



# country COOL

**Best friends**  
The 36-year-old (left) and her best pal Nina chat on the front porch of Chloe's home, an up-dated old slab cottage in Berry, NSW. The 1970s bench, a garage sale find, was painted white and is custom to the rough-hewn ironbark landscape.

A modern extension is added to an old cottage without taking away its character & charm



**Seamless style**  
Homeowner Paola Zullian and daughter Chloe relax in the hub of the house – the new open-plan kitchen. The sleek, contemporary lines of the modern extension are linked back to the old building with the warmth of the stringybark counter joinery, revamped vintage school chairs, rustic dining table and old bench seat that cost \$10 from a second-hand store. →



**Outside in**  
Huge timber doors slide back into a wall cavity to really open up the living area to the outdoors. Battened awnings filter the sunlight and cast graphic shadows into the space.

## W

hen Paola Zullian and Nick Anderson bought their old slab cottage in the rural town of Berry, NSW, 10 years ago, it was only meant to be used as a weekend. The couple, from Sydney's Northern Beaches, had recently returned to the East Coast after living in Perth, and having travelled for many years they were ready to put down roots. "We visited Nick's family in Berry regularly and it reminded us of the Margaret River area south of Perth, which we often visited," Paola says. "Berry is such a beautiful place – and we loved being close to the beach and in the countryside at the same time." The relaxed lifestyle of the South Coast proved irresistible, so the couple bought the rustic old cottage as a place to chill out at the weekends. Made from rough-hewn ironbark slabs, the cottage had previously been completely disassembled and relocated from the country town of Crookwell, north of Canberra, by a local antique dealer. It was painstakingly reassembled, piece by piece, in Berry by local builders who were experienced in traditional carpentry techniques. "The cottage had been set up as a holiday rental and the interiors were very Victorian and dark," Paola recalls. "I loved the rustic look of the property but the first thing I wanted to do was open it up and paint some of the walls white." →



floating bench links eating & lounging zones

**Cool contrast**  
The living area in the new addition of the cottage features a concrete floor, which is warmed by a rug and under-floor heating in the colder months. The use of old and new architecture in the home is reflected in the choice of furnishings. Here, a modern sofa contrasts with the vintage armchairs, which were refurbished by Paola. The artworks are by friend Natasha Marshall.



**School's out! (above)**  
As the local primary school is nearby, Chloe's friends often drop by to visit. This timber step links the transition between the old and new buildings.



**Original charm (above)**  
The sitting room in the original section of the cottage features a delightful old stone fireplace and other charming features such as the weatherboard-lined ceiling and beautiful timber floorboards. Paola painted most of the walls white to lighten the space.

**Tactile textures (below)**  
Warming textures and colours, through leather cushions, artworks and timber furniture, add cosy character to the cool concrete flooring in the new section of the cottage.



**who lives here? | Paola Zullian, partner Nick Anderson and their daughter Chloe, 6**  
**1. Reno timeframe** About eight months. "Although it's not a huge space, it was quite a fiddly job and a challenge for the builders," Paola says. "We went for quality of finishes and design rather than size, but I look at it and enjoy every tiny detail."  
**2. Green aspects** The new extension's northern orientation makes the most of the available sunlight, and the north-facing exposed concrete slab flooring absorbs and stores the heat. Garden walls were made from old bricks found on the property. The home is furnished with many second-hand and revamped pieces.

**On a different level**  
The paved outdoor area is a step down from the grassed backyard, which creates a defined space for eating and sitting around the firepit. The rendered wall is just high enough to screen a derelict building next door, but it doesn't block out the freetops. →

The return trip to Sydney after weekends staying at their country cottage soon became harder to face and Sunday-night departures for the family turned into Monday mornings. "We eventually realised we would rather be living in the cottage full time so we started making plans to extend it to make it a more suitable permanent home," Paola says. And so the family packed up their apartment in Manly, Sydney, and made the move to Berry. Local architect and friend Natasha Marshall was called on to devise a contemporary addition to the cottage. The home now consists of three bedrooms and a cosy sitting room in the original section. From here, a step leads down to the new extension that features the main bathroom, an ensuite bathroom and dressing room off the master bedroom, plus an open-plan space consisting of kitchen, dining and living areas that open out to the garden. The strong contemporary lines of the extension are softened by the use of warm timbers. The exterior of the new addition was painted a deep charcoal colour to allow it to "recede" into the old cottage. The former weekenders is now a delightful home – and the family are happily settled into their cool country cottage. "It would probably have been more cost-effective to move rather than extend," Paola says, "but we love the feel of this old place and you can't replace that!"



old screen door recycled as wall art

**White 'n' woody**  
A simple decorating palette of white and timber is continued in the master bedroom to great effect. A mix of patterns and textures through the old wooden bench, vintage Balinese fabrics and painted wicker bedside tables provide interest and warmth.