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FRENCH COTTA

Downsizing gives a couple the opportunity to create a



GE CHARM

perfectly sized home.

BY JOHN ROARK PHOTOGRAPHY BY IAN DENKER

The 3,000-square-foot cottage was a tight fit on its corner cul-de-sac lot. "It was tough squeezing everything in, but the orientation created intimate front and backyard spaces. That ties in well with the coziness that the homeowners were looking for," says builder Howie Haynie.

The home's main living space includes an open kitchen, dining area and large family room. French oak flooring and repurposed barn beams add rustic touches to the interiors, which are finished in a neutral palette with bright accents.





RELOCATING to the Southwest can be a culture shock. Our climate and landscape are unlike anywhere else in the world; even our architecture can feel like a departure for neophytes unaccustomed to desert dwelling.

After raising three daughters in a Kansas City, Missouri, historic district, Joel and Teresa Pavelonis found themselves in a strange new land when his work brought them to Arizona. The couple purchased a ranch-style home in Phoenix that had undergone numerous additions and renovations. "It was kind of a hodgepodge," says architect and *Phoenix Home & Garden* Masters of the Southwest award winner Michael Higgins, who worked with the couple to renovate and remodel the ranch.

"I could never quite figure out that ranch," says Teresa, whose aesthetic was shaped in part by historical homes she had owned and decorated herself. "Nothing seemed to fit or make sense. I remember saying to Mike, 'One day, you're going to build us a house.'"

Drawn to the decidedly non-cookie-cutter vibe of Arcadia, the Pavelonises found a modest corner lot on a cul-de-sac that could serve their needs. As empty nesters, they were ready to downsize, and with Higgins' help created a 3,000-square-foot dwelling that in every way met Teresa's No. 1 wish. "As we were planning, the word that came up again and again was 'cottagey,'" Higgins remembers.

The architect designed a split floor plan with a large family room, open kitchen and dining area at the center flanked by three guest



In lieu of a dining room, homeowner Teresa Pavelonis opted for a large farmhouse table and upholstered banquette. "This is the heart of the house," she says. "It's so comfortable, and you can see everything from here." The backyard view includes Camelback Mountain.



“Bigger isn’t always better.”

“With smaller houses, you gain space by extending it outside,” says architect Michael Higgins. In the family room, French doors open to the covered back patio, making the space feel larger. The vault of the ceiling is half of the pitch of the roof; plumbing lines and air conditioning ducts were run through the space between.

Over-the-top is not our style.”

—JOEL PAVELONIS, homeowner



rooms, a bath, Teresa's office and laundry on one side, and Joel's office, a living room and master suite on the opposite end. The layout gives visiting guests their own space accessible to the kitchen and living areas, and affords the homeowners privacy as well.

"When it's time to quiet down, we have our own end of the house to enjoy," says Joel. "We appreciate having that separation when we need it."

Even though the square footage may be modest in comparison with the couple's previous dwelling, Higgins stresses there was no need to economize when it came to incorporating everything they wanted to include. "There are quite a few rooms in this home," he notes, "which you don't typically get in a smaller house."

The architect employed a number of means to make the rooms feel larger, including vaulted ceilings in the great room and master suite, and a splayed skylight in the kitchen. But he was also mindful to honor the intimacy that the homeowners sought, scaling some details back—such as incorporating 9-foot-high ceilings in the guest wing and 7-foot-tall doors throughout, which are throwbacks to older homes. "A little house like this wouldn't feel right if the small rooms had 10-foot-high ceilings," he notes. Another of the architect's favorite design devices is the use of "enfilade," a feature in which rooms, windows and doorways are lined up, allowing the eye to travel through a space. "It is a great technique for smaller homes," Higgins explains. "The windows don't need to be large, but they



RIGHT The kitchen wall is clad in matte-finish arabesque-cut tile, which are offset to catch the light. "That wall is one of the focal points when you come in the front door, and it needed to be fabulous," says interior designer and family friend Laurel Pfannenstiel, who collaborated with Teresa early in the home's interior design. A skylight above the kitchen's island floods the area with natural light.

BOTTOM LEFT Outside of the laundry room, a small side yard is perfectly sized for the homeowners' dogs to stretch their legs.

ABOVE The kitchen wall includes free-floating white marble shelves that match the countertops.



“I wanted our home to feel organic, peaceful and calming—not flashy in any way.”

—TERESA PAVELONIS, homeowner





The master suite is cozy yet eclectic, with a view of the backyard poolscape. Seen on the wall behind the bed, reclaimed Chicago brick was used as an accent throughout the home, adding a historical vibe. **TOP RIGHT** Teresa's workspace includes windows that open wide to welcome breezes and the soothing sound of a fountain located just outside. **RIGHT** In the guest wing, the bathroom's neutral palette is punctuated with vibrant red accents. To maximize the intimate scale, shower glass and tile run from floor to ceiling. "It's a way to make small spaces feel bigger," says Higgins.



bring light in and provide a glimpse outside, which gives you the feeling that the space is larger.”

Higgins reinforced the French cottage vibe by using natural materials throughout, including reclaimed Chicago brick, limestone, antique hand-hewn barn beams and French oak flooring. “The house has an aged feeling to it, as though it has been here a very long time. Nothing stands out as being new,” he notes. “We used these rustic surfaces sparingly, just enough to make a statement. There is a

consistency inside the house of these repurposed materials, but it’s not overly done.”

To achieve the cozy quality she wanted the house to embody, Teresa brought in such details as antique vanities and bathroom fixtures, a century-old salvaged French fireplace and industrial-style lighting over the kitchen’s large island. “The goal was to make it charming, not ostentatious” she says. “Conscious decisions were made to scale back. We simplified as much as possible. It may look



RIGHT In addition to the swimming pool and spa, the backyard includes a fountain, putting green and fire pit. **ABOVE LEFT** The patio outside of the great room is a covered fresh-air retreat. “Entertaining is very important to us,” says owner Joel Pavelonis, who appreciates the home’s many inviting spots, inside and out, to have a glass of wine and visit. **LEFT** A small patio off the living room provides an additional front-yard space to enjoy.

simple, but it took a lot of thought to make it that way. I believe you have to respect the architecture of a home and listen to what it's telling you. That goes a long way in making your design choices easier.

"I think that if you start with a lot of color you can tire of it," she continues. "I recommend using colorful accents such as pillows. In a few years, if you're ready for something new, you can change to something else. I have a fetish for hot pink that I sneak in wherever I can. It might be a little much. I hope not."

The charming French cottage hits the mark for both homeowners, who had never built a residence from the ground up. "Our previous houses were the result of someone else's thoughts and creations," says Joel. "This one suits us. The best thing you can say about your home is that it is a place you always look forward to returning to."

Teresa agrees. "Honestly, I don't care to go on vacation; I just like to be here." □

For more information, see Sources on Page 142.

