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# Palm Springs Life<sup>®</sup>

California's Prestige Magazine

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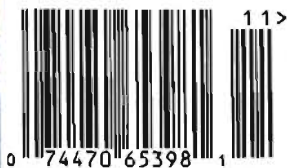
Elegance in Eveningwear

The Art of Community

AtHome: Spectacular Kitchens

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# Let Me Entertain You

A Mediterranean retreat reveals a penchant to party

Location: Bighorn, Palm Desert  
Architect: Kristi Hansen  
Builder: Gary Herauf  
Interior Design: Jeanette Christian  
Text: Jeff Atwell  
Photography: Ethan Kaminsky  
and Charles White

The warm and inviting great room features a wall-to-wall bar that overlooks the golf course and valley below. "We used four big and comfortable chairs at the bar rather than a number of stools," says interior designer Jeanette Christian. Indeed, everything about this home offers plenty of elbowroom.



Maybe it's the steady flow of golfers playing one of the desert's most picturesque courses just a few yards away. Or the bursts of color emanating from original watercolors and oils throughout the bright and airy rooms. Perhaps the wrap-around patio with pool, spa, outdoor kitchen, and outdoor media room best embodies the carefree and creative nature of this home. Or the fully equipped kitchen that makes every novice cook think he can give the Naked Chef a run for his money.

A feeling of elation starts at the back of your neck and spreads between your shoulders as you pass the mammoth courtyard doors and enter this sprawling estate. You instantly want to kick your shoes off and settle in. This home equals time off. Time away. Time to play.

"Last Christmas we hosted a party for 240," says homeowner Susan Burger. "We opened up the pocket doors and enclosed the patio, and the house never seemed crowded. It has an easy flow for entertaining."

Designed to make a large space even larger, tracks installed along the roofline hide all-weather curtains that enclose the patio, creating an outdoor room protected from the elements.

"Rather than little rooms and lots of them, I prefer fewer rooms large enough to create an open flow," Burger says. "I knew I wanted a Tuscan villa design, not rustic but more elegant, and at the same time it had to be very functional — we have kids and we entertain a lot, so the house is going to be used."

The user-friendly *coup de grace*? With the touch of a button, the kitchen window climbs into the wall, creating a pass-through to the outdoor bar and kitchen area. This area sees the most action. Anchored by an expansive kitchen island — "the continent," as the family calls it — multiple work stations and entertainment zones keep everyone occupied. With all the purposes it needed to serve, it grew as large as the room would accommodate. Inside the continent, a soda fridge, ice maker, and storage areas make sure "the kids leave the rest of the kitchen alone," Burger says. "I wanted the kitchen to be the place where the family congregates. At the same time, it had to be low maintenance."

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"The hard surfaces in this home were a treat to design," Christian says. "I used tile on the island (the landing strip!) instead of a slab to break it up and give it an Old World feel."

ETHAN KAMINSKY

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**T**ravels to other cities and countries inspired many elements throughout the house. Two kitchen elements in particular stand out, both from a neighboring Southwest city. "I saw this same pot rack while traveling in New Mexico," Burger says. "But I didn't think it was big enough. I wanted to go ahead and get it, but decided to take a picture and have [interior designer] Jeanette [Christian] refabricate it here. It turned out just like the one we saw, only big enough to fit this space."

Burger found the tile for the stove backsplash "in the back of an old guy's pottery place in Santa Fe." She knew she wanted to use it somewhere, sometime. When she decided to make the tile a backsplash, she commissioned muralist Mike Guthrie to match the tile with a row of hand-painted accent tile on the stove hood. The combination adds a dramatic, artistic touch to the grandiose kitchen.

"We are so blessed to have such spectacular, unobstructed scenery in an area where we can entertain to our heart's content," Burger says. "It has been an exciting experience teaming with [architect] Kristi Hansen, [builder] Gary Herauf, and Jeanette Christian to make the home feel warm and welcoming. All of the high-tech comforts are incredible — remote control everything, including media, fireplaces, sun shades, lighting, and sound, make it a complete luxury package." ■

Opposite page: Outdoor entertaining becomes a favorite pastime on the large, covered, well-appointed patio. This page: Rough woods, thick plaster, and marbled granite add color, texture, and depth throughout the classic home.



ETHEL LANGRISH



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