

# SAN DIEGO HOME/GARDEN

L I F E S T Y L E S

## Southwestern Tilt

A new Spanish Colonial hacienda



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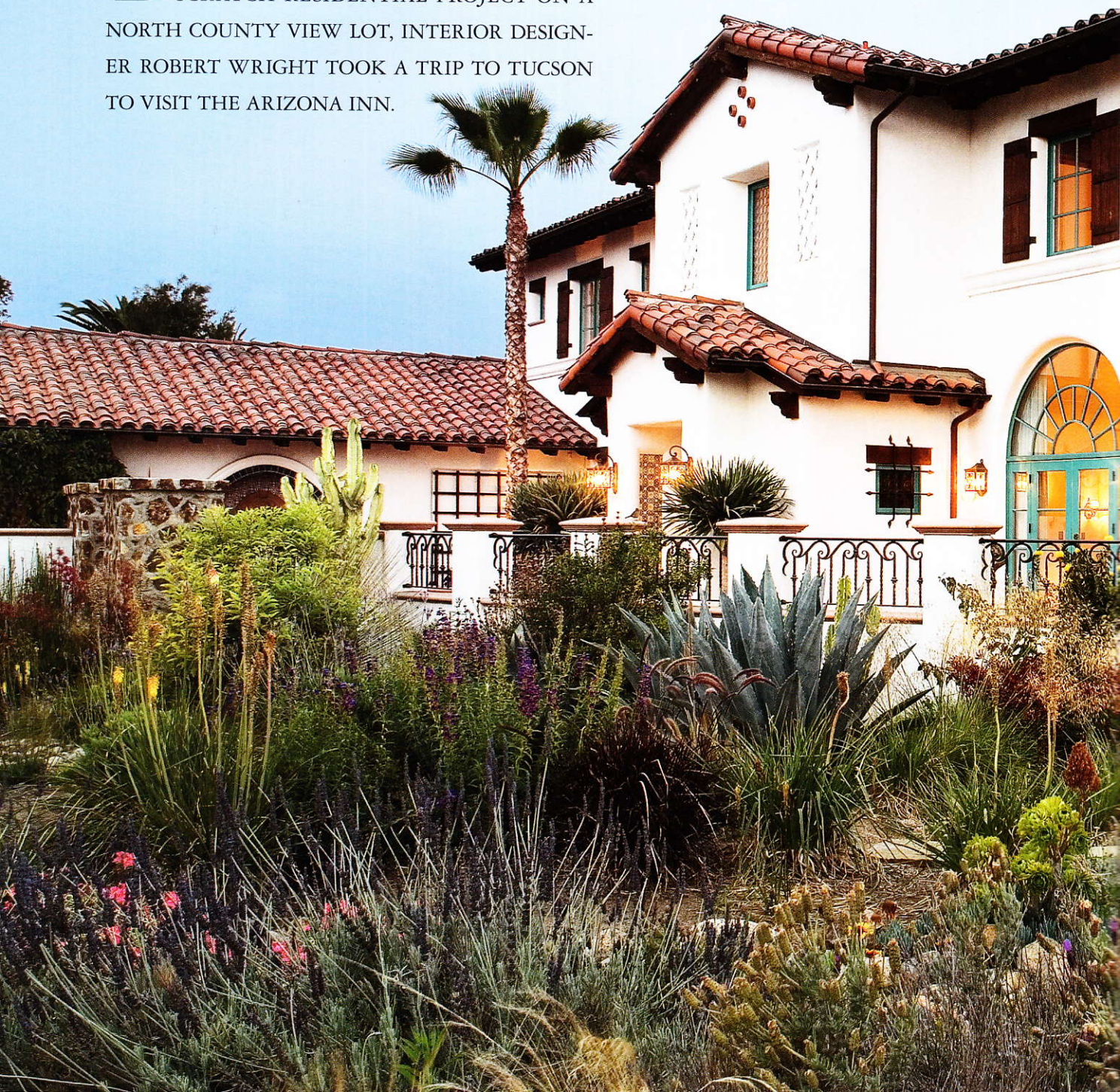
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OCTOBER 2008



# Oh, So California

A NEW NORTH COUNTY HOME EMBRACES A SANTA BARBARA AESTHETIC

**B**EFORE EMBARKING ON THE CREATION OF HIS CLIENT'S FIRST BIG START-FROM-SCRATCH RESIDENTIAL PROJECT ON A NORTH COUNTY VIEW LOT, INTERIOR DESIGNER ROBERT WRIGHT TOOK A TRIP TO TUCSON TO VISIT THE ARIZONA INN.









PREVIOUS PAGE and below: This new North County home, designed by architect Mark Lee Christopher and interior designer Robert Wright, bears a resemblance to a Mission-style residence but has a more casual early-California look. The outdoor barbecue off the kitchen brings home the San Diego indoor/outdoor lifestyle.



OPPOSITE: "It is natural to look up in a grand room, so we wanted to make sure there was something pretty wonderful to see," says Wright of the 22-foot living-room ceiling made up of hand-painted panels. Wright designed the room's chandelier, which is switch operated to come down for cleaning. The niches were integrated to accommodate Spanish benches, found in Los Angeles. Later, on a search for decorative artwork for the niches, Wright came across the two antique tapestries.

"I've been working for this client and his family for about 20 years," says Wright. "They love the Southwest look, especially the homes in the Santa Barbara area. They asked me to go to the Arizona Inn to absorb and be inspired by the Colonial architecture of that inn."

The architectural elements that define Santa Barbara and the Spanish Colonial look — white stucco walls with arched openings, terra-cotta patios, red-tiled roofs, decorative chimneys, window shutters — were the model for the new home's design, but the feel is casual, with an early California setting of mountains and nearby riding stables.













OPPOSITE: To give a softer, more elegant appearance, the dining room's reclaimed ceiling beams were whitewashed.  
 ABOVE: The scalloped corners are well used in a wide opening where an arch might appear too tall. Handcrafted tiles and ironwork are decorative touches on the home's grand stairway.  
 BELOW: The comfortable kitchen/family room is made for get-togethers. The kitchen was laid out so that the big picture window would frame the pool and mountain views. With no panes, this window is different than any other window in the house.





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"They were very clear they wanted the home to be Spanish eclectic, but they didn't want a dressy Mexico City estate," says architect Mark Lee Christopher of the clients, who requested that their names not be used for this story. "By the time we studied the clients' desires for room size and proportion and arranged them in such a way as to capitalize on the particular characteristics of the property — sun and wind patterns, issues of view and privacy — we ended up with a long house with the kitchen on one end and the master suite on the other."

In fact, the home has the look of a hacienda that grew over time and responded to the homeowners' changing needs. A separate guesthouse and a natural fieldstone-surfaced rotunda, which serves as an office, are set off from the rest of the house.

The residence also embraces an outdoor courtyard. "In a traditional hacienda, the courtyard would have to have four sides," says Christopher. "For this house it was appropriate to have three sides." The fourth side is open to a northerly view, across a golf course, toward the mountains.

"The home's architecture and its interiors are tightly integrated," says Christopher. "The continuity between the materials on the inside and out is such that there is no demarcation between architecture and interior design."

Much of the home's interior is weighted toward intimacy and comfort, yet the dining and living rooms are designed with more formality in mind. By far the grandest room in the house is the living room, which, with its exceptionally high ceiling, thick walls and small flared windows, looks a bit like a monastery. Here, antique tapestries hung inside scalloped, arched niches flank a tall elegant fireplace. Traditional furnishings adhere to the Spanish Colonial theme, as does the custom wrought-iron chandelier suspended from the ceiling.

"Reclaimed beams were used in



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both the living- and dining-room ceilings," says Wright. "For the living room's ceiling treatment, panels are hand-painted. They pick up the motifs in the custom deco accents of the tile floors."

Laird Plumleigh designed the floor decos. His work also can be seen on the risers of the home's sweeping staircase, and on fireplace surrounds throughout the house, including the fireplace in the family room where interiors are designed more for comfort than elegance.

"The homeowners wanted a family room that was more casual than the living and dining rooms," says Wright. "They have a big family with lots of grandkids and like to entertain in their home. They always are having family get-togethers."

The kitchen is the family's gathering place and is situated on a north-facing wall with a picture window that offers a view of the mountains.

"The kitchen is the inglenook, the heart of the home," says Christopher. "This kitchen occupies a focal point that serves to hook the family room, the dining room (by means of a butler's pantry) and, most importantly, the outdoor entertaining area."

Entertaining as a means of relaxing with family and friends was clearly high on the homeowners' list of priorities. In fact, the homeowners said the main goal for their residence was to have a warm and cozy home to accommodate their large family.

In the end, Wright, Christopher and the homeowners conceived the house as a team. Together they arrived at a comfortable Southwestern style, in a home that is both elegant and livable. ■

Where to find it, page 157

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