



Martha's Vineyard

HOME & GARDEN

SPRING-SUMMER 2015

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Free House!

The people at the Home & Garden Television network like to say they didn't choose Martha's Vineyard as the location of their nineteenth Dream Home giveaway; it chose them. About a year ago, when the HGTV team was scouting potential sites, the Vineyard was an easy sell. "This is an ideal location. It's beautiful here," said Jack Thomasson, the official house planner for the HGTV Dream Home. "People are really friendly on Martha's Vineyard. The Island has a lot to offer."

Fittingly, the network also offers a lot in its annual sweepstakes. In May, one lucky winner will be given the keys to a lavishly appointed three-bedroom house in Edgartown. Also included in the approximately \$2.5 million prize package: a brand new GMC Acadia Denali, \$250,000 from Quicken Loans, and a one-year membership to the Field Club next door, with its two pools, tennis and squash courts, and workout facility.

HGTV tapped Island architect Pat-

rick Ahearn to design the home, and Tim McHugh, owner of Timothy McHugh Builders, Inc. in Edgartown, served as contractor. Back in December, when HGTV flung open the doors for a tour of the completed collaboration, natural light streamed through the kitchen, bouncing off Thomasson's Clark Kent-style glasses. He pointed to the home's soaring ceilings, the reclaimed wood beams, and the freshly painted walls – all done by hand, he said, "a very Vineyard thing to do."

"A lot of what is inside this home is local," said interior designer Linda Woodrum, who has worked on every HGTV Dream Home. Price tags on the bottom of dinner plates indicated they had been purchased at Vineyard Haven store Juliska. The master bathroom was equipped with bath salts from Rainy Day. A cashmere bathrobe draped over an ottoman in the walk-in (but big enough to run-in) closet had a tag from Tracker Home Decor. All the artwork in the home was bought from Island artists. And what would local art and architecture be without local food? The shelves were stocked with LeRoux olive oil, Morning Glory Farm cookbooks, Bad Martha beer, and Boston Red Sox hot sauce (close enough).

Whether the lucky winner will ever become a local, on the other hand, is another question. Last year's sweepstakes for a home in Lake Tahoe, California, had 72,427,440 entries, so while plenty of year-round residents and other Vineyard-lovers entered this year's contest before the February 17 deadline, the chance of someone with an existing Island connection winning is very, very, very slim. Even HGTV representatives concede that the winner may not actually move in to the Martha's Vineyard dream home. Instead, he or she may opt for a dream lump sum of cash.

Though not readily publicized by the network, winners always have an option of taking a reduced cash amount, essentially giving the house back to the builder to resell. The breakdown, according to HGTV: \$1.45 million in cash, plus the \$250,000 from Quicken Loans, and the Acadia Denali, worth a total of \$1.75 million.

Gary McCormick, director of corporate communications marketing for Scripps Networks, which owns HGTV, won't reveal how many past winners have actually made their sweet homes their home-sweet-homes. But, he says, the location of the house and the financial situation of the winners can be limiting factors. The home is "free to you but not all tax-free," he said. In addition to paying income taxes on the total prize value, new homeowners are responsible for annual property taxes and Land Bank transfer fees. In Edgartown,

taxes on a \$2 million home will come to approximately \$8,000 a year. A one-time fee to the Land Bank would total \$32,000 to \$40,000, depending on whether the winner is a first-time home buyer. Annual dues at the Field Club, meanwhile, are another \$7,950 a year. (If the winner intends to keep the home, this is presumably where the \$250,000 from Quicken Loans comes in.)

"The winner would have to determine

financially if they could still stay in the home given that they don't live in that area or have a job in that area," said McCormick. Or, given the Vineyard's booming rental market, he or she could opt to keep the house and rent it out. Only time will tell what the lucky person will choose to do. In the meantime, we say congratulations to the winner, definitely. And welcome to the Vineyard, maybe. ♦

– sydney bender

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