

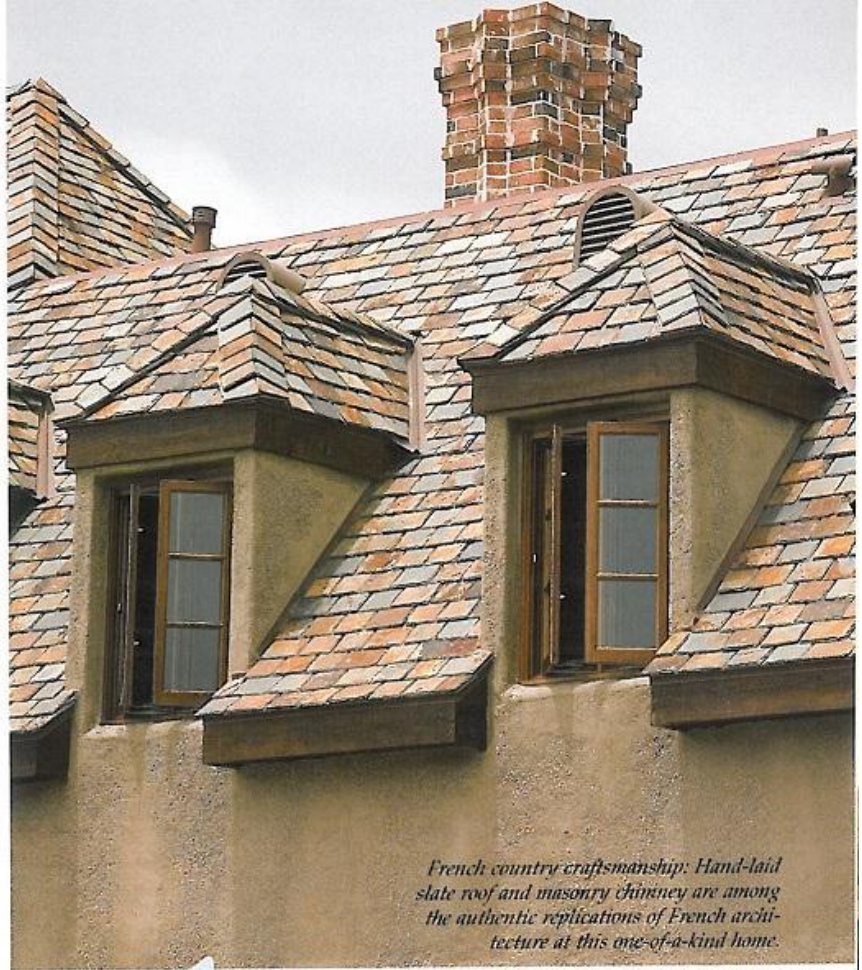
Vailla!

A French Château Crowns a Hilltop in Del Mar

*by Miriam Raftery
photography by Jim Brady*



“This home is made true to the French châteaux that were built in the 1800s,” says Jordi Estape, president of Jordi Designs in Carlsbad and Las Vegas. Estape and his wife, Bree, have re-created the aura of antiquity and elegance of a vintage château in this new home.



French country craftsmanship: Hand-laid slate roof and masonry chimney are among the authentic replications of French architecture at this one-of-a-kind home.

From subterranean wine cellar to slate-tiled mansard roof, the 8,000-square-foot home situated on 5 acres in Del Mar Meadows is historically authentic in virtually every detail. One half expects to gaze out dormer windows from an upstairs loft and spy fields of lavender, sunflowers or vineyards on the sunny slopes beyond.

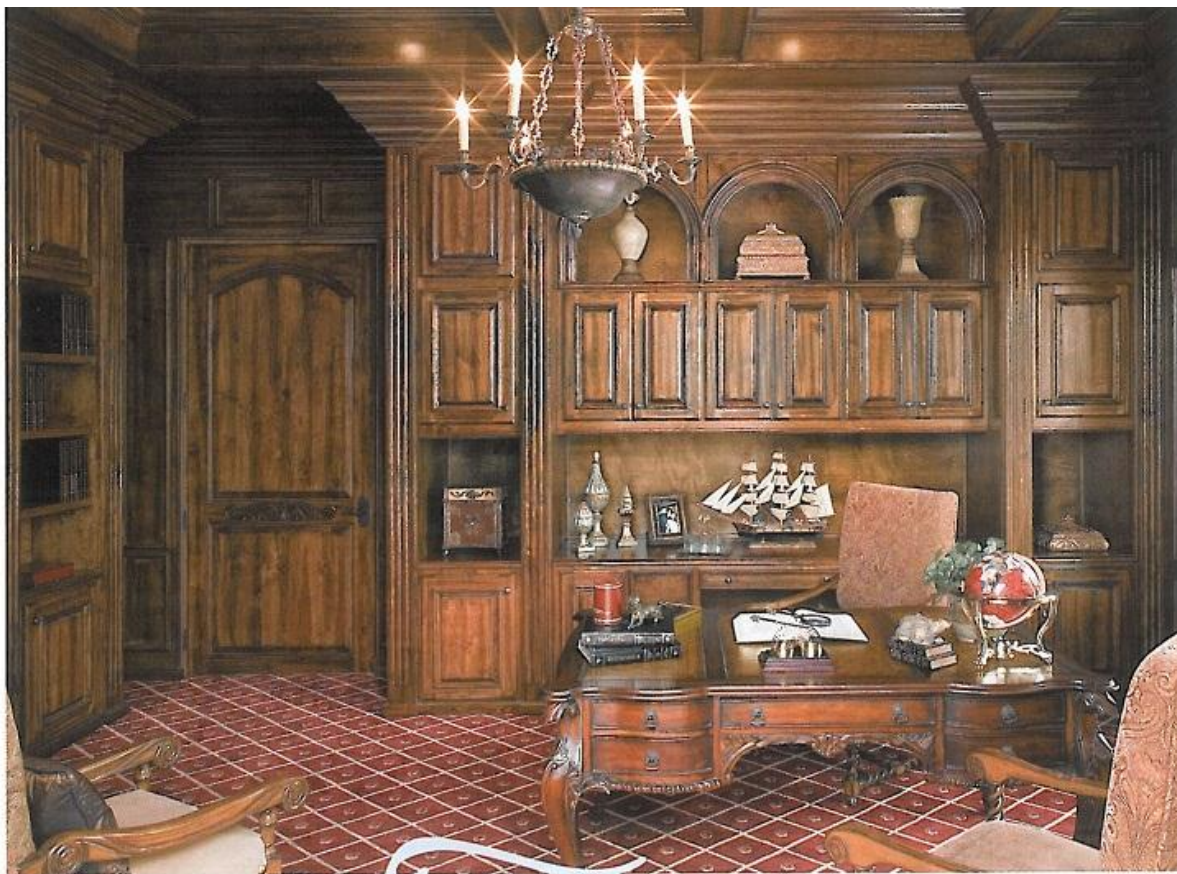
“This look is very difficult to achieve,” says Estape, a native of Barcelona, Spain, of the exposed pebbles in a stucco façade that simulate the weathering of age. “Instead of regular framing with stucco, craftsmen fill this up with stones and rocks, applying three to four layers of stucco for thickness.” Gold-hued flagstone façades, copper-flashings and hand-laid slate roofing tiles, “the way they used to do it,” further evoke the ambience of a 19th-century home suited for a French aristocrat.

Medieval châteaux included thick walls and castle fortifications to withstand military attacks. In the Renaissance and Baroque eras, châteaux evolved into opulent homes for the French nobility. By the 19th century, wealthy French landowners were building châteaux that re-created the fairy tale, castle-like dwellings of the Renaissance.

The Del Mar Meadows château, inspired by those 19th-century dream homes, was built by Silver Oaks Estate for a real estate developer and his wife. It wraps around a formal European-style pool and elevated water feature. Water spills down golden-hued stones laid in a miniature brick pattern. At the top, water from a sunken spa overflows its boundaries into a shallow surround, providing an idyllic place for the homeowners’ three young children to splash and play.

Left: Vive la différence: This French château in Del Mar Meadows wraps around a European-style pool and spa, providing privacy and luxury.





Left: Wherefore art thou, Juliet? The Juliet balcony adds a crowning touch to the family room, projecting from a game room in a loft above.

Upper: Luxurious library: A French provincial desk, coffered ceiling, lustrous cabinetry and gleaming chandelier combine to create a rich retreat for reading or working at home.

The estate grounds also include an outdoor kitchen and barbecue, brick fireplace, large lawn, and putting and chipping green. Ultimately, Estape says, "the owner plans to put in a stable, horses and tennis courts for the children as they grow."

Arched mahogany doors herald entry to the home, which is appointed in a warm color palette of gold, copper, deep brown, sepia and red tones. An iron chandelier with ambered glass illuminates hand-distressed wood floors in the foyer, leading to a host of elegant rooms beyond.

"We created fully framed cabinetry throughout the house. That is one of the features that really separates me from other designers," says Estape, stepping into a library lined by floor-to-ceiling alder wood bookcases in a rich mahogany finish. A coffered ceiling and crown moldings two and a half feet deep add to the Old World aura, along with a French provincial-style desk with graceful curved legs and leather top.

Estape also designed all the furnishings throughout the house, combining historical detail, creativity and a dash of *savoir-faire*. "I do a lot of Mediterranean homes," he notes, "but my furniture can blend with any Old World style."

A central great room features combined living and dining areas warmed by a brick and stone masonry fireplace suitable for a castle keep. An eight-way, hand-tied gold sofa with fringe nestles beside a tumbled Emperador marble-topped coffee table, along with a pair of custom carved chairs. Silk coppery draperies hung on carved rosettes provide simple yet elegant window treatments.

Estape designed a dining table fit for royalty, complete with trestle base and ornate carvings. Studded nail-head chairs with leather upholstery, scrolled legs and chenille fabric provide seating for a feast.

A console table from Estape's Monaco collection features a three-layered gold patina base with original scrolled crest, topped by Negro Marquina Italian black marble. The dining room also features a solid alder wood buffet. "Everything I do is hand-finished to give the richness that we need," the designer adds.

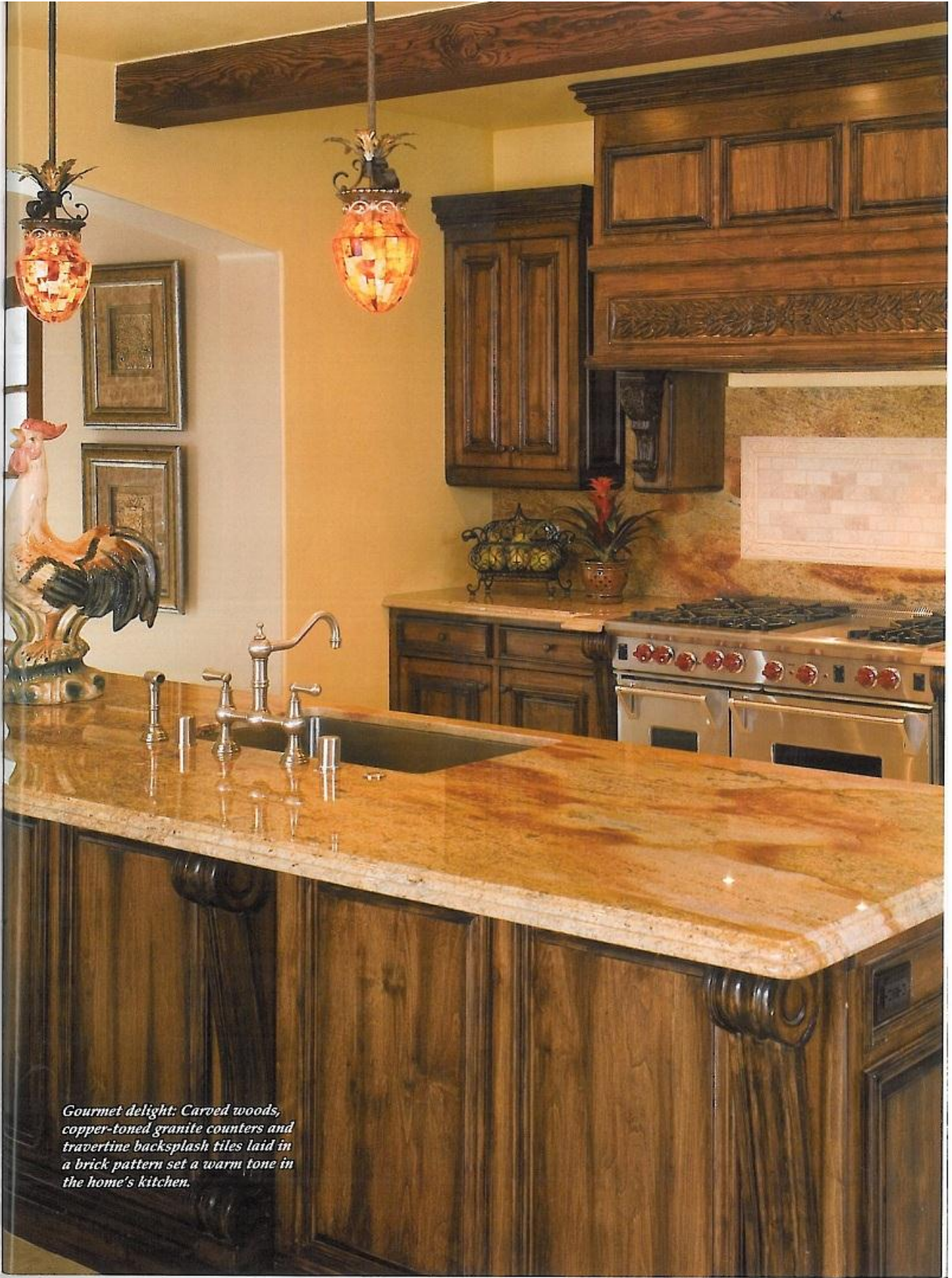


Showtime: A three-tiered home theater with custom leather chairs, velvet drapes and screen atop a stage platform combine the best of high-tech and tradition.

Though historically accurate, this chateau does include some contemporary creature comforts. The rich scent of leather fills a home theater room, where cognac-hued theater seats were custom made to occupy two levels. A third tier behind the seating areas features a bar with iron railing, providing room for barstools to accommodate guests. Fluted columns flank a theater screen atop a stage platform, concealed by motorized velvet drapes when not in use.

"The whole house is wired with smart house technology," says Estape. Acoustic Evolutions installed the state-of-the-art sound system. Equipment is hidden in a hall closet just outside the theater room, with a special grid at the top, which allows heat to escape.

Steps from both hall and dining/living room areas lead up to an expansive kitchen and family room. Copper and gold-hued granite countertops add richness and warmth to the kitchen, providing contrast to tumbled travertine floors laid in a Versailles pattern. Corner alder wood cabinets display French pottery, while a hand-carved leaf and berry embellishment on the hood over a six-burner professional Wolf range and double-oven enhance the artisan ambience. The kitchen also includes a deep farmhouse sink, island and inlaid travertine accent tiles laid in a brick pattern.



Gourmet delight: Carved woods, copper-toned granite counters and travertine backsplash tiles laid in a brick pattern set a warm tone in the home's kitchen.





Grand-scale great room: The lavishly appointed great room harkens back to castles of yore, complete with ornately carved furnishings, silk draperies and shimmering chandeliers.

A brick fireplace with a large hearth sets a welcoming tone in the adjacent family room, where an entertainment center masquerades within an arched built-in cabinet. A scroll-armed sofa designed for comfort includes an abundance of down-filled pillows; ultrasuede chairs with carved wood frames provide additional seating. Candle fixtures on an iron chandelier provide the aura of vintage lighting.

Above, a Juliet balcony with scrolled iron rail overlooks the family room from a loft above that doubles as game room for the family's three young children. A curved sheet of Plexiglas lines the balcony rail, providing protection for youngsters. Sloped ceilings and dormer windows lend an attic feeling to the home's upper story, where children's and guest rooms—including a Jack-and-Jill suite—are located.

Servant quarters at one end of the home provide room for live-in help, ideal for a French maid.



Master suite: Sumptuous bedding and unique furnishings, designed by Estape, create a regal setting in the master suite, which features a separate sitting room.

The master suite occupies the opposite end, divided into a separate seating area with open beams on a sloped ceiling and adjacent private bedroom quarters. A pair of chenille lounge chairs and framed prints of old French châteaux add comfort and historical touches to the sitting area, which is conveniently situated at the base of stairs leading to the children's rooms. Stairs made from solid slabs of travertine were "very difficult, and very expensive," the designer says.

Doors leading to the master suite, like all doorframes in the home, have been scaled small by modern-day standards to re-create those of a bygone era.

A distinctive bed from Estape's Marquessa Collection was inspired by a magazine portrait of a regally attired woman. The headboard and footboard dip down in the center, simulating fabric folds in the neckline of a dress, while a central carved symbol was patterned after a pin the model wore. A red and gold brocade bed covering, fringed and tasseled pillows and a pair of bow-front nightstands enhance the royal ambience.

His-and-her master baths connected by a walk-through shower feature marble floors, vanities with hammered-copper sinks and a walk-in closet suitable to house a royal wardrobe. An oval marble tub embellished with travertine basket weave inset and moldings provides an added touch of elegance for the lady of the house, overlooking the pool beyond.



Like fine French châteaux set amid vineyards, the château Estape has replicated features an authentic subterranean wine cellar. Steps lead downward, lined by walls with exposed pebbles that conjure up the aura of antiquity. Cracked ceilings, travertine floors and candle-style iron light fixtures enhance the aged ambience. Brick arches crown stone-framed wine racks, where a collection of favorite vintages are stored. A counter provides ample room to savor cheese and wine.

"This is a very, very unique home. It required a lot of research," Estape says of his masterful creation.

For the owners of this fabulous estate property, a timeless French proverb clearly applies: *Il n'y a pas de petit chez soi*.

Translation: There's no place like home. □

Cozy cuisine: Jordi Estape designed all furnishings in the home, including this ornately carved table and chairs in a nook off the kitchen.

RESOURCES

Interior design, stone cabinets, carpentry, iron, furnishings

Jordi Estape Designs, Inc.
760-930-1330; www.jordidesigns.com

General contractor

Canyon Construction, Inc

Architect

Lawrence Pepper

858-756-5817

Builder

Anderson Silver Oak, LLC

858-538-9870

Subcontractors

Appliance

Pacific Sales

760-827-2200; www.pacificsales.com

Audio/media

Acoustic Evolution

858-673-1675

www.acousticevolution.com

Flooring (hardwood/carpet)

M. Stevens Rug & Carpet Gallery

858-277-8484

Interior lighting

Illuminating Interiors

858-566-3780

Landscape

RD Jones Landscape Construction

760-758-9864

Masonry

JSA Masonry Inc

760-231-9107

Painting

Painting Is My Life

619-778-9536

Pool

Santa Fe Pool Construction, Inc.

760-871-0417

Putting green

Southwest Greens of San Diego

760-471-7716;

www.southwestgreens.com

Roof

Skyline Roofing Co.

760-744-1970

Tiles/stone

Falconieri & Company

760-505-8501

Wine rack

IWA Inc.—International Wine

Accessories;

800-527-4072; www.iwawine.com