





Old-World Elegance *Meets Tuscan Splendor*

A couple builds their Italian-inspired
dream home on Green Lake

By Anne Morrissy | Photography by Shanna Wolf



Interior designer Katie Wozniak drew inspiration from the home's exterior to design the kitchen. A rough stone arch over a copper hood provides texture and warmth to the room, which houses state-of-the-art appliances like a Viking range and a Sub-Zero refrigerator with cabinet facing. A massive walnut and granite island provides ample seating as well as storage.

Standing proud on a hill overlooking Lauderdale's Green Lake is an imposing home that would not be entirely out of place in rural Italy. In fact, the home's exterior features a stucco effect intended to mimic naturally aged stone to evoke an "Under the Tuscan Sun" look. The homeowners, a wife and husband with Italian ancestry, bought the three-acre property in 2010 with the intention of building their dream home, and for them, that dream was rooted in Italian, old-world splendor.

"Italy really inspires us," the wife explains. "We knew some of the newer homes on the lake were built in the Nantucket style, and that was nice, too. But for us, we wanted something different. So we went with a little classic, Italian flair." The homeowners worked with Elkhorn builder Thelen Total Construction from the beginning of the project to find the perfect property for the home they knew they wanted to build. Once they found the ideal spot, the homeowners and the team at Thelen worked together with architect Richard

Olsen to site the home on the property in order to maximize the lake views.

BUILDING THE VISION

The property originally contained a small cottage dating to the 1920s, a smokehouse and a defunct apple orchard, all located on relatively hilly land. One of the first challenges the team faced was to properly grade the land for a new, larger home. "On this site, one of the things we had to consider was integrating the home into the topography," explains Randy Thelen, owner of Thelen Total Construction. "To fit the home, we ended up cutting down one side of the property by eight feet and filled in the other side about ten feet."

The homeowners have a long history on the Lauderdale Lakes. "We've been on the lake for many years, and this is our fourth home here," the wife explains. "We would come up summers and weekends—our kids grew up on the lake." They began to realize that their ideal post-retirement life

included living on the lake full-time. This helped shape and dictate the home's design. Their first priority was entertaining. "Our motto as we were designing the home was, 'If you build it, they will come,'" the wife explains. "Having four sons, they're all just starting their families, so we were thinking of lots of family that comes up to visit."

The home is also designed for everyday ease and comfort. The main floor contains all of the necessary living areas for the homeowners—including the kitchen, great room, master suite, office and laundry room. "Being accessible was a priority because we all want to be in our homes as long as possible," Thelen explains. "The hallways are wider, the doors are wider and there's an elevator that serves all three floors."

The upper level contains four guest suites, one for each of the homeowners' sons. The walk-out lower level houses a state-of-the-art exercise room, a craft room, a wine cellar, a spa room with an



The great room features vaulted floor-to-ceiling views of Green Lake and ornate flourishes like a Tuscan-inspired chandelier (top). A stone archway separates the kitchen and dining areas and evokes the look of a classic Italian country estate (bottom left). Silk damask wallpaper in one of the home's guest bathrooms brings a refined elegance to the design (bottom right).



A chair rail, crown moldings and an arched cornice over the fireplace in the master bedroom sitting area create a sense of old-world elegance. The homeowners sought to build a new home that combined old-world aesthetics with the latest in modern conveniences.

indoor hot tub and a movie room with a full bar. But perhaps the most striking room in the home is located above the spacious garage: a room affectionately known as the “man cave,” though this massive, 2,500-square-foot, Canadian lodge-inspired room is anything but cave-like. The room serves as the ideal place for the husband to display his hunting and fishing trophies, and contains a full wet bar, a pool table, a Foosball table, a massive stone fireplace and a 100-inch flat-screen TV, ideal for football season. “With four sons, that room was a must,” he says.

CRAFTING A TUSCAN VILLA

With the layout finalized, the homeowners hired Katherine Elizabeth Designs to help them achieve the combination of old-world elegance and rustic, Tuscan charm they desired. Led by Principal/Lead Designer Katie Wozniak, the design team at Katherine Elizabeth Designs drew heavily on the couple’s research. “[The wife] brought in a binder of inspiration pictures and different pictures from their travels of things that had caught their eye,” explains Wozniak. The team was then instrumen-

tal in guiding the homeowners to their choices of layouts, finishes and even exterior final touches. “In the beginning, we worked with them to select everything from specifying what age flooring to use, to even the general kitchen layout and the light fixture layout,” Wozniak says.

Wozniak’s designs for the home’s interior were guided by the exterior stone effect the homeowners chose while attending a national building show with Thelen early in the process. To complement the exterior, Wozniak incorporated a significant amount of exposed stonework in the home, including an arched doorway between the kitchen and dining area, the massive stone fireplace in the great room and the stone arch over the hood in the kitchen. She then paired the stone with warmer finishes throughout the home: aged copper in the kitchen, rough-hewn beams, wire-distressed wood floors. “What this accomplishes is a marriage of formality with comfort,” Wozniak explains. “[The homeowners] didn’t want it to go too formal. For instance, the fireplace in the great room has the limestone, which is considered more formal, but

then we paired it with rough-cut stone to give it warmth and dimension.”

In the master bedroom suite, the homeowners requested a luxe, refined look, so Wozniak included a hand-glazed metallic leaf ceiling, a crystal chandelier, silk wallpaper and a limestone-surround fireplace. But in the sunroom—which the couple describes as their favorite room in the house—Wozniak intentionally designed the room to be cozy and informal. “The idea there is that when [the homeowners] are entertaining, people will start in the formal great room for drinks and then they will move to the dining room table, and from there they move into the sunroom for dessert and coffee,” Wozniak explains.

Originally imagined as a screened porch, the plans for the sunroom evolved over the process of building. Eventually the homeowners decided they wanted more year-round living space, and the newly reconceived sunroom turned out to be the perfect place to incorporate a full coffee bar and pizza ovens into the home. Then Wozniak

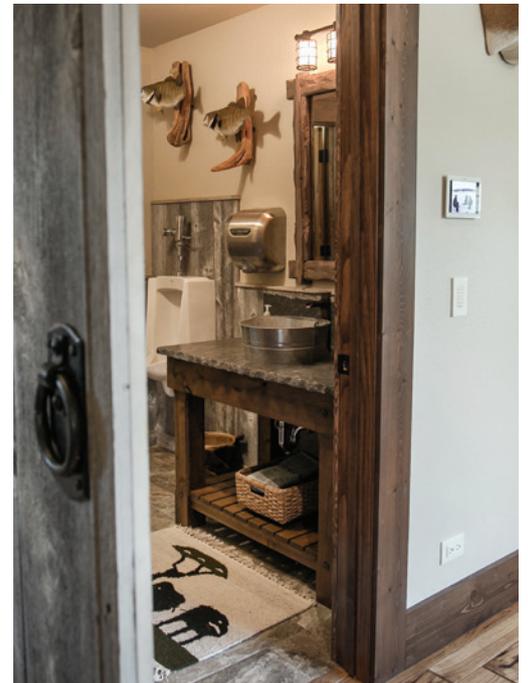
Wozniak designed the bedrooms in a refined style and individualized each room based on the preferences of the homeowners and their four sons (the home's most frequent visitors). A neutral, metallic palette achieves a calming effect, while the damask bedspread echoes the guest bathroom wallpaper.





and her team designed custom, oversized “chair-and-a-halves” to encourage comfortable lingering. “In that space, you’re stepping into a more casual area, so we tried to convey that with the colors and materials we used,” Wozniak says. “We just love that room,” the wife says. “We sit there every morning and have coffee. We start our day taking in the view, enjoying the warmth of the sun. And when we have guests, we usually end up gathering there, so we call it the ‘Gather Room.’”

Now, after several years of searching, planning, designing and building, the homeowners are able to fully enjoy their Tuscan-inspired dream home. And they’ve found that their design motto turned out to be prophetic and accurate. “We built it for entertaining and family and the growth of our children and grandchildren,” the wife says. They built it, and the people do in fact come to visit. “We had 28 people here one weekend recently!” she smiles. “It’s always fun and great memory making.” 🐾



The massive game room above the garage, affectionately known as the man cave, was designed after a favorite Canadian hunting lodge. The room provides the ideal location for the husband’s hunting and fishing trophies (top). A sliding barn door brings a rustic quality to the man cave (bottom left). The bathroom features a washbasin reminiscent of a tin bucket (bottom right).



The ornate scrollwork on the door into the wine cellar complements the room's tile floor (top). A fire pit, screened porch and open deck are a few of the options the homeowners have for entertaining during the warmer months (bottom left). The homeowners fell in love with the home's distinctive exterior stone effects while attending a national homebuilders' show (bottom right).