

## Bayou wonderland

### Monfish Key is all about function, flow

December 30, 2012 Coast Magazine

By Sue Mayfield Geiger



*Photos by Jennifer Reynolds*

Monica and Bob Fisher built their Dickinson Bayou retirement home nine years ago, but the average onlooker would swear it was brand-spanking new. This Balboa-style house, with a cheery yellow exterior and dark green trim and shutters, was inspired by Fisher's husband, who grew up in Panama. With 255 feet of waterfront, the view goes on forever.

“We spent an entire year planning the house,” said Fisher, who sang the praises of architect Tim Broadhead, of Seabrook, and builder Roland Souliere, of Friendswood. The stained-glass front door of the elevated two-story, three-bedroom, three-and-one-half-bath home is the real grabber, with giant bright goldfish swimming among sea plants in sparkling blue water. It's partly why the house is called “Monfish Key.”



“It's a play on words of my name but also that of my father-in-law's friend, Montaine. They jointly owned a boat and named it Monfish,” Fisher said. “After we platted our land, we decided to call it Monfish Key, which became the name of our house as well.” Since a Monfish is fictitious, the Fishers weren't sure how it should look. They ultimately decided on the giant goldfish. “When the afternoon sun shines through the door, it's like having an aquarium in our home,” Fisher said.

Those aquarium doors open up to a spacious living/dining area with fireplace, wine closet, powder room, two guest rooms with extra-large bathrooms and, finally, the star of the house — the kitchen.



The striking solid maple cabinets with ladder rail allow for easy access to out-of-reach items. Cabinet and drawer pulls by designer Gayle Bright are a mix of pewter alligators, plumerias, pelicans and other whimsies. “I’m all about function and flow,” Fisher said. “I wanted to make sure there was plenty of room for everyone to mingle.” That becomes an important factor when Bob, a gourmet cook,

whips up his culinary specialties on the six-burner commercial-grade Wolf stove.

*A wine closet off the dining area in Monica and Bob Fisher’s Dickinson Bayou home is stocked with their favorite wines, including those found during their trips to Napa Valley.*



“He loves to cook and his roux can’t be beat,” Fisher said. A small breakfast nook is on the other side of the kitchen. The master bedroom, bath and “his” and “her” offices are on the top floor. “The entire second level belongs to us,” said Fisher, who said her upstairs view is “like being in a treehouse.” A fireplace extends from the first floor and opens into the master bedroom as well as the mermaid-themed master bath with art by Pat Chapin. The morning bar is something that both Fishers appreciate since coffee can be made without a trip to the kitchen. Oodles of family photos hang in the upstairs hall.



*dual sinks in the master bath*

*Display shelves surround the mirrors that separate the*

All interior walls are painted a soft pale green, floors are a mix of hardwoods and tile with carpet only in the bedrooms. The house has an elevator and is built for wheelchair accessibility. The upper deck and lido deck also are designed for function and flow with a complete outdoor kitchen and two sets of patio furniture, providing lots of room for the entire Fisher clan — five children and nine grandchildren — when they convene. EarthBoxes on the lido deck are the perfect place to grow fresh vegetables, and a nearby herb garden provides finishing touches for gourmet meals. A three-car garage with plenty of extra parking and Bob's workshop are below. Moss-covered trees hug the water's edge and co-mingle with palms, crepe myrtles and plumerias that surround the swimming pool. An antique train bench from the original Panama Canal Railroad sits across from the elevator doors.

*Monica and Bob Fisher's dog, Maggie, perches on the back of the couch in their spacious living/dining area.*

A mango tree, Meyer lemon and Satsuma orange trees bear seasonal fruit in the front yard. The second best thing about their special place is when they go cruising along the bayou in their Boston Whaler, Fisher said. "This is our tucked-away wonderland," she said.



*The lido deck overlooks the couple's pool and has enough space for Monica to grow vegetables and herbs in EarthBoxes.*