

# Architectural Savvy

What is farmhouse style, anyway? Here are the essential ingredients you need.

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**I**t's easy to recognize farmhouse style when you see it, but when it comes to recreating the look in your own home, can you list off the elements you need? When Steve Vanze of Barnes Vanze Architects viewed the pristine Virginia hilltop that would become Wow Vineyard, he knew it was the perfect location to embody farmhouse style. "This is a farm, and you're in farm land, so we did it stylistically that way," he says. Here's what he used to create this farmhouse masterpiece.



**LEFT:** Wow Vineyard has three buildings: the main house, the barn and an attached pavilion. "The pavilion contains the master suite, and is actually connected to the main house," Steve says.  
**ABOVE:** The big ticket feature of this home is the view. "When we first started, we drove to the top of the hill and turned around, and then saw the view," Steve says. "We wanted to have someone drive up and not see the view until they entered the front entry way, hide the big surprise until you get into the house."

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**RIGHT:** For Steve, designing a home that fits the owners is key. "You always want to get a sense of peoples' tastes and how they live," he says. "You want to do something that will make people feel comfortable."

**OPPOSITE:** Inside, Steve made every nook and cranny functional. "That whole gallery houses the couple's books," he says. "It also connects to many different rooms, including the kitchen and mudroom."

**BELOW:** One of the beauties of farmhouse style is its simplicity. In this bedroom, there's very little trim on the window, which allows the drapery and bed to shine.



#### MAKE IT COMFORTABLE

Farmhouse style isn't pretentious—in fact, it's one of the most relaxed, easy-going designs your home can portray. To that end, too many fancy details and expensive-looking pieces will create disparity instead of cohesion. Steve knew this and kept things simple. "We did very simple detailing and trim," he says. "There's no fancy crown molding." He also made the fireplace and hearth a major focal point in the living room. "We used local stone from a local mason who uses traditional techniques from that part of the country," he says. The simple, traditional features make the home look like it's been around for decades.

#### MAKE IT FUNCTIONAL

Ever heard the phrase, "Fashion over function"? That doesn't apply to farmhouse style. Construct your home so it's easy to navigate as you go about your daily tasks. For Steve, that meant designing smaller closets at Wow Vineyard. "This is a retired radiologist, and often, when we're doing houses like this, people want big closets," he says. "But this homeowner said he just needed four hooks for four pairs of jeans."

When you design your own farmhouse, think about what will make life easier. Farmhouses often have wide doorways for moving furniture, open floor plans to connect the kitchen to other living areas and large windows to look out on the scenery. "This house commands incredible views, with the Blue Ridge mountains 30 miles away," Steve says. "We made the rear of the house almost entirely glass."



### GET THE RIGHT TEXTURES

Texture is important to any design style, and farmhouses are no different. What are the kinds of texture you picture in a farmhouse? Rough wood, striped slats, scratchy burlap—these all contribute to country charm, and Steve kept these textures in mind with his designs. “The flooring inside is reclaimed tobacco wood from an old tobacco farm,” he says. The old wood gives off a rough textural look that complements the home. He even added texture to the ceilings. “We put bead board on the port ceilings, which is a typical cottage farmhouse look,” he says. And don’t forget to add a touch of burlap, whether it’s on your decorative pillows, curtains or even the runner on your dining table.

But the most important aspect of farmhouse architecture? Enhance the beauty that’s already there. “You want to say, ‘What’s the best thing about this site or this house, and how can we make it better and make it someplace special?’” Steve says. Do that, and you’re on your way to abundant farmhouse charm.

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Mounting the home on top of the hill proved a challenge for Steve. “Because it was so steeply sloped, we wanted to get as high as we could to get the great views,” he says. “Logistics made it difficult, with the septic field and vineyard.”



Steve took advantage of the hill and designed a bank barn—a barn on a sloping bank. “You can get to it on the upper level from the breezeway, and farm equipment is below,” he says. **ABOVE:** To save on exterior siding, Steve cheated a bit and used bead and batten that was built with 4-foot boards and fake battens. “We put them up in 4-foot sheets,” he says.

## 5 EXTERIOR ESSENTIALS

Here are Steve’s tips for adding farmhouse style to your exterior.

**Multiple buildings.** “A farm compound is always made up of multiple buildings in one area,” Steve says. Often, this means a main house, a barn and a shed. No matter how many buildings are on your property, make sure they all have the same architectural style, such as matching roofs or windows.

**Traditional paint colors.** “The general feel of a white house with a black roof is typical of farmhouses in Virginia,” Steve says. Look around your area. What do the other farmhouses look like? Your home will be in even better shape if it shows off traditional local architecture.

**Red barn.** There’s nothing like a red barn to tell everyone the style of your home. “Red for the barn is traditional,” Steve says. That color has a lot of history too, from its Swedish

origins to its migration to the US in the 19th century. (For more information, see page 131 of our Fall 2016 issue.)

**Clapboard or board and batten.** Both of these sidings are traditional farmhouse details. Clapboard makes a narrow horizontal stripe, while board and batten makes a wider vertical pattern. “You can make board and batten more economical if you build it with 4-foot boards and put fake battens in between,” Steve says. (For more on wood paneling, see page 106.)

**Carriage lights.** “You would find these in many houses in the first half of the 20th century,” Steve says. You can use them in myriad places, from the porch to the side of the barn or even hanging from posts down your drive. The more, the merrier.