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CLEAN & SIMPLE  
A neutral color  
scheme with pops  
of blue combined  
with stone, slate,  
wood, and iron  
finishes give rooms  
a unified look.



# In His Eyes

CHRIS LAFOND REALIZES THE VISION FOR HIS HOME



YOU CAN LIVE IN WILTON FOR YEARS and think you know the town and its geography well, until you suddenly find yourself on a beautiful residential street close to the town center that you've never heard of or seen before. That's what Chris Lafond was thinking 18 months ago when he arrived to tour a potential home for himself and his two children, situated at the end of Graenest Ridge Road. Nothing gets a second chance to make a first impression and this two-acre property abutting Bradley Park and 80 acres of scenic trails didn't disappoint.

The 5,600-square-foot Colonial needed quite a bit of updating, but the light-filled home was structurally sound, had good bones, and lots of potential. Even though Lafond had never overseen a renovation before, let alone made aesthetic design decisions, he was not deterred. He bought the house and, on the recommendation of a friend, enlisted the help of New Canaan interior designer Emily Fuhrman of Sage & Ginger.

He knew what he wanted, which, according to Fuhrman, is always a huge plus. "Chris is clear on his needs and goals, thoughtful and definitive when

making decisions, engaged and excited by the whole design process. What more could you ask?" The two clicked and so began a year-long collaboration.

On the main floor, there were four spaces, including living and dining rooms, a family room, and kitchen, all opening to a center hall running from the front to the back of the house. But every room had doors that effectively cut them off from each other. "The rooms were too closed off," says Lafond. "We removed four sets of French doors and opened up two walls to increase flow and connect all the spaces."

One of the first things you notice is the amount of natural light. Even on an overcast, rainy day, the home's interiors are bathed in a luminous glow. The abun-

**WINING & DINING** A passion for wine inspired the addition of an impressive 800-bottle wine room adjacent to the comfortable dining room. Chris Lafond pictured with his children Brian and Megan.







**ART WITH MEANING** The homeowner wanted his personality and taste to be reflected throughout the house so he personally chose every art piece, many of which he collected while on business trips around the world.

dance of tall casement windows showcase spectacular views, a feature the homeowner wanted to take full advantage of. “We made sure the window treatments were minimalist and clean, to finish the spaces but not detract from the light,” says Fuhrman.

The primary color palette incorporates warm earth tones. “Beiges and greiges with a shot of blue,” says Emily. The neutral color scheme is relaxing, clean, and timeless while also complementing the stone, slate, and iron finishes throughout the house.

Lafond describes his style as “minimalist and not fussy,” which is reflected in the simple lines of the furniture and accessories. He wanted every room to be comfortable, inviting, and uncluttered. All the artwork was chosen by Lafond. Many of the pieces were picked up while travelling on business during his ten years as CFO for Gartner, a Stamford-based technology firm. “I wanted everything on the walls to have personal meaning,” he says. “The art is from Cape Town, Sydney, Melbourne, Hawaii, the Bahamas, and various countries across Europe. The Wilton sign was found here in town at Signature Style.”

Fuhrman describes the home’s aesthetic as wine country chic. “Chris’s passion for wine helped inspire the design. We took cues from wine country, but went more refined than farm. Comfort also played a key role.” Fuhrman stresses that it was important to design the main floor spaces as a unit. “They all had to speak to each other but still tell their own stories.”

And tell stories they do. Particularly the dining room, with its striking feature wall of stacked stone, with large glass doors leading into a spectacular wine room, which was created by eliminating an unnecessary second front entrance to the house.



### THREE DIMENSIONAL SYMMETRY

A three-person breakfast bar provides an additional option for informal dining for Chris, Brian, and Megan in the light-filled kitchen. Oversize pewter nail-heads give the chairs a masculine touch.

A Phillip Jeffries cork wallpaper on the ceiling adds a touch of whimsy and it so closely resembles actual cork that it fools the eye. “People always put wine cellars in their basements, and no matter how nice they are, no one wants to go down and sit in the dark,” says Lafond.

Unlike many renovation projects, there was no drama, no nightmares, and no botched jobs. “I worked with a great contractor—Val LeBlanc from Norwalk. He’s responsible for everything you see and everything you don’t,” says Lafond with a smile.

And how do his children, Brian, a Muhlenberg College freshman, and Megan, a Wilton High School sophomore, like their new home? “Initially it was an adjustment,” says Lafond. “But now they both love the house—they’ve had sleepovers and parties here, and they feel comfortable.”

After a six-month hiatus, the homeowner is now focused on updating the kitchen and revamping the master bath. “I wanted my home to be a place where I walk in and it feels like me, and I think we accomplished that,” says Lafond. “I thought this house would be a good investment for the short term, but now that it’s customized to my tastes, it’s really an expression of who I am. So I could certainly see myself living here for a while.”





