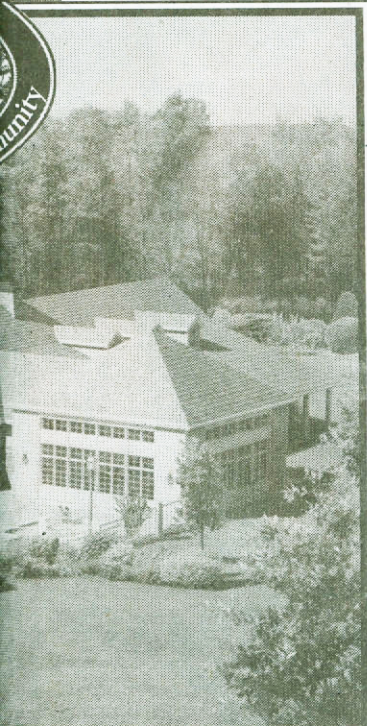


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## YOUR SECOND HOME | *Winter Houses in Summer*

# Seasoned to Taste



NANCY DONIGER

By BILLIE COHEN

**W**HY shouldn't you use your ski house in summer?

It's not as if there are any real rules about that kind of thing — and, after all, it is your house. But if you are going to transform your snow den into a summer retreat, you might want to think about a few changes to the look and to the layout.

"Everyone said we would love it in the summer, and we didn't believe them," said Heather Coburn Snyder, of Jenkintown, Pa., who bought a place in Stowe, Vt., four and a half years ago. But when she and her family went up the first summer to paint and renovate, they just fell in love with it.

"We were surprised at how much there is to do and how many people there are doing it," she said. "There's an antique-car show, a hot-air balloon festival, a wine weekend. Last summer, we took the gondola up to the top of the mountain and then walked down our favorite ski slopes. And one of the nice surprises is that we go up and buy our ski gear for the next year because it's half off."

In addition to experiencing new things outside the house, Ms. Snyder changed some aspects of the experience inside the house. "We put in portable air-conditioning units," she said. "Not the win-

dow units, because part of the appeal of the house is the views, and we didn't want to block the windows."

Ed Del Grande, author of "Ed Del Grande's House Call" (Viking Studio, \$15.95) and a contractor who appears on HGTVPro.com, agreed — this is one of the first steps to take to make a ski home more comfortable in the summer. "I'm not recommending putting in central air; those can

*If you love a place  
in January, why  
not in June?*

be \$18,000 to \$20,000, when usually these climates don't get that hot in the summer, anyway," he said. "For an affordable price, you can get boxes that get cut into the nonsupporting walls, and the air-conditioning unit slides right into the box. It's flush against the wall, and it looks like the finished part. And in the winter, you can put a cover over it or take it out and store it."

Another inexpensive solution to a hot house is removable awnings. "They are an unbelievable way to keep a house cool without spending a lot of money," Mr. Del Grande said. "Put them up in spring or summer, and take them down in the winter."

He also suggested that homeowners look at their driveways. "Most ski houses and chalets have gravel or rock driveways because it's easier to keep those plowed and it gives you more traction in the snow," he said.

"You want to look into investing in asphalt because in the summer and spring you don't want to deal with the mud and weeds that will grow." Plus, he added, asphalt will probably raise the property's value.

Another tip, he said, is to add a bit of luxury in the form of an outdoor fireplace (many require little to set up) or shower (which Mr. Del Grande estimated could be built for under \$2,000). "If you're looking to make a winter house feel like a summer house," he said, "nothing will feel as good as an outdoor shower in a wooded area."

There are other ways to take advantage of the outdoors at a ski-turned-summer home — you just have to be creative. "I have one client who uses her balcony like another room of her house in the summer," said Anne Grice, owner of Anne Grice Interiors in the Aspen area. "We got an indoor-outdoor rug and really comfortable patio furniture, and they go out there to have lunch every day and drinks in the evening."

As an additional nod to the seasonal shift, the client has a local nursery install flower boxes. Inside the house, Ms. Grice suggests replacing heavy accessories and candles with fresh flowers and lightening the look of the place by switching the throw pillows, the bedding and even the rug in your entryway. "You probably have a dark rug," she said, noting that mountain houses get a lot of ski-boot traffic. "But this is a chance to put in something lighter; you're not going to be getting it as dirty in the summer-time."

And the truth is, even if you do, what's the big deal. It is after all, your house — no matter what season you use it.

## Correction

The High & Low column last Friday, about North Carolina golf communities, misstated the location in South Carolina of Sea Pines, which is considered the first master-planned golf home community. It is in Hilton Head, not Myrtle Beach.