

## DAY'S END

Focus on good design and clever construction



## Kava Hut ... Philly-Style

by Scott Bailey

I don't think my client has ever gone to Polynesia, much less tried its famous kava (a root used to create a mild narcotic drink). But he liked the idea of a casual socializing area with a tropical flavor and—using a book on life in the South Pacific islands for reference—asked me to design and build a sheltered pool-side deck with a similar feel.

I repurposed as many materials as possible, for character and for sustainability, to build the 8-by-16-foot structure. I found some beautifully weathered 17-foot-long cedar 8x8 posts and 4x7 beams and a stack of unused ipe decking in the stockpile of a former custom builder and had a local shop laminate arches from new select western red cedar.

To fasten the structural-grade bamboo purlins to the arches, I cut access holes through the top edge, then ran self-tapping structural screws through the lower edge into the framing. Cedar stops fastened to the arches on either side of the purlins help hold the bamboo in place (see photo, top right).

I researched bamboo joinery and lashing techniques to create railings that were strong but looked casual. For example, I used a special saw to cope the ends of the bamboo cleanly and used a flat table with a frame set to the exact size of the railing to assemble the pieces prior to installation. The ends of the top and bottom rails fit into mahogany verticals, while lashings of chocolate-colored natural hemp

cordage hold the rail pieces together. I finished the railings with three coats of marine varnish, then screwed the verticals to the posts (see photo, above right).

The hut's canopy was fabricated from a marine textile called Stamoid, a vinyl-coated polyester material. Not only is the canopy translucent, it's also quieter in the rain than metal roofing. The fabricator fitted battens into the perimeter of the canopy to maintain its shape and provide anchor points for adjustable cables that hold the canopy slightly taut, even in high winds. ♦

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