

ISLAND VIBES

A trip to the tropical resort of their dreams is right outside this McLean, Va., family's back door.

By Kristen Schott // Photography by Jimi Smith Photography

What do you get when you combine the innovation of a Florida outdoor living designer with the talents of a Virginia-based alfresco architect and a family's vision for an island escape in their backyard? This 4,000-square-foot space. It's the work of Tampa's **Ryan Hughes Design Build** (ryanhughesdesign.com), Fairfax's **Colao & Peter Luxury Outdoor Living** (colaopeter.com), and the dream of Huong Thai and Khoa Ho. The duo built their 17-room McLean, Va., mansion in 2016, but sought an open-air oasis for entertaining, family fun and relaxing—like they do in Bora Bora. “The goal was tranquil by day and wow factor by night,” says President Ryan Hughes. After he delivered the final sketches, they secured Colao & Peter to bring the project to full build-out. “[It] surpassed everyone’s expectations,” notes Hughes. The most challenging aspect? The technical side. There are five automated fire features, LED bubblers and lots of lighting. “[Khoa] is from the tech world, and accomplishing the mood, [and] animating the space, was important,” says Hughes. Joe Colao, a partner in his namesake firm, waxes poetic about the spa and pergola. “With illuminated ‘floating’ custom imported limestone steppers, a privacy firewall... and an all-glass double-overflow spa, [it’s] stunning.” Yes, whether you’re in the vanishing-edge pool, at the swim-up bar or in the kitchen, it’s a sanctuary. “We enjoy the peace and calm,” says Thai. She’ll even find it next month, when the couple hosts a party for their kids’ birthdays. The parents are invited too. “The adults will enjoy the spa,” she says. “It feels like an all-inclusive resort when sitting with a mojito.”



The kitchen boasts a backsplash that changes colors; it's an example of the state-of-the-art technology used throughout the project.