

Country French



timeless
transformation

A soft palette, layers of texture, and shimmering surfaces enhance the European-inspired architecture of a remodeled ranch.

photographer: MICHAEL GARLAND produced by: BARBARA MUNTALL

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The moment Kathi Fidei saw this rambling villa's blue shutters, she felt transported to France's picturesque Loire Valley. After running her hands over the plaster walls in the Phoenix home and gazing out through French doors to a backyard shaded by mature trees, she was thoroughly smitten.

"The architecture, from the roof to the cabinetry to the fireplaces, felt wonderfully old-European," Kathi says. "And the scale was comfortable but not ostentatious—it was perfect for us."

Builder Nancy Brunkhorst and architect Mark Candelaria had spent months transforming the dwelling, using the footprint of the property's existing 1950s ranch as much as possible, when Kathi and her husband, Ray, stepped onto the scene. The design team had kept the layout largely intact, then constructed an upper-level master suite highlighted by pitched ceilings and dormer windows. Candelaria smoothed over the new construction with a facade modeled after the steep walls, high rooflines, and minimal trim of a modest European-style cottage.

"Simple architecture can be the hardest to achieve," Candelaria says. "We purposely avoided the gingerbread look and allowed the small details and

ABOVE: A higher roofline with dormers subtly reveals the new upper level on the remodeled ranch. RIGHT: Interior designer Berkley Vallone used a high-back sofa to anchor the living room. "The piece creates a visual divider between the living and dining areas," she says. "When you sit in it, you feel sheltered and cozy."

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THIS PHOTO: In the breakfast nook, weather-resistant wicker chairs and a table topped with zinc speak to the home's indoor-outdoor connection. OPPOSITE TOP: Two plush sofas in striped velvet encourage lounging in the family room. OPPOSITE BOTTOM: A mix of countertop materials—honed black granite and butcher block—gives the kitchen a built-over-time look.



beautiful natural textures to shine through." Stucco walls set the backdrop for slate walkways, divided-light windows, and a shake roof, forging an authentic French look that teems with understated elegance.

Inside the home, Brunkhorst followed a similar strategy, designing clean, simple spaces that evoke the casual warmth of a European farmhouse. Trading excessive embellishment for quality old-world artisanship, she chose walnut for the flooring and plaster for the walls. To create a sense of coziness, she kept most of the rooms at their original size and left ceilings at a modest height—no more than 10 feet.

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The architectural bones of the house cast such a warm spell that Kathi was hesitant to dress the rooms. But interior designer Berkley Vallone trod



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THIS PHOTO: The master bedroom's sitting area is a favorite hangout for reading and relaxing. OPPOSITE LEFT: The reproduction bed is regal yet unfussy, and it's perfectly sized to fit under sloping eaves. OPPOSITE RIGHT: Gray Bardiglio marble surrounds the tub.



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 —homeowner Kathi Fidel

lightly, ushering in a soothing palette of grays, browns, and creams along with a host of antiques and chic upholstered pieces that immediately put Kathi at ease. "We didn't want to overpower the architecture with the decor," Vallone says. "Layers of texture, rather than strong color, bring the rooms to life."

Vallone's light touch shines in the open-plan living and dining room. Antique dining chairs upholstered in metallic-painted velvet reflect the shimmer of an antique chandelier and gilded mirror, while a coffee table welded together from antique iron gates creates a riveting

In the upstairs master suite, Vallone continued the theme of restrained old-world glamour with a fanciful oval mirror above the plaster fireplace and a wing headboard atop a gilded frame. Black painted side tables embellished with golden paint serve as sophisticated punctuation marks. "The suite makes us feel like we're living in a flat in Europe," Kathi says. "If we had a kitchen, we'd never want to leave! It's elegant without being fussy. Like the rest of the house, the historical references give the rooms a sense of timelessness."

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Ever mindful of the connection between the past and a simpler way of life, the design team crafted the house to encourage alfresco living. Candelaria replaced many



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RIGHT: A dramatic truss on the rear exterior conveys the home's country French charm. BELOW: A built-in grill and rustic trestle table transform the terrace off the kitchen into a favorite open-air dining spot. OPPOSITE: Vallone paired a plaster capital with a marble top to create a table for serving cocktails.



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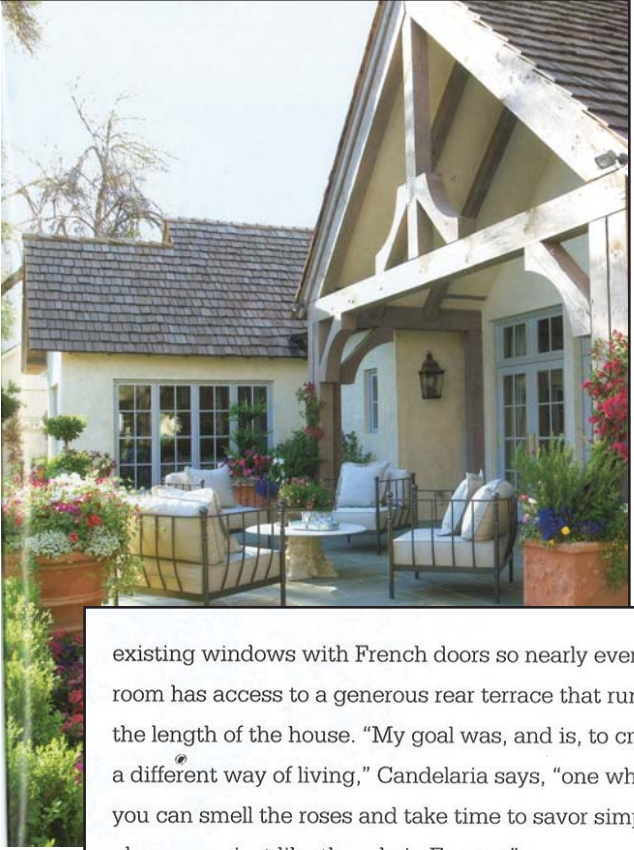


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existing windows with French doors so nearly every room has access to a generous rear terrace that runs the length of the house. "My goal was, and is, to create a different way of living," Candelaria says, "one where you can smell the roses and take time to savor simple pleasures—just like they do in Europe."

Vallone rounded out the architect's vision with comfortable seating pieces. Oversize wrought-iron armchairs gather in a conversation circle outside the family room, while a trestle table for eight is at the ready off the kitchen. The Fidels and their two children relish the results.

"The backyard feels like a European château," Kathi says. "There's an even balance between the hardscape and the greenery, so when you're sitting there, it's easy to lose track of where you are. It completely takes you away."



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