

AWAY Playing Chef in a Little Kitchen on the Shore

By WENDY KNIGHT

IN the one-man kitchen of a Cape Cod cottage, Gary Sullivan is fixing yogurt parfaits for his partner, Mark Young, and a guest.

Professionally, Mr. Sullivan doesn't spend much time in the kitchen, even though he is a partner in the Sapphire Restaurant Group in Boston. Instead, he is responsible for "the front of the house." (On Wednesday, he will help open Rocca Kitchen & Bar in Boston's South End.)

But at the beach cottage in Truro, Mass., that he owns with Mr. Young, a commercial real estate lawyer, he gets to play chef.

"Gary becomes a housewife down here, cooking and cleaning," said Mr. Young, 44, who grew up in Bedford, Mass. "I'm like Darrin Stevens of 'Bewitched.' I just stay out of the way."

With the coffee brewed, Mr. Sullivan, 45, layered organic granola and fresh strawberries on the yogurt. "In another life I would want to be a chef," he said.

Initially, it was architecture that captured his attention. Accepted in the architecture program at San Diego State University in 1979, when he was 18, that summer he packed up his new burgundy Mustang and drove from Massachusetts cross country with his 15-year-old sister, Patty, for company.

Though he enjoyed the design aspect of architecture, a different passion was simmering. During summer breaks from college, Mr. Sullivan would return to the Boston area to work at a restaurant called Finely Michaels.

Discouraged that other students "got things down sooner," he didn't return to college for his final year in 1982. Instead, he stayed on with Finely Michaels, where he worked as a manager overseeing the construction of a private party room and training the wait staff. In 1994, wanting to work more closely with chefs, he teamed up with one, Anthony Ambrose, to open Ambrosia on Huntington.

"I really enjoy the restaurant business," Mr. Sullivan said.

Born in Sudbury, Mass., he grew up in nearby Holliston west of Boston, the sixth of seven children. His parents worked at Blimstrom's, a supper club in Boston that launched the careers of musicians like Johnny Mathis, a family friend.

When Mr. Sullivan was a baby, his father was offered a job as a lighting technician touring with Mr. Mathis, so his parents moved the family to California. They moved back to Massachusetts in 1967, when his father was offered a job as a lighting director at a Boston television station.

Mr. Sullivan's own career gained mo-



Jodi Hilios for The New York Times

2 BEDROOMS WITH A VIEW Gary Sullivan, left, and Mark Young in front of the cottage, left, that they have renovated in Truro, Mass.

mentum in 1998 at a book party, where he met Michela Larson, who along with Karen Haskell is a partner in the Sapphire Restaurant Group. With Jody Adams, Ms. Larson had recently opened Michela's and Rialto, both in Cambridge.

Mr. Sullivan was hired as a general manager for the group, which soon opened blu, a seafood restaurant in the Ritz-Carlton Towers, and Noir, a bar in the Charles Hotel. He was made a partner in 2000.

Using his architectural background, he works on design concepts for the group and also consults with hotels. "This must have been what I was meant to do," he said.

HIS artistic sense of style and space is evident at a party for Rocca. Dressed in a navy crepe Armani jacket with satin piping, Mr. Sullivan proudly shows guests the restaurant, which features both colors (sea glass, sand) and cuisine (pesto, fish) from the Ligurian region of Italy.

"I like to use different textures," he said as he pointed out the hammered bronze doors and a two-story cork wall in the glass rotunda that is meant to represent the sheer cliffs of the Ligurian coast.

A similar palette — muted greens, turquoise and beige — permeates the beach cottage that Mr. Sullivan and Mr. Young bought in 2001. In the main room, a pair of Nantucket blue rocking chairs face the

L-shaped sofa covered in white sailcloth. An off-white leather ottoman is wedged in between. In the corner, an old jelly cabinet doubles as a linen closet and TV stand, while a stainless steel ceiling fan adds a hint of Jetson-era whimsy.

In 1999, the couple, who began dating in 1988, started looking for a vacation property in Provincetown, where they had spent occasional weekends. They wanted to be on the water, but in their price range (below \$90,000) "we weren't seeing anything we loved," Mr. Young said.

A real estate agent took them to Truro, two miles south, and showed them a former motel complex with cottages on the beach. They looked at a 1,200-square-foot cottage near the water but couldn't swing \$375,000. They didn't bother to look at the smaller cottages in the back despite the more reasonable cost of \$165,000.

Two years later, they returned to the same cedar-shingle cottages in Truro and found some of them being renovated. The two remaining 500-square-foot cottages for sale still had gray linoleum flooring and unattractive wallpaper, but, Mr. Sullivan said, "we could see the potential."

They bought a two-bedroom cottage for \$203,000 and immediately stripped off the "pirate ship and golden pineapple wallpaper," and installed double French doors that opened to a new beach-level deck that they also added.

Over the next three years, the couple made more substantial improvements to the cottage, raising the ceilings and installing granite countertops and Ikea cabinets in the kitchen. "We wanted to keep it simple," Mr. Young said.

TO add more space to the two tiny bedrooms, they created vaulted ceilings of whitewashed pine and took out the small closets. In the windowless bathroom, they added a pair of crank-out windows and an open shower with mosaic tile flooring. The wall behind the sink is tiled in sage green glass.

"This was our splurge," Mr. Sullivan said as his hand glided down the translucent surface. "I miscalculated, though, and it cost us a third more than what I thought."

"Two-thirds," Mr. Young corrected from the main room.

"My job is to make sure it's practical from a use and budget perspective," Mr. Young said as he stretched out on the white sailcloth sofa. "Together, we strike a balance."

To harmonize their different styles of spending and decorating, they undertook the renovations in stages or compromised.

"When we spend money, I flip out," said Mr. Young, whose divorced mother supported him and his younger brother by cleaning houses, waiting tables and relying on wel-

fare assistance. As a result, he said, he's conservative with money.

"Without Gary, I would be living somewhere with posters and a futon," he said.

In Boston, the couple, who married in 2005, live in a 1,700-square-foot high-rise apartment in Chinatown. From July 4 through Labor Day, they spend each weekend at the cottage, sometimes with a single friend or another couple, though they often prefer to be alone.

"Cooking is my form of relaxation," Mr. Sullivan said while sipping coffee at the round dining table tucked in a front corner.

On Cape Cod, a restaurateur cooks for his partner and friends.

Two pugs, Sophie and Ellie, snuggled into a dog bed nearby. "I don't get to cook much during the week."

He finds "great ingredients" like arugula and fresh herbs at Angel Foods in Provincetown for salads and sometimes buys lobster, or fish straight from the dock. "There's nothing better than lobster and chardonnay," he said.

While Mr. Sullivan is busy in the kitchen, Mr. Young catches up on reading and sleep, or "tinkering" he said, weeding or picking up discarded bottles from the beach. At low tide, they walk two miles across the sand bar into Provincetown or ride bikes through the National Seashore.

And while they aren't sun worshippers, they enjoy taking their "double wide" float into the ocean where "we tie ourselves to a mooring and lay in the sun and talk," Mr. Young said.

How will the opening of the new restaurant affect their private time at the shore?

"We're done," Mr. Young deadpanned.

Mr. Sullivan ignored him and gave a more studied answer.

"We're talking about that now," he said. "Mark might work with me in the restaurant on Saturday nights."

From the sofa, Mr. Young strenuously shook his head.

"It's not going to happen," he insisted. "The last time I worked at one of his restaurants I got into a fight with a customer and he took the customer's side."

"It's hard for me to separate from work," Mr. Sullivan conceded. "But it's good for us to have time here. It's therapeutic for me to take care of us versus 300 people in a restaurant."