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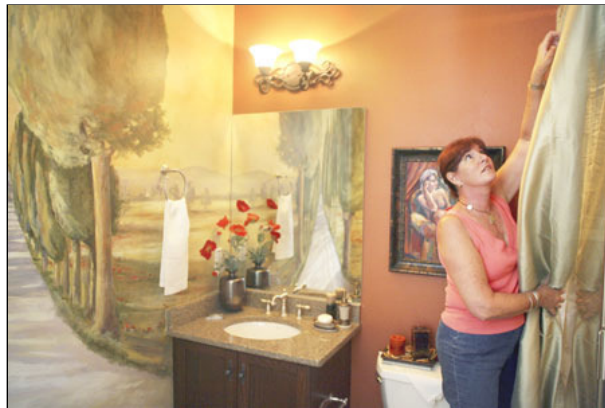
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A taste of Tuscany

Old World touches transform the Florida Orchestra Guild/Tampa's designer showhouse into a slice of Italy.

By JUDY STARK, Times Home and Garden Editor
Published May 12, 2007



[Times photo: Kathleen Flynn]

Joanne Karpay fluffs a silk shower curtain in a guest bath. The hand-painted mural of a cypress-lined country road, which is reflected in the mirror, is visible from the kitchen. Stone tiles, the terra cotta wall color and vase of poppies add more Tuscan flavor.

TAMPA - The colors of Tuscany are enough to make you hungry and thirsty, and why not? Watermelon. Olive. Rich wine red. Chestnut. The golden yellow of gorgonzola and pears and polenta.

So if you leave the Florida Orchestra Guild/Tampa's designer showhouse looking for a glass of wine and a meal, it will be understandable.

This year's house - a new home, just completed by Hannah Bartoletta Homes - is a Tuscan palazzo tucked away on Lake Byrd. Inside are the columns, arches, wood beams and tile we think of when we dream of living in a sun-drenched Italian village.

Outside, there's a lanai with an outdoor kitchen, but close your eyes and you can pretend you're sitting on a piazza in "the soft, slow Tuscan twilight, fading . . . from transparent to golden to evening blue," as Frances Mayes writes in the Italophile's bible, *Under the Tuscan Sun*. Oh to be drinking unpretentious wine out of tumblers, smelling chickens roasting over rosemary branches while old men play bocce down the street.

The designers all came up with their own interpretations of a Tuscan theme, with more of those colors you can taste: mushroom, honey, fig, chocolate, plum. Did you know the Italians call Santa Rosa plums *coscia di monaca* - nun's thighs? You'd blush - and so would the

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nuns – if we told you what they call a certain kind of local watermelon.

The dominant colors of cinnamon, pumpkin and olive came from the backsplash in the kitchen, designed by Matt Long and Ralph Mills of All Interior Furnishings. Long does the interior design for most of Hannah Bartoletta's models - everything "from roof to pavers," he said. "I've become a complete control freak," and he had to learn to understand the concept of *festina tarde* – "make haste slowly" – as other designers worked on their rooms at their own pace.

Look closely at the cabinet doors on the kitchen island. Long covered them with padded leather, then had them hand-painted with the same scrollwork image that you'll see on the row of inset tiles – the *listello* – in the back-splash above the range.

In the adjacent family room, the colors are olive and gold, with lots of texture: woven metal shades on the lamps, blown-glass finials on the iron drapery rods, a murano-glass light on the ceiling fan, faux-ostrich leather on a pair of chairs, a complicated tray ceiling. The huge entertainment center is painted a distressed black, which makes it look like a family piece that has been around since nonna was a girl. (Designers: Jennifer Manning and Mary F. DeVincenzo of Norwalk: the Furniture Idea.)

Faux finishes abound. "That lady has been in here faux-ing like a fiend," remarked Annabelle Johns of Annabelle's (she did the living and dining rooms) as she studied the master bedroom designed by Deanna Harms and Mary Jo Polo of Design Interiors. The bedroom's ceiling, recessed 2 feet, has a Venetian plaster finish. In the adjacent bath, floor and wall tiles are inset with copper "to give a hit of jewelry, shimmer and glamor, a little bit of the unexpected," Harms said.

The showhouse runs until May 28, but Hannah Bartoletta plans to keep the home open as a model for two months with the designers' furnishings and accessories. The price, including the furnishings, is just under \$1.35-million (*un sacco di soldi!* a bundle!) for the 4, 195-square-foot home (5 bedrooms, 4 1/2 baths).

So if you yearn for your own *bella villa* under the Tuscan sun - well, the Tampa sun – perhaps your piece of *la dolce vita* is right here.

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FAST FACTS

Visiting the showhouse

What: Designer showhouse sponsored by the Florida Orchestra Guild/Tampa.

Where: 1822 Bella Casa Court, Tampa.



[Times photo: Kathleen Flynn]

The kitchen of the Tampa Orchestra Guild designer show house. The use of oak was to bring out an earthy feel to the kitchen.



[Times photo: Kathleen Flynn]

Rich colors and textures of the Old World highlight the dining room, by Annabelle Johns of Annabelle's. The room welcomes diners with wooden ceiling beams, a huge table, upholstered chairs and an Oriental rug.

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Directions: From Interstate 275, exit at Bearss Avenue. Drive west 1 1/2 miles and turn right on Lake Magdalene Boulevard. Turn left on Indian Mound and right on Bella Casa.

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