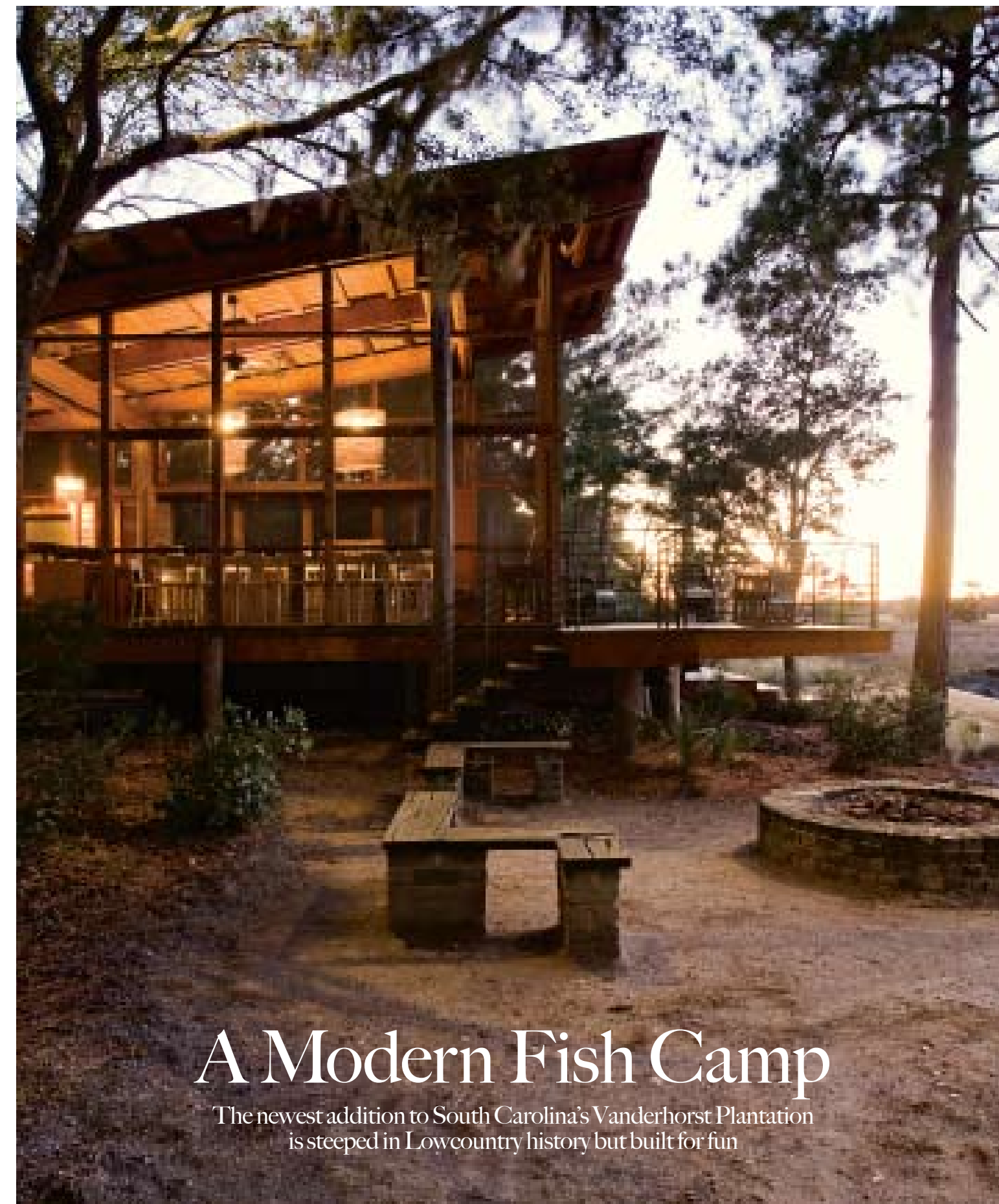




Woodland Creation This page: The bar at the creek house was constructed using fallen live-oak limbs. Opposite: Remnants of an antebellum kitchen house were reapointed for use as benches around the fire pit.



A Modern Fish Camp

The newest addition to South Carolina's Vanderhorst Plantation is steeped in Lowcountry history but built for fun

SIXTEEN YEARS AGO, VANDERHORST PLANTATION, BUILT in 1803 on South Carolina's Kiawah Island by wealthy planter Arnoldus Vanderhorst, was rescued from a century-long slide into dereliction by Charleston developer Buddy Darby. Darby's preservation efforts helped land the property on the National Register of Historic Places. But recently a new chapter has begun with the completion of a modern outbuilding on the fifteen-acre historic site, catapulting old Vanderhorst into the twenty-first century.

"We call it Creek House," says Darby of the structure that began as a wish for a place to relax away from the formality of the plantation house. The cedar-clad pavilion, nothing more than "an open-air shed paneled in screens," he says, sits on pilings a stone's throw from the water and takes in a miles-wide panorama of Lowcountry marsh. Respecting the history of the place, he secreted it from the old house behind a scrim of live oaks and palmettos.

Architects Reggie Gibson and David Thompson of GTG Architects in Charleston were a natural fit for an unconventional project. After all, their previous projects include both a historically reproduced drawbridge house that overlooks the Ashley River and a twenty-room avian hospital at the Center for Birds of Prey in Awendaw, South Carolina.

Casting about for the creek house's personality began with a location search that led around the bend from the old house to a natural indentation in the tidal creek. It was here that an earlier archaeological survey had revealed the ruins of a kitchen. "We decided to stabilize what was left of its brick foundation and build the creek house in an L shape hugging the old site," says Thompson.

The style of the creek house, Gibson says, is "no style, really... just a porch on the water with a big fireplace and lots of prep space for cooking." Rough-sawn, unstained cedar plank walls inset with panels of bronze screening face the creek. South American ipe tree trunks stripped of bark provide in-ground posts for long spans of cedar beams. The combination of so many rustic elements—two bar tops are halves of a live-oak limb that fell on the property—convey the simplicity of a Lowcountry fish camp. Even the pendant lamp shades over the dining table are hand-woven from kudzu. It's a laid-back look Charleston designer Ginger Brewton supplemented with furniture and fabrics that she chose, she says, "not just for the weather exposure but to hold up to sixteen children."

Under a roof canted high to catch the creek breeze is the state-of-the-art stainless steel kitchen Darby requested. "We clean, cook, and eat what we catch here and afterwards wash down the floor with a hose." A three-by-sixteen-foot poured concrete table is not just for food prep and feasting. Its rebar-reinforced legs extend through the floor into the ground. "We needed a table strong enough to dance on," Darby says, laughing. 📍

► For more information, go to gtgarchitects.com.



Open Air This page, clockwise from top: The creek house; a copper sink in one of the bathrooms; a view from the creek house dining room; from left, architect Reggie Gibson, designer Ginger Brewton, owner Buddy Darby, and architect David Thompson. Opposite: The three-by-sixteen-foot poured concrete table seats up to twenty.

