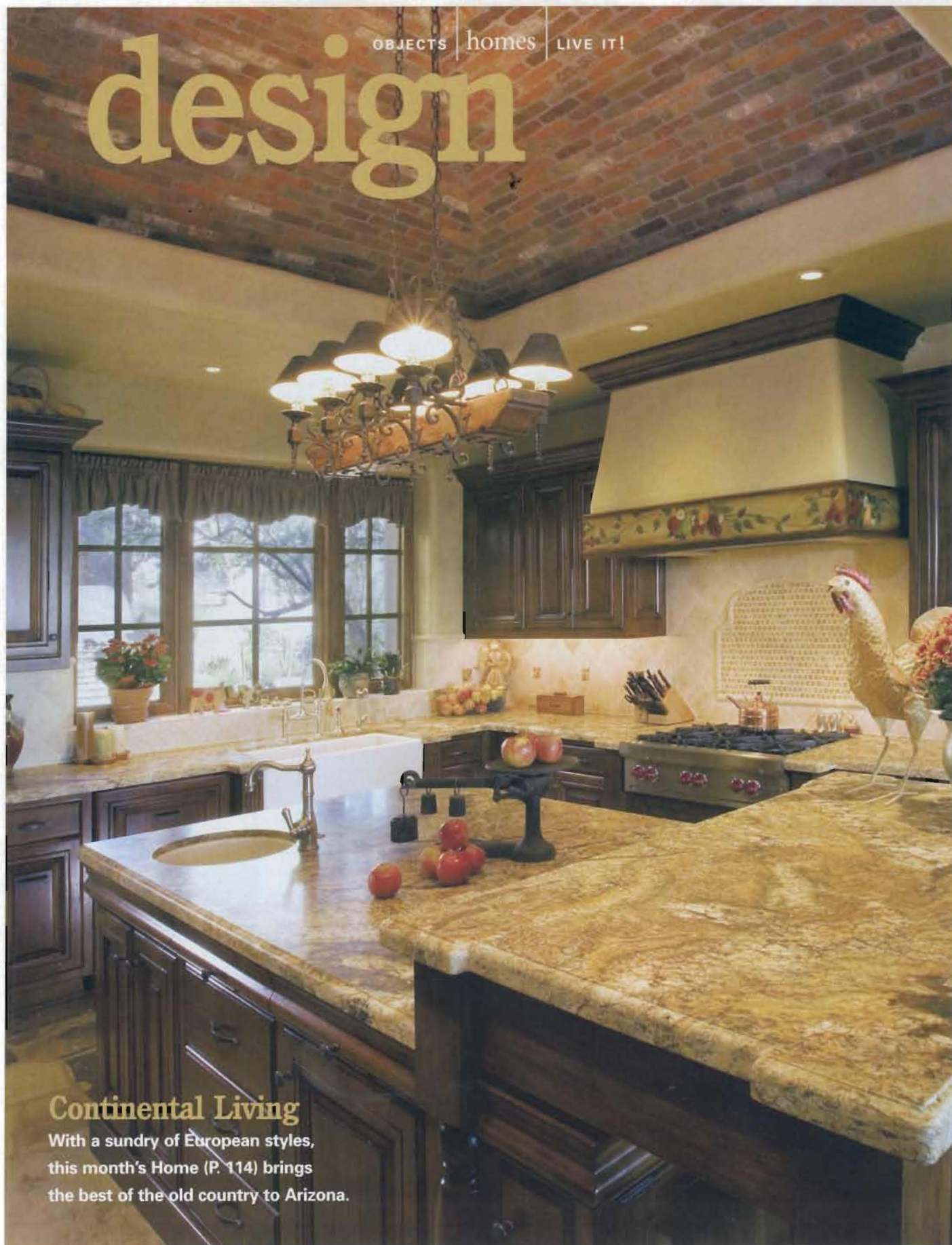


design

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Continental Living

With a sundry of European styles, this month's Home (P. 114) brings the best of the old country to Arizona.



ARCHITECT: Jim Hann, James Hann Design.

BUILDER: Dan Couturier, Madison
Couturier Custom Homes.

PROJECT SUPERINTENDENT: Felix Carrasco,
Madison Couturier Custom Homes.

DESIGNERS: Julie White, Cristi
Pettibone and Tony Sutton, Est Est.

SQUARE FOOTAGE: 8,112 livable (10,783 total).



Family History

In a community where bigger is often better and opulence is automatic, one couple dared to emphasize atmosphere over accessories in their European-inspired nest.

BY: ELIZABETH EXLINE PHOTOGRAPHY: JERRY PORTELLI

PULL INTO THE AUTO COURT of this Italian-villa-meets-French-country home, and you'll find yourself in a bear hug of stone and stucco walls. Park wherever you like, make your way to the carriage-door-style entry and Jan, the homeowner, may just greet you with a plateful of homemade sugar cookies. Or, if you've come early, she might invite you to pull up a seat at the

kitchen island beneath the brick-lined, groin-vaulted ceiling while she finishes a batch. This is just a taste of the sweet life that Jan and her husband, Steve, lead at their Desert Mountain home—and it's wholesome enough to make anyone ask for seconds.

Originally hailing from Des Moines, Iowa, Jan and Steve are high school sweethearts whose marriage has endured three kids, six grandchildren and residential stints everywhere from California to Maine. So when retirement loomed on the horizon for Steve, he and Jan decided to settle down to a simpler, more peaceful life somewhere warm and, above all, not humid. They'd whittled their choices down to Arizona, New Mexico or California, when they came to visit Steve's sister in the Valley, and they asked for her recommendations on good places to buy land. "She sent us up here to Desert Mountain, and we bought [this] property," Jan recounts. "We didn't even go to New Mexico!"

Purchasing the lot turned out to be the easiest part of the process. The homeowners interviewed three architects before deciding on Jim Hann of James Hann Design. Then they hired a series of interior designers until they came across Julie White, Cristi Pettibone and Tony Sutton of Est Est, a trio that, despite coming onto the project midway, was able to complete it with grace and panache. Yet Steve and Jan's determination to find the right homebuilding team wasn't a function of some petty meticulousness—they just wanted professionals who could build the right kind of house for them, and to do that, they needed people who really listened to what they wanted.

"It's our house, and I want it to be my house, not the designer's," Jan says. "My problem is I can tell you what I like, but I'm not sure I can tell you what to do to get

Solutions: Setting the Stage for Style

Adding an influx of ornamental roosters and bright reds, yellows and blues isn't the only way to establish a French country feel in an Arizona home, as proved by Jan and Steve's dining room (shown, opposite). Thoughtful collectibles, natural hues and touches of texture with wrought iron and rustic wood provide just the right amount of provincial flair.

- Jan and Steve's oval table with a distressed wood finish and the worn cream-color chairs with vertical slats impart a pastoral touch.
- Natural tones give the interior walls a farmhouse-like finish, and a built-in display ledge provides a perfect perch for collectibles like Jan's baskets.
- The large, wrought-iron chandelier above the table is a warm yet ornate complement to the formal dining space.

—Jason Kerkmans



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there. I know the feel I want, but [White and Pettibone] have that flair, that little special something that turns it from a house into something that has some personality to it."

As adamant as Jan is regarding what she does like, she and Steve are just as opinionated about what they don't. In this case, contemporary or traditional Southwestern homes were about as appealing to them as finding a rattlesnake in their garden. They gravitated instead toward a sundry style with touches of French country and Italian virtuosity. "I just said to Steve, 'If I ever get to build a house, I want it to look like a little village in Italy,'" Jan says, "and that's where we started from." So Hann uniformly layered

They gravitated instead toward a sundry style with touches of French country and Italian virtuosity.

the roof planes; he imbued the space above the garage (which incorporates Steve's office and the grandkids' bedroom) with an atticlike feel via sloped cathedral ceilings and steps on both ends that lead down to the main residence and guest house. He used wood beams in the ceilings elsewhere in the home and stone and brick on the exterior, all with an eye toward creating a European cottage atmosphere.

The house feels as though entire sections have been added on over the years, and most of the furnishings (having come with the couple from previous residences) maintain an aged essence. Yet integrating Jan and Steve's existing pieces into their new home was the least of White and Pettibone's problems. More challenging was their task of being able to make the right design decisions while they were still getting to know the project and Jan both. Luckily for them, Jan is a forthright woman who isn't prone to dithering over details. "[White and Pettibone]

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can give me ideas, or they can show me things, and I can tell them almost instantly 'yes' or 'no,'" Jan says. "I don't waste time."

Nor does she waste artifacts, fabric or furniture. Against a backdrop of Jan's favorite colors—green and red with splashes of gold—every space in the home incorporates some vestige of the past. Reclaimed wood floors were salvaged from a Midwestern barn; an antique ladder resides in the living room; and Jan's collection of old milk bottles is on display in the guest house's living room. Her assortment of baskets, which she's accumulated throughout her life, keeps watch over the relaxed dining room from a ledge near the ceiling. An old

"I think [the house's motif] is just the history of Jan and Steve," White says.

churn that whispers of Jan's farm-girl history shares space in the family room with a Nepalese paint well that speaks to her and Steve's global travels. "I think [the house's motif] is just the history of Jan and Steve," White says.

Yet, for all that the home's objects speak to Jan and Steve's past, it is people who represent their present and future. If the grandchildren have Tonka truck races in the living room, so be it. If they hide away in the bedroom designed just for them, Jan doesn't bat an eyelash. "This house is certainly a lot bigger than Steve and I needed," she says, "but the first thing I told Steve when we started building this house is, 'I will not build a house [where] I cannot have my kids and grandkids all [visit] at the same time'...I think you add something to their lives as a grandparent, being involved. You can give something to them."

"They're all about the quality of life," Pettibone says of the couple, "and that's so wonderful to see." 

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