. "Our wedding was a great occasion, and we knew that the improvements would enrich our lives not only just for that moment but for all the things we do here and all the people who are touched by what we do here," says Michael.

Friends, family, and clients all enter through a side door that opens to a foyer. To the left is the family room that also doubles as the community room for Slow Medicine group meetings. Before Spiro joined their team, Michael and Robin had decorated the space in shades of gray-blue and fuchsia, hung paintings they found while on vacation in New Orleans, and added a one-of-a-kind redwood coffee table by woodworker David Zander.

To the right of the foyer is the brick kitchen that was built back in 1976 by Michael and Barbara Reed who first converted the barn to a home. The Finkelsteins, who are enthusiastic and adventurous cooks, accessorized but kept much of the Reeds' vintage details, including the wide reclaimed floorboards that were likely originally sourced from the forests of New England in the 1700s.





ON THIS FARM An arbor overlooking the community garden is the perfect place to share food and friendship. Robin's women's group (top left) meets weekly at SunRaven. Stanley, the family peacock (left) lives in a habitat beside the garden gate, not far from the stable where Robin's horse, Beau, and his trusty llama companion, Frosty, make their home.



The kitchen is open to a breakfast area furnished by Spiro, a dining area, and the raised meditation room. "The eating space is one of my favorite places indoors because it's where we commune together," says Robin. "We often have dozens of friends here for meals or our whole family. That brings the most joy—to connect and see everybody."

Further down the hall are offices for both Robin and Michael's practices. While Robin wanted her office to be light and airy with a quiet serenity, Michael wanted his to resemble a tree house. "Growing up, my favorite place was to be up in a tree," he says. So, he outfitted the room with wood shelves that have live edges and an indoor fire feature filled with rocks he has collected on his travels around the world.

Upstairs is where Spiro worked her magic in the months leading up to the wedding. Michael and Robin asked her to create rooms that would be sanctuaries for their grown children who often visit. The blue bedroom, draped in fabric, is inspired by Stanley, the family peacock, and the couple's memories of Moroccan tents. In the room across the hall—which serves as both a bedroom and sitting room, "Debbie brought together maybe 20 different fabrics. Her ability to see how they all worked together was really remarkable," notes Robin.

Spiro also helped transform a guest bathroom upstairs, and they are now working on plans for the "grand finale"—the master bedroom.

"This house is so livable from the inside to the outside. People feel relaxed—at ease and at home here," says Robin. "The pergola is my favorite outdoor space. It's a hub where I can see everybody everywhere." Michael concurs, "It's great to be able to be outside and look around and see the animals and the garden. When we sit outside with people and eat, we share what we grow in the garden and produce in this kitchen. The nature of SunRaven since the beginning has been that of a community gathering space." ■

