

SAN DIEGO HOME/GARDEN LIFESTYLES®

ANNUAL REMODELING ISSUE



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The Sands of Time Challenge**



SAME WITH A DIFFERENCE

Details redefine a moderately Mediterranean home as solidly Spanish

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY GAIL OWENS

Noushin Berjis longed to get back to the La Jolla neighborhood where she resided from 1992 to 1997. She was ecstatic when, in 2008, she saw a "For Sale" sign in front of a Mediterranean-style home on the same street as her previous residence.

She was even more thrilled when she did a walk-through and the house matched the three most important items on her list of specifics: an ocean view, a master bedroom on the same first-floor level as the kitchen and the potential for the home's design to become authentically Spanish.

"The house sold within a week," Noushin says, "so I didn't get the chance to buy it. A couple of years later, I saw the house was back on the market. When I showed it to my husband, he said, 'Are you sure?'"

Despite the fact that the 1990 spec home had a bland personality, narrow hallways, dark rooms, outdated materials and no patio, Noushin was sure.



A new tiled overhang made it possible to extend balconies and brought Spanish character to the back yard. Architect Kim Grant gave the fire pit Moorish Revival style. Interior Design Imports supplied and fashioned the tile.

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Designs in antique fixtures from Spain, Italy and early California Spanish Colonial residences were used to create the dining room chandelier, as well as lighting elsewhere in the home. Ceiling beams were darkened and hand scraped for a rustic yet graceful look. Artwork on the living room wall is by Shirin Sahba, the daughter of architect Fariborz Sahba, who designed India's Lotus Temple. Shirin based the paintings on fabric swatches from the living room chairs.



She had kept a *San Diego Home/Garden Lifestyles* article from November 2010 featuring a Bird Rock remodel done by architect Kim Grant and designer Paul Schatz that turned a very small cottage into a beautiful Spanish home.

"So I knew Kim and Paul had the eye to take this house, which already had a Mediterranean feel, and turn it into something great," she says.

A long, winding road leads to the home's hilltop location. Remote-controlled iron



Removing beams and designing a simple, coffered ceiling added height in the family room (previously an informal dining room). Windows facing the ocean view were enlarged. The door (one of two) leads to a new barbecue patio space.

gates open to reveal classic exterior features: smooth, white stucco cladding; a low-pitched, red-tiled roof; an asymmetrical façade; and a tower-like chimney.

"Although these details were nicely designed, the house lacked soul," Kim says. "The goal of the remodel for both the exterior and the interior was to be more authentic in the architectural style. We wanted the house to feel like it was built in the 1920s, with a few slightly more contemporary interpretations of a strongly styled Spanish Revival home."

On the exterior, that meant switching out standard aluminum garage doors for custom wood doors with a steel-brushed finish to add texture and the look of age; minimizing an overpowering, dark green trim to a softer sage green more reminiscent of a Spanish Revival home; and replacing small-paned, crank-out windows with larger paned, push-out casement windows.

To add interest to the existing walnut front door, Kim exchanged its plain, top

panel with an art-glass window that brings light and filters color into the previously dark foyer.

The simple entrance to the house contradicts the dramatic impression on guests when the front door opens to an ocean view that commands attention.

"Before, the view was obscured by the thick wood framing on the living room's clunky, plantation-shuttered French doors," Kim says. "The new steel doors are more elegant, and the thinness of the steel allows a higher-impact view from the front door."

The steel doors' full-radius arch echoes the repropportioned opening from the foyer to the living room. Distressed white oak flooring provides more character than the previous thin-paneled red oak. The wide planks run the same direction as the living room's rustic ceiling beams that stretch toward the ocean.

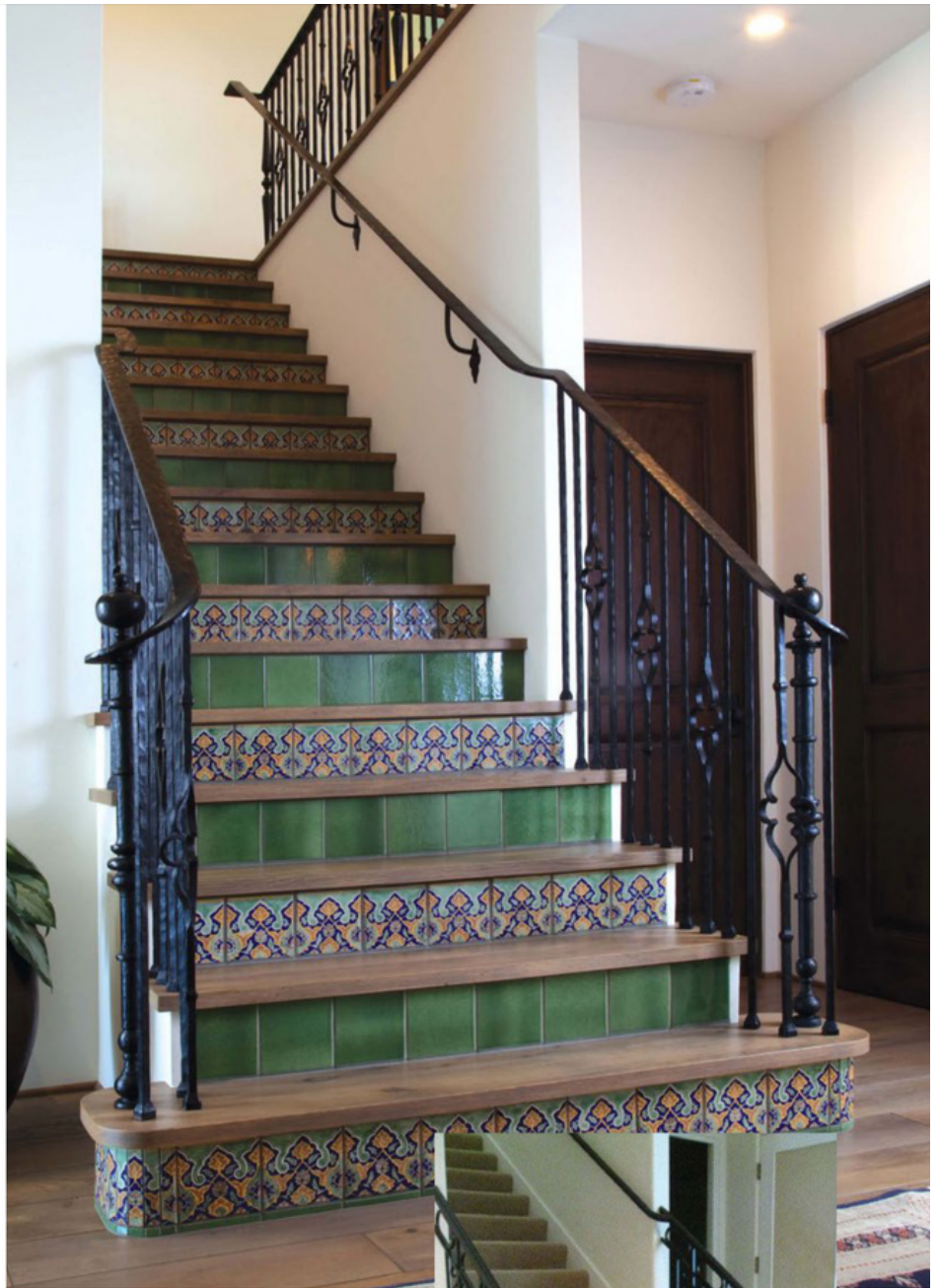
"Before the remodel, the home was devoid of interior architecture," Paul says. "There were big rooms and openings that



The footprint of the kitchen remains the same, but new cabinetry, countertops, flooring and appliances (including a steam oven) update the space. The blue-green island and Talavera-tile backsplashes give the kitchen personality.

had no theme. Some of the architecture was not at all appropriate to the style of the residence. The original fireplace in the living room, for example, was a contemporary style. The new, classic Mediterranean fireplace incorporates a plaster hood with a limestone, hand-carved fireplace front. Angel Vargas designed it, as well as a hand-forged iron screen, to add even more character."

The fireplace lends warmth to the living and dining areas, which are open to each



other. Lushly upholstered and intricately carved furnishings in both rooms resemble 16th century museum pieces.

"I had the opportunity to take Noushin and her husband, Benny, on a shopping trip to San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, for many of the items collected for the residence," Paul says. "The work from artisans in San Miguel is classical Spanish Colonial. I wanted the furnishings to be a timeless collection in keeping with the style of the residence and yet extremely comfortable."

A combination of hand-painted Talavera tiles and monochromatic green tiles transformed the stairs into a showpiece.





The kitchen and the family room, adjacent to the dining area through a doorway, contain some of the most dramatic alterations. As in most areas of the house, the layout is unchanged; but a fresh take in materials, colors and accent pieces transformed two frumpy rooms into one elegant great room.

Kitchen cabinets in a light, maple-stained veneer were exchanged with custom wood in a rich, dark finish. The bar counter, the only dividing line between the family room and kitchen, has matching cabinetry. The island gains extra appeal from the contrasting, antiqued blue-green finish on the cabinetry, which is topped by a veined quartzite resembling marble. But the entire kitchen pivots around the custom-designed Talavera-tile backsplash.

What is now the family room had been a casual dining area with country-styled furnishings, a red brick fireplace and laminate-tile flooring. These items now are attuned to their setting, but the room's prime assets are access to two patios through glass doors and the new picture window, with a breathtaking outlook over La Jolla to the Pacific Ocean.



Before
Details like arched openings, ornate ironwork on the vent and skylight, hefty ceiling beams, wide-planked wood flooring and ornamental chandeliers provide distinctive style in the hallway leading to the master bedroom.



"Just outside the family room is a patio with a barbecue," Noushin says. "Before it was just a useless grass area."

Down a few steps from the barbecue, a narrow walkway that extends the length of the house has been widened for another covered patio that includes two comfortable seating areas — one at the north end just outside French doors at the back of the family room and the other at the south end just outside French doors leading to the master bedroom.

Noushin, who slants a bit toward modern in her furniture taste, wanted to bring in a contemporary bed. But after some discussion with Paul, she opted instead for a bed that caters to a more traditional style.

"Paul saved me from making so many mistakes," she says. "Originally, I wanted to put dark, hardwood flooring in the house. No one was going to change my mind. Paul showed us a sample; and I realized that if

I had done the floor my way, I would have been miserable. When Paul put the tiles above the tub in the master bath, I thought it would be overwhelming with too much color and pattern. But he has an eye; and when everything came together, it wasn't overwhelming. He took the master bath, which was just a bathroom, and turned it into a piece of art."

Up the stairs, now with tiling on the risers and hand-scraped metal on the railings, are bedrooms, bathrooms and another family room in the process of getting new furniture.

"I never go upstairs unless my son is home or guests are here," Noushin says.

Other than additional square footage gained with new patio spaces and two new upstairs balconies, the form of the home remains identical to the original.

"The house is exactly the same," Kim says, "except totally different." ❖

The library/media room off the entry includes a painting by homeowner Benny Malek. The room adjoins the master bathroom on the other side.



Before