

A PEACEABLE KINGDOM

For Emilia Fanjul Pfeifler's family of five, a century-old estate in Locust Valley, New York, is a lush escape from the bustle of city life. By Chloe Malle. Photographed by Oberto Gill.

PARADISE FOUND

A boundary fence on the six-acre Locust Valley property brims with roses in summertime.

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MAKING A RACKET

Fanjul Pfeifler, in Lahwin, on the grass tennis court with her children and dachshund. Dexter, from left, Nico, Francesca, and Emilia. Details, see in This Issue.

Emilia Fanjul Pfeiffer's iPhone weather app suggests the day will turn to rain, so her seven-year-old, Nico, and his sister Emilia (Emsy for short), four, are playing Ping-Pong outside before the storm rolls through. Earlier that morning they made their pilgrimage to the six-acre property's greenhouse and basketball court-size vegetable garden, which brims with produce through the fall. "Last year we had so many tomatoes, we couldn't eat all of them," says Emilia, standing over the stove stirring a saucepan of meatballs, which will be Emsy's lunch. "This whole table was bowls of tomatoes."

She's in the large kitchen of the Colonial-style six-bedroom manor she and her husband, Brian, purchased six years ago—around the same time Emilia shuttered her public relations firm in Manhattan to answer the ever-increasing calls of motherhood. "I grew up coming here, so I knew it," she says of Locust Valley, a quaint hamlet on Long Island's North Shore. Her tawny hair falls loosely across the shoulders of her pale striped linen button-down. "We come out every weekend of the year, even on a Saturday if we have to," she says. "I need it. The dogs need it." As if on cue the family's black Lab, Guapa, enters and stations herself hopefully next to the stove. "It's off the beaten path, which is why I love it," Emilia adds. And yet this enclave of rolling hills, two-lane roads, and wooded glens thick with the locust trees that give the area its name is only an hour's drive from Midtown, meaning Brian can commute during the summer, and short weekend trips are as painless as they are restorative. The Palm Beach-bred sugar heiress shrugs happily. "It comes down to the fact that it's just mellow here."

Like legions of seven-year-olds before him, Nico is anything but. After heroically participating in the morning-long photo shoot with his mother and sisters (Emilia's youngest, Francesca, is 21 months), he now dances into the kitchen stripped down to his Smurfs underwear, a red velvet cupcake in hand. Although a Jacques Adnet daybed upholstered in a Loro Piana cashmere and pillows covered in eighteenth-century Chinese textiles accent the living room, the higher-traffic kitchen is equipped with a practical table and linen-upholstered chairs from Restoration Hardware, so the blooded crumbs from Nico's cupcake don't raise an alarm.

"Fine furnishings plus three children?" decorator Frank de Biasi says later, arching his eyebrows playfully. "It really comes down to the attitude of the parents, and they're just low-key and normal about it." He strolls through the raw-oak-paneled library and gestures toward the piecework springbok-hide rug. "You know the kids are going to mess it up, but it just makes it nice and an old, comfortable house." The library is clearly loved and lived in. Cozy cashmere throws with Paul Renwick's colorful hand-embroidered blanket stitching are draped across dark leather bergères. Built-ins reach the height of the Serge Mouille ceiling lamps, with children's books crowding a low shelf, the most beloved titles spilling over into a red wagon on the antique French herringbone-pattern oak floor.

The library and adjoining living room overlook the grassy patio where the blue Cornilleau Ping-Pong table provides a shady refuge for Dexter, the wirehaired dachshund. Higher-stakes games (in proper footwear, of course) are played on the immaculately groomed grass tennis court up the hill, flanked by the swimming pool on one side and the vegetable garden across the gravel drive. For further amusement there's the full-size jungle gym in a forested nook of the property and a



COUNTRY LIVING
A view of the six-bedroom Colonial-style home, built c. 1917.



CHILD'S PLAY
Nico shows Emilia proper archery technique.



PUPPY LOVE
Guapa, the family's black Lab, takes a leap into the pool.



PILLOW TALK
The walls and ceiling of an upstairs guest bedroom are batted in a floral fabric from John Rosselli Antiques.



LIGHT SHOW
Antique French oak floors accent the foyer; the lantern is 19th-century Scottish.

GRAND PLAN
An Ugo Rondinone work on paper anchors the living room.

GREEN PEACE

The vegetable garden at the property's southern end includes a greenhouse where the family grows everything from zucchini to green beans to arugula.



playroom on the third floor, equipped with chalkboard walls and a miniature ball pit.

The master suite is decidedly more grown-up: The walls of Brian's study are covered in cognac pigskin, and a large copper tub custom made in England takes pride of place in his bathroom. Emilia's dressing room is anchored by her grandmother's daybed, updated in a Muriel Brandolini fabric, with framed antique herbiers lining the walls. Just adjacent is the bedroom, with robin's egg-blue Tapis d'Avignon felt carpet, a painted-iron canopy bed found in Florence, and Provençal toile batted fabric on the wall, the last a discovery from the Georges Le Manach archives in Paris. French doors open onto a terrace overlooking the pond at the foot of the property; both the master bedroom and the living room below are seamless additions to the original c. 1917 architecture, whose poise and spirit the couple worked hard to preserve.

The three-year renovation was epic, taking the house down to the timbers. "This was a massive gut job," Emilia says. "The kitchen had a tree growing through it. That door was over there"—she points toward the opposite corner of the room—"and there were no windows. It was like the Black Hole of Calcutta." Now that black hole is light-filled with English roses creeping up the trellis framing the windows. Emilia made a desperate plea to Nancy Taylor, the landscape designer and a local friend of her grandmother's, to come out of retirement and rejuvenate the neglected gardens. Taylor consented and lined the allée from house to pool with lady's mantle, purple poppy mallow, daylilies, and a mini orchard of crab-apple trees. Nestled behind the rhododendron is the most picturesque freestanding garage since *Sabrina* (incidentally, Billy Wilder's 1954 classic was filmed in neighboring Glen Cove).

Emilia likes the "old school" feel of Locust Valley but admits somewhat reluctantly that "it's becoming kind of popular right now. Because it's close by and year-round. If you're in a beachy spot in the winter, it can feel cold and a little depressing, but Locust Valley never has that feeling, because when it becomes winter it's all about winter sports." Indeed, every Saturday and Sunday in the cold months, the kids can be found zealously careering around the ice-skating rink at nearby Beaver Dam. Back at home the fireplaces, crowned with travertine mantels rescued at a salvage emporium outside Rome, are put into constant use, and the hand-crank rotisserie grill in the oversized kitchen fireplace is perfect for evening meals. "I think Brian had a romantic notion of doing, like, goats on there," Emilia says. Upstairs, just outside the sloped-ceiling guest room, the window above the desk—accented with an Il Papiro dachshund-print desk set—offers a clear view, once the leaves fall, of Long Island Sound.

Outside storm clouds are threatening so the whole team, minus Brian who will join them on Friday, assembles in the kitchen. The meatballs are ready, and Nico's pizza bagels are warming in the oven. Emsy has a napkin tied around her neck to protect her printed frock. Asked how old her baby sister is, she grabs Francesca, just woken from her nap, in a bear hug, wrinkling the smocking on the toddler's dress. "Almost two!" she says brightly. "Are you going to sleep over again tonight?" Emilia asks Emsy, who gets to share her mother's bed when her father is in town for business. Emsy swivels her head, as if part of a delicious conspiracy, and gives her mother a contented nod. □

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