

crystal clear
Christmas

Exquisite pastel ornaments bathed in light ensure a romantic Bucks County Christmas

WRITTEN AND PRODUCED BY CANDACE ORD MANROE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY COLLEEN DUFFLEY



Moira Gavin puts the finishing touches on her Fraser fir, which is decorated with 162 delicate Waterford ornaments.



Despite all my travel, I'm a real homebody at heart. —MOIRA GAVIN

One of seven siblings, Moira Gavin always was the feminine child of the family. Or so says sister Paula, who's just dropped in at Moira's Bucks County, Pennsylvania, home to see how Christmas is holding up for our photo shoot, and, we suspect, to do a little snooping along with the obligatory sisterly harassment.

"When we shared a room, my half was the clean, minimalistic side, while Moira's was all flowers and stripes. We each had stuffed dogs. Mine was this huge German shepherd named Adolf. Moira's was a blue French poodle named Pierre. Nothing's changed," Paula, a wife, mother, and C.P.A., declares expansively, sweeping her gaze across Moira's kitchen with its wreaths, French ceramic chickens, and beautiful old Wedgwood, a collection that long predates Moira's association with Waterford Wedgwood USA Inc., the company she has served as president since 2002. (Moira is the first woman to hold this position in the venerable firm's history.)



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Best friends, the Gavin girls enjoy nothing more than the giggles that erupt from telling stories on each other out of school—or out of the shared bedrooms of the past. But truth is, Moira's taste has retained a constancy over the years. It's no longer expressed in fuzzy blue poodle dogs but in a two-story custom-built home with Country French detailing and in antique French furniture that warms up comfortable new pieces. ("Comfort," Moira insists, "is the ultimate requirement for me.") Even her preference in palettes hasn't altered so much as evolved. "Poodle" blue has taken a sophisticated turn to water tones—pale aquas, turquoises, and clear blues as refreshing as a cold mountain stream. Pottery collections built over a lifetime reveal a passion for the cool colors, as do the au courant clothes hanging in her closet. "These are my badge," she laughs, caught wearing a cashmere sweater in opalescent blue.

"I like the idea of having a basically white house as my canvas, so that I can clear out all my accessories and rugs and slipcovers and really change everything with the

Above: Ebony-stained floors anchor the great room's 20-year-old sofa and keep the white rooms from "floating away," says Moira. The tree separates the great room and living room.

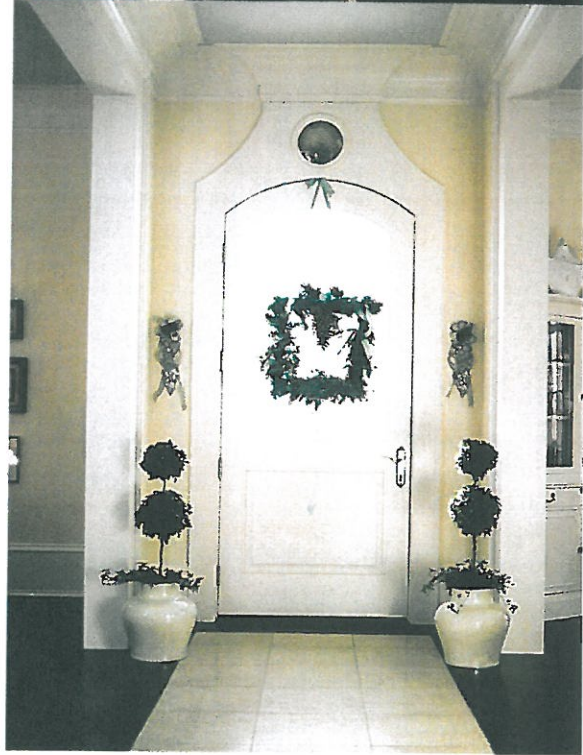
Opposite, clockwise from left: Greens adorn the great room's late-1700s French clock. ■ A Waterford star adds its graceful shape to the tree. ■ Just beyond the tree are an old leather-top bench and a new table set with crystal and sterling candlesticks.



seasons," Moira explains. At Christmas, a jewel-red slipcover injects holiday color into the monochromatic taupe-and-ivory formal living room. But as soon as the season is over, "I'm back to accessorizing with turquoises, aquas, blues—my favorite colors."

And thanks to the company that employs her, now she's even able to weave her pastel palette into her holiday decorating. Her 9½-foot Fraser fir sparkles with 162 delicate Waterford ornaments in Moira's signature water colors, all backlit by 28 strands of tiny white lights. The tree stands in the great room—"the focus of any large entertaining I do," Moira says. It is located where the great room opens onto the living room, allowing that more formal space to share a view of its impressive dazzle.

"The house was designed so that the downstairs rooms would be open and flow," explains Moira. The dining room is for elegant sit-down dinners, the living room for cocktails in front of the fire, "but the back of the house is where I really live. This is where I entertain on a large scale [in the great room], and this is where my bedroom



is. And it's where I always celebrate Christmas with my family and friends." Every other year, the New Jersey-born gang of Gavins assembles at Moira's for the holiday. (Intervening years, they gather here for Thanksgiving, so the house is always a hub for one of the two annual festivities.) It's sibs and their families only, since Moira's parents are deceased, but she's still influenced by the Christmas traditions she learned growing up. "I remember my father spraying snow on the windows. He would cut out triangles, mask the windows, and then spray on the snow very precisely so that it looked like it had settled into the edges. He was so meticulous, God rest his soul."

She also recalls her dad creating diagrams for the placement of holiday lights. "We had special rose lights of my grandmother's that we hung from a mirror. He had a diagram marked on the back of the mirror so that he would always hang the lights in exactly the right place each year. I'm not that particular, but that's where I got my sense of tradition and my joy and pride in the holidays."

Opposite: An antique mirror and collection of ornaments and crystal candlesticks decorate the living room mantel along with holiday greens. The sofa sports a red slipcover for the season.

Inset: The Country French house.

Above, clockwise from top: Moira's antique French table displays a pair of alabaster lamps. ■ As you enter the house, the dining room is to the left, the living room to the right, and the great room straight ahead. ■ Moira Gavin.





It shows. Moira doesn't do her dad's artificial snow—she eschews anything fake in holiday decorating—but she's inherited his passion for getting Christmas right. "I could never draw diagrams and place things the same way year after year like my dad did," she says. Instead, she allows creativity to have its say. But first, she stocks up on a plethora of wreaths and ribbon, so should the impulse move her, she's prepared.

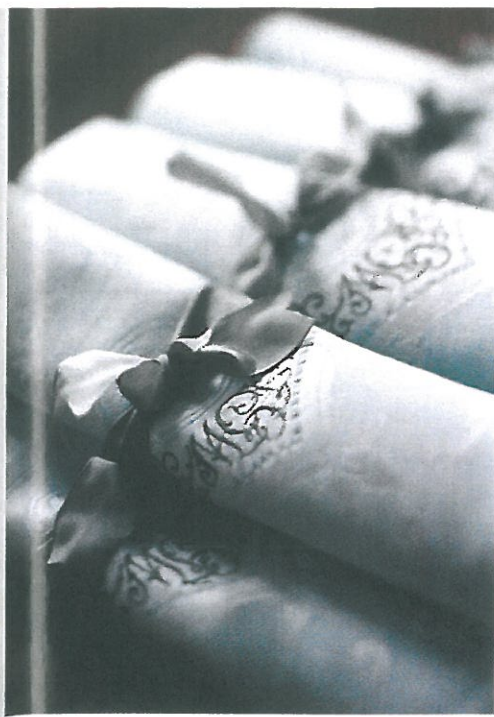
When she noticed that the open-shelved dish cupboard in the kitchen needed holiday cheering, three small wreaths and a spool of gauzy brown ribbon practically shouted, "Pick me! Pick me!" from the brimming seasonal stockpile. A square wreath seemed destined for the entry hall, while above Moira's bed, a focal point was created using five round wreaths. (It helps to have several sizes on hand!) Matching wreaths suspended from ribbon were the solution for windows in the great room. Moira's friend of more than 20 years, Rick Janeczek, fleshed out those wreaths further, adding a dainty china cup—filled with pinecones—to each one.

Opposite: Moira's green Country French kitchen opens up to the great room, where guests can sit in comfort and visit with her.

Above, clockwise from top left:

Ribbon is always close by at Christmas. ■ Open cabinets display collections that include vintage Wedgwood. ■ Moira couldn't resist a find of antique turquoise Venetian stemware. ■ Creamware makes a striking still life. ■ The butler's pantry is stocked with collectibles.





“We’re the grown-up version of *Friends*,” jokes Moira, turning toward a kitchenful of her closest buds, including Atlanta designer Gretchen Edwards, who provided the window treatments and the finishing touches after Rick pulled the house together when Moira first moved in five years ago. “I couldn’t have done it without Rick,” Moira insists. “He’s part of a group of us who do everything—cooking, decorating—together.” (The two have known each other since their days working retail in Texas.)

“He knows my taste so perfectly he just found things for me. I discovered other things, and then we used a lot of what I already had.” The big cushy sofas in the great room, for example, have been in Moira’s life since 1985. “They’re covered in white textured cotton so they go with anything,” she says. “We just put new pillows on them.” Rick’s special talent was, and is, in displaying Moira’s existing objets d’art in interesting arrangements. “It’s amazing to watch him work,” she says as Rick snips a single tulip and moves blue vases to a table in preparation for a photograph.

Opposite: A Waterford chandelier glamorizes the dining room.

Above, clockwise from top left: The vintage monogrammed napkins are a gift from a friend who discovered them in East Texas.

■ A French settee stands between the room’s bookcases.

■ A china bowl decorates the dining room’s wreath.

■ An old Wedgwood tureen adds elegance to the table.

■ Wedgwood soup bowls with double handles display Moira’s favorite blue.