

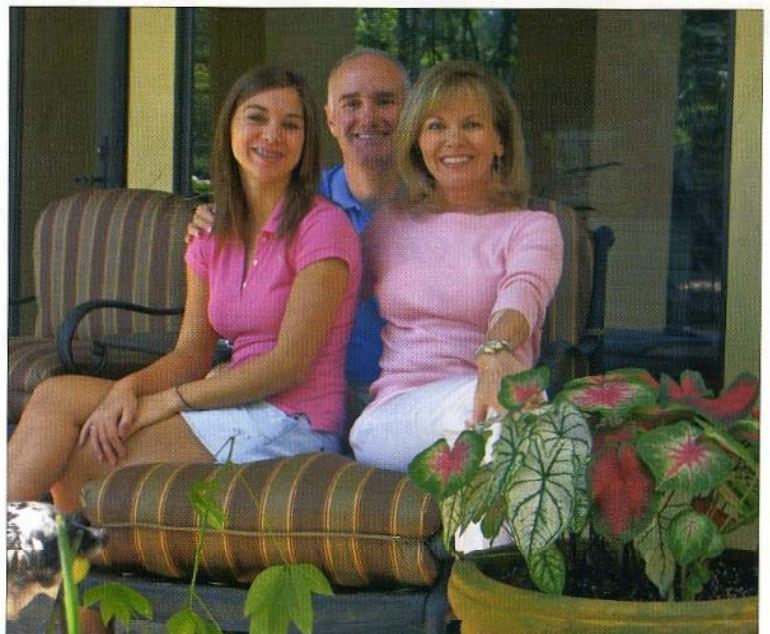


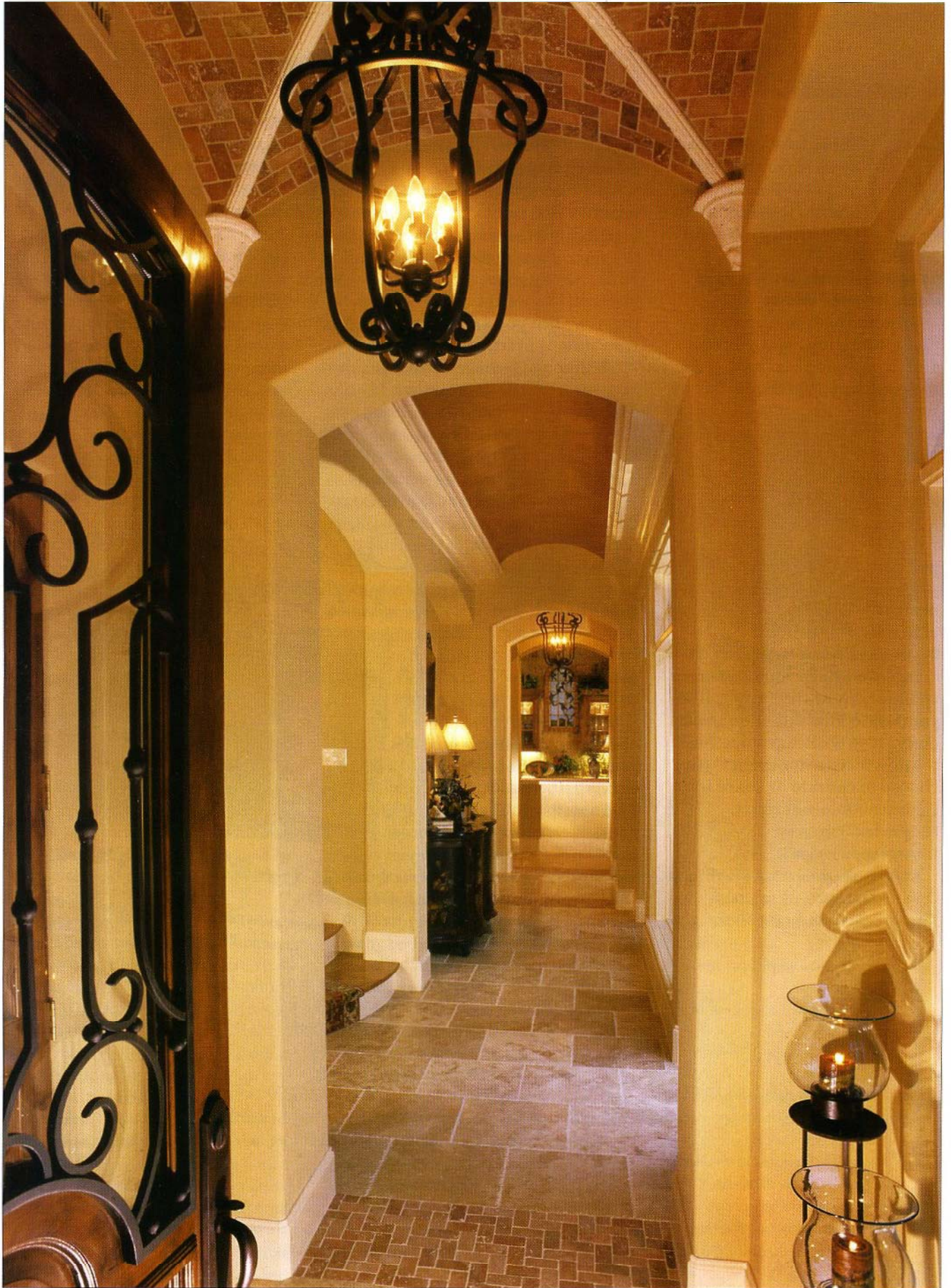
Italian Influence in the Woods

A casual indoor-outdoor ambience blends invitingly with sophistication

By Donna Mosher
Photography: Rob Muir
Builder: Röhe and Wright Builders
Residential Design: Röhe and Wright Residential Design
Pool: Marquise Pools

Approaching the home of Karen and Brad Goebel in Carlton Woods, one is transported through the woods to the Italian countryside. A dramatic but welcoming façade presents an intriguing assortment of elevations, stucco colorings, rooflines and alcoves, resembling a little village. The buttery stucco exterior is accented with massive blocks of stone and rustic wood corbels. The requisite exposed brick, tile roof and arched windows emphasize the Italian feel.







PREVIOUS PAGES: The elegant entryway is graced with magnificent ceiling treatments, including a groin-vault ceiling lined with mosaics and plaster trim and a gold faux-painted barrel-vault ceiling. Walls of windows look to the pool and courtyard. At the end of the hall is a bar, complete with a stained glass window. ➔ A little bit of Italy is tucked into Carlton Woods.

Authentic details in the buttery stucco, arched windows, stone accents, exposed brick and tile roof give this home its Tuscan accent. ➔ Macey's home away from home is in The Woodlands with Brad and Karen Goebel, her aunt and uncle.

Gas lanterns and a fountain enhance the walk to the heavy wood front door.

Step inside and the feeling of being transported to Tuscany is complete. The front door leads not into a foyer, but into a gracious arched passageway that opens onto a spectacular enclosed courtyard with pool and outdoor kitchen. The house wraps itself around the courtyard as if to say this is the heart of the home. With the sun brightly shining, the spa gently bubbling, the warm travertine tile surrounding the pool and cushioned lounge furniture gathered around the outdoor fireplace, one's cares all but drop away.

Karen and Brad Goebel have moved 14 times, thanks to Brad's career in the oil business. They have lived in such places as Scotland, Moscow, Calgary, Wyoming and Tulsa, and they have built three homes. This one was a partnership; a work they wanted to craft together. The couple moved to Carlton Woods from a home in the Village of Indian Springs because Brad wanted to live on the Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf Course.

For two years, Karen had been collecting ideas for her next home. She compiled a huge binder filled with photos and magazine clips;

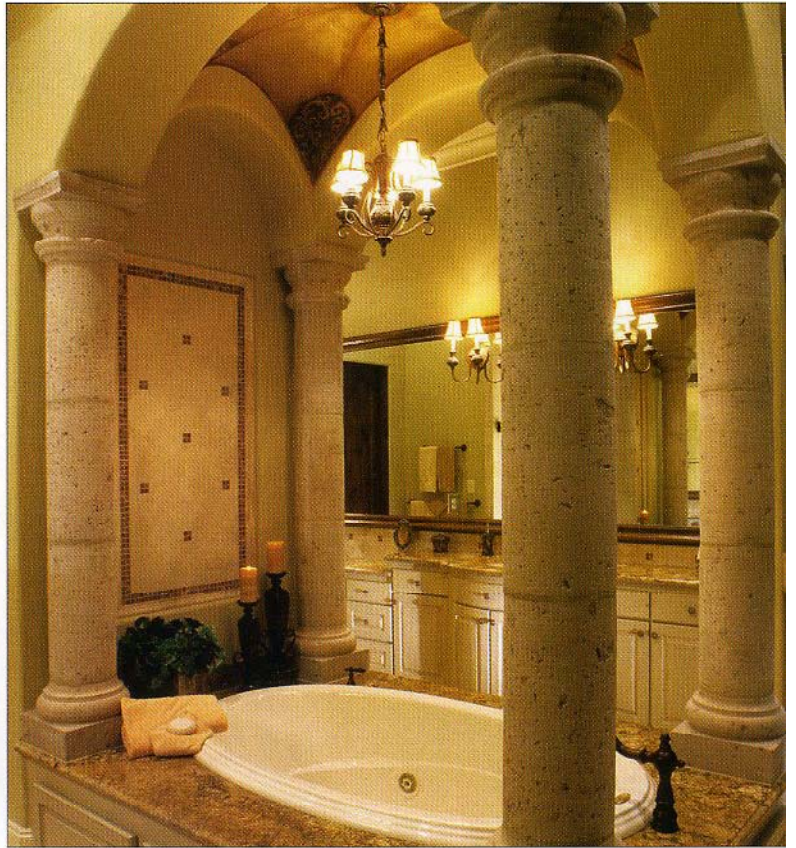


her diligent homework facilitated the process with her builder, Röhe and Wright Builders, residential designer Steve Hullinger and project manager Mike Dwyer. Karen and Brad researched Tuscan styles and learned the value of architectural details in imparting the authentic flavor of the design. From floor to ceiling, mosaic thresholds, stone columns, groin-vault ceilings, massive timber beams and trusses, plaster trim and more subtly convey an Italian accent.

“Steve contributed such wonderful details,” Karen says. “He’s really on the cutting edge of his field. And Mike really helped us through the building process. On several occasions, he even got the deciding vote when I was having trouble making color, texture or finish choices.”

And while the details in building a custom home from the ground up can be overwhelming, Karen also tracked every decision—from faucets to front door hardware—with photos of her selections. If ever an incorrect item arrived for installation, Karen had evidence of what she actually ordered. “Brad and I chose 85 percent of everything in and on the house,” says Karen, “...stone, stucco color/finishes, brick, roof, slate on the back patio, balcony and backsplash in his study, light fixtures, plumbing fix-

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The staircase curves gracefully up, and the eye is drawn to the magnificent faux-finished domed ceiling accented with cross beams. ➤➤ True luxury is found in the master bathroom, complete with juice bar. Cantera stone columns support a splendid vaulted ceiling and frame the tub. A mosaic-trimmed inset, a marble mosaic grid in the travertine floor and gracious light fixtures enhance the room. ➤➤ The house wraps around the central courtyard; one enters the home through the arched passageway. Mosaic-trimmed planters frame the serene pool, while an expanse of unfilled travertine wraps around it. The façade, inspired by an Italian village, boasts varying styles, stucco finishes and colors.

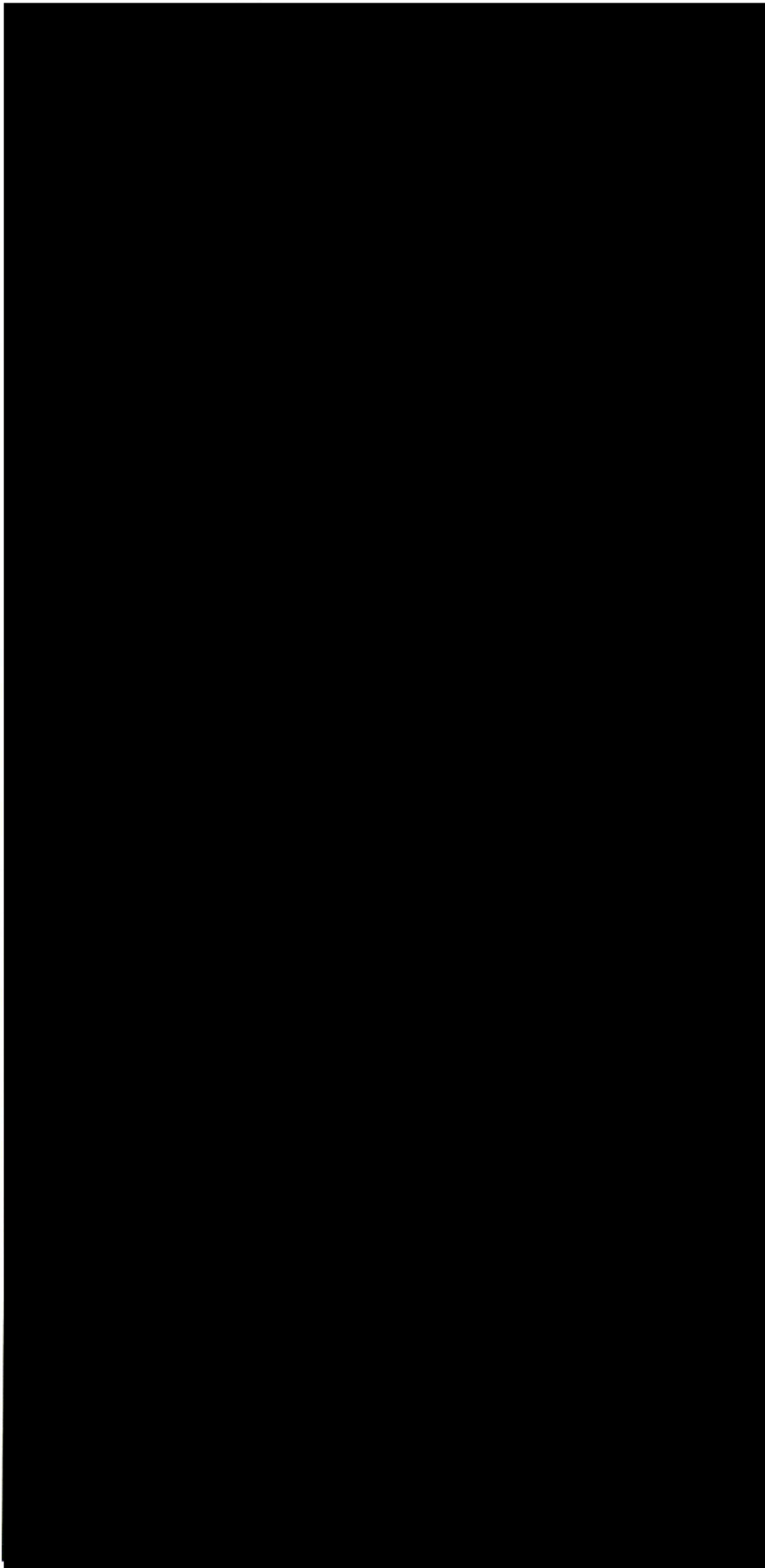
tures, tile, carpet, paints, stains, countertops, cabinet finishes, driveway pavers... you get the picture!"

The results speak for themselves. The Goebels have fashioned an inviting and comfortable home for themselves and their nieces, Macey and Chelsea, who live with their dad but are very close with Karen and Brad. Chelsea has recently graduated from Texas A&M but Macey has a second set of parents in Karen and Brad, traveling with them on vacation and visiting frequently on weekends. She even has her own little casita—a guesthouse adjacent to the pool—to call home-away-from-home.

Carefree and Comfortable

While the abode certainly presents an exquisite display of fine design, exclusive materials and rich furnishings, Karen wanted a home that would be comfortable for their friends, their nieces and, of course, for their two dogs, Dingo and Gizmo. Carefree surfaces and comfy furniture ensure that. Their indoor-outdoor lifestyle demands worry-free stone floors. A see-through fireplace separates the kitchen from the family room, making both spaces warm and inviting. Casually elegant furniture, even in the formal living areas, encourages guests to feel at ease whether in shorts or cocktail attire.

Of course, the nucleus of the home is the kitchen. Dominated by a massive arched alcove into which the Wolf commercial range and an eye-catching decorative range hood are tucked, the space is where Karen pursues her love of cooking. Tumbled travertine with a chiseled





Trusses in the family room support the 24-foot ceiling and lend a Tuscan ambience.

edge covers the floors in a Versailles pattern. The cabinets were originally intended to be stained, but a concern that the room, in the center of the house, would be too dark encouraged the Goebels to opt to paint and distress them, while keeping the granite-topped island a warm wood.

The *pièce de résistance* in the kitchen is the magnificent hand-carved travertine farmhouse sink made in Peru. Because it was made by hand, there was a slight gap between it and the precisely measured recess cut in the granite counter. What could have been a moisture-trapping disaster was turned to fortune when a craftsman suggested building a slim granite platform to cover the gap. Karen is actually quite pleased with the solution because it sets off her handsome stone sink like the mat in a framed work of art.

Another concern became an advantage when it was discovered that the Cantera stone columns separating the formal living and dining room from the gallery were improperly scaled. Sections carved with a pineapple pattern were

placed between the column and the capital, compensating for the shortfall and contributing beautifully to the architectural detailing of the room.

A marvelous juxtaposition balances the home. Interior windows and French doors look to the sunny courtyard and pool. Back views present the luscious green of the 14th fairway. The home is truly an inviting and relaxing masterpiece of luxury and comfort.

Ask anyone who's done it—building a home is never easy. Any homeowner who's built one this beautiful would almost consider it unthinkable to move. When asked if this will be the last house she and Brad will own, Karen answers predictably for one who has seen so much of the world. "Probably not," she muses. "This house is our baby. We don't *plan* to move. But who knows...?"

Editor's Note: *Röhe and Wright Builders was awarded the Greater Houston Builders Association's 2006 PRISM Award for Custom Home of the Year in the \$1 to \$2.5 million category for the Goebel home in The Woodlands. Congratulations to the builder and to Karen and Brad Goebel.*