Designed to fit the lay of the land and the lifestyle of the homeowners, this 3,000-square-foot custom home was definitely ...
Barb Fog and her husband loved everything about their land by a lake—the views are terrific all year long, and the commute to downtown Minneapolis is less than 20 minutes.

It was their old house that was exasperating. Originally designed as a summer cabin, the Fogs' 1,400-square-foot home had been expanded several times, creating a rabbit's warren of tiny rooms. After their architect, Rosemary McMonigal, advised them that remodeling the house would be more costly than demolishing the cabin and starting over, down it came.

Although living in the cabin had been uncomfortable for the family of four, it taught the Fogs how their new home should be positioned in relationship to their lot. They wanted to maximize the southern and western views in the rooms where they spend the most time, while minimizing windows on the north side for privacy. They also hoped to save as many of their mature trees as possible.

With the Fogs' goals in hand, McMonigal went to work. "The lot is very long and narrow—just sixty feet wide at the lake, eighty feet wide at the road, and five hundred feet deep," says McMonigal. "It slopes quite a bit from the north side and also down toward the lake. Rather than modify this with fill dirt and retaining walls, we decided to create a house to fit the site. Obviously, that meant we needed to create a tall, narrow house.

"We also knew we wanted to rebuild on the same building site so that we would be able to remove as few trees as
- The kitchen island right, designed at two levels to accommodate chairs instead of barstools, is practical for a home with small children. The smooth-face maple cabinets provide a simple backdrop for the view outdoors.

- The kitchen and dining area left share space and enlarge the feel of the family room. The first floor's open layout fits the Fogs' lifestyle. "It's perfect for casual entertaining and family togetherness," says Barb.

- Every shelf on this built-in bottom left was designed to fit the Fogs' audiovisual equipment—right down to the last CD and videotape. "That's the beauty of having your cabinetry custom-made," says McMonigal.
A BIT ABOUT BUILT-INS

Should you have display cases and storage units custom-made like the Fogs did? Here’s some information that may help you choose what’s right for your home.

- Custom-made built-in cabinets are often less expensive than the pieces you can purchase at quality furniture stores, and they are always a perfect fit. Barb Fog says her pieces cost about 50 percent less than if she had bought manufactured pieces. “But,” she cautions, “I kept our pieces simple and straightforward. Fancy moldings and trims boost the cost of built-ins.”
- Because they are “built in,” custom cabinets can be financed along with the rest of your home. When you purchase furniture separately, you’ll have to pay cash or finance it with either credit cards or credit.
- Built-in cabinets do not necessarily boost the value of your home, but they may make it more salable than one with little or no built-in furniture. Conversely, if you will be moving soon, you won’t be able to take these custom pieces with you.
- Consider going halfway. Stock cabinets can be combined with carpenter-built shelves and moldings to create a built-in unit at a very affordable price. For example, the storage unit next to your fireplace can be made out of stock kitchen cabinets, molding, fillers, and custom shelves for an even more affordable custom fit.
- Built-ins limit furniture placement. It’s tough to move the TV to a new location when it’s designed to fit the built-in unit in the corner of the family room or master suite. Likewise, large furniture pieces such as sofas and love seats may only fit in one place if there are several built-ins in the same room.

possible.” Though the Fogs’ living space more than doubled, only one tree had to be sacrificed.

Barb feels McMonigal did a great job of maximizing the view of the lake. To do this, McMonigal created a floor plan in which the home’s main living areas—the combination kitchen/family area, the master suite, and the children’s bedrooms—are all located on the home’s south and west sides. Only two rooms lack a view of the lake—the guest bedroom and the seldom-used formal dining room.

The large southern windows also gain passive solar energy during Minnesota’s long winters. During summer, the leafed-out trees provide shade to reduce cooling costs. And designing the north wall with few windows not only provides the Fogs with privacy, it also reduces their heating bills.

McMonigal’s plan was much more complex than placing windows on the south and not on the north, however. “We spent a lot of time standing where the family room was going to be, trying to figure out how wide a view of the lake we could get,” says Barb. “And in reality, the view is across other people’s front lawns, even though it looks like it could be our land.”

This same attention was given to the home’s other architectural details, such as the custom-made, built-in cabinets.

“I like clean, simple lines,” says Barb, “and I despise clutter, so I chose to have a great deal of our furniture built in. It makes for a cleaner, well-planned look.” Barb, a nonpracticing interior designer, knows building in cabinets is often cheaper than buying them from quality furniture stores and, she says, “built-ins always fit better.”

Barb designed all of the cabinetry, made from maple, with an eye toward simplicity—flush panel doors and clean
lines, so you notice the beauty of the wood rather than any costly, and in this case unnecessary, detailing.

In the kitchen, bird's-eye maple cabinets line the walls. Glass-front maple cabinets hang from the 10-foot ceiling to divide the kitchen and informal dining areas. The island, also fitted with maple cabinets, is composed of two levels to accommodate chairs instead of barstools.

The family room built-in was designed so each piece of audio equipment fits perfectly, furthering the smooth, clean look. In the master suite, a built-in next to the fireplace eliminates the need for a conventional dresser. "I don't care for contemporary bedroom furniture," says Barb. "The built-in alleviated the need for it, making the room less cluttered and more flowing."

"I love seamless design," Barb continues. Perhaps that is why she is so comfortable in her new home—even the floor plan appears seamless.

"The entire first floor flows from one room to another," says Barb. "You don't know exactly where one room stops and another begins. Yet even though it is so open, it still feels warm."

BUYING GUIDE INFORMATION ON PAGE 98.