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MYTHS, **PAGE 41**





# The Big Chill Out

A CHELMSFORD FAMILY PLANS THE ULTIMATE VACATION SPOT,  
RIGHT IN ITS OWN BACKYARD. **BY MARNI ELYSE KATZ**

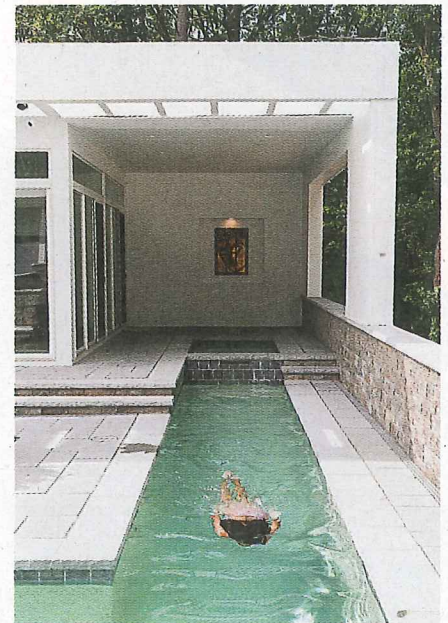
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A Z-SHAPED POOL (LEFT), COMPLETE WITH A LAP LANE AND COVERED HOT TUB (RIGHT), IS THE FOCAL POINT OF THE KRISHNANS' BACKYARD.

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ADVENTURE TRAVEL is a way of life for the Krishnan family. Santhana and his wife, Namita, along with their two teenage daughters, Nikki and Natasha, spend vacations in high gear—they've snorkeled in Belize, gone river rafting in Peru, and been on safari in Kenya. So what do they do when they're ready to relax? As of this summer, they simply step into their backyard.

After searching for an architect with a contemporary aesthetic who would be open to their design input, Santhana and Namita, both employed in the technology industry, hired Boston-based architect Stephen Chung to transform their Chelmsford home's large backyard into an entertainment compound. "We're a very active family; this takes the place of beach vacations," Santhana says.

Raised in India and Southeast Asia, where he often visited temples and museums, Santhana has a strong interest in art and architecture. He envisioned a design with a contemporary Asian flavor. For Chung, the challenge lay in how to successfully fuse a contemporary aesthetic in the backyard with the traditional neo-Georgian architecture of the existing house, where the family has lived for 16 years. Chung decided that simple forms in colors and materials similar to those used in the main house, plus some smart transitional features, would do the trick.

The project includes a Z-shaped pool with integrated hot tub, a freestanding pool house with a sauna and home gym, and a guest suite addition to the existing house, where the couple's parents could comfortably stay for extended visits. Extensive hardscaping, also designed by Chung, and Japanese-style landscaping, for which Woburn-based Zen Associates Inc. devised an overall blueprint, were also part of the plan.

The new pool house and guest suite are simple box-like forms with flat





THE POOL HOUSE CONTAINS A LIVING AREA (ABOVE) AS WELL AS A KITCHEN, SAUNA, AND GYM, AND JUST OUTSIDE, A GAS GRILL (LEFT). THE POOL HOUSE AIR CONDITIONING, THE POOL'S WATER TEMPERATURE AND LIGHTS, AND OTHER FEATURES CAN ALL BE CONTROLLED FROM AN IPHONE OR IPAD.

## HOMEOWNER SANTHANA KRISHNAN ENVISIONED A DESIGN WITH A CONTEMPORARY ASIAN FLAVOR.

roofs and large expanses of glass — their spare quality has a Japanese aesthetic, says Chung. He clad the structures in cedar tongue-and-groove siding painted white, to match the main house, with accent areas in stained cedar for interest.

To subtly differentiate old from new, the siding on the two new structures was installed vertically, in contrast to the horizontal siding of the main house. Wooden trellises above outdoor areas next to the main house, addition, and pool house help tie the structures together, “sort of like a ligament,” says Chung. The trellises are equally at home with traditional and modern design, he says.

The pool, which sits at the center of a U-shaped courtyard formed by the buildings, is an innovative design. Chung describes it as a series of canals. There's a covered hot tub, a lap pool, and a rectangular area that's ideal for fun and games. The entire spread is elevated, with stone retaining walls that eliminate the need for fencing. As for the landscaping, Santhana chose most of the plantings, including those in a small Japanese garden. The serene, minimalist design is based on a master plan by Shinichiro Abe of Zen Associates, who specified the placement of two decorative rock formations paired with Japanese black pine trees on the patio.

The new features are a hit with the Krishnans. The girls are home more, Santhana says, hanging out in the backyard with friends. Both he and Chung, who consider themselves collaborators, are proud of the design. Chung says: “From the front, it's just a traditional house. Then, it's like, ‘Wow, what is all this?’ That element of surprise, to deliver the unexpected, was all part of the idea.” ■



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