



# Coastal

U-T SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO HOMES

## BACKYARD HEAVEN

LANDSCAPER DREAMS BIG WITH  
ROCK FORMATIONS AND TWO  
POOLS IN A TROPICAL SETTING

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# ‘GYPSY GIRL’

TILES AND OTHER FURNISHINGS IMBUE RANCHO SANTA FE HOME WITH MOROCCAN FLAIR

**SOPHY CHAFFEE**  
SPECIAL TO THE U-T

All it took to bring out the Moroccan flair of a Spanish-Moorish-style home in Rancho Santa Fe was about eight months of work by skilled craftsmen, custom lighting by an expert the homeowner called an “Abracadabra Man” and tens of thousands of tiles.

Much of that tile came from the homeowner, who wishes to remain anonymous. Her love of Moroccan style prompted her to collect enough Moroccan tiles, doors, furniture and the like to fill two storage units.

“I have a reputation,” the home-

owner said. “When companies (selling Moroccan goods) move or close, they’ll ask, ‘Do you want everything? Take it all.’ ”

Even with her collection, she considers her team – architect John Oleinik, builder Paul Davis of Design Construction Co. and Jim Gibson of Gibson & Gibson Antique Lighting – to be the real experts and credits them with the vision to remodel the approximately 7,500-square-foot home and guesthouse she shares with her family.

The Moroccan makeover, which was finished last month, included two bathrooms, the dining room,

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The Rancho Santa Fe remodel began with a plan to replace the old French doors in the kitchen (top) with 12-foot pocket doors to the backyard and patio (above). “Everything just snowballed from there,” said the homeowner. PAUL DAVIS PHOTOS



# Ranch Santa Fe

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living room and entry. The kitchen, family room and outdoor courtyard were redesigned as one open space.

"Their ideas were the scaffolding that made it all," she said. "I maybe added the jewelry. They dressed it. ... They understood I wanted it to be a Moroccan gypsy girl, not a preppy, not a stewardess."

Oleinik and Davis, meanwhile, called the homeowner the driving force of the design. They said she asked how items from her collection could be used.

"We designed the project as we went along," Davis said. "It was always a surprise – what was she going to come up with next?"

The most dramatic changes were in the new indoor-outdoor great room. The team started by taking out the old French doors to the courtyard and installing two 12-foot lift and slide pocket doors that open to the courtyard and backyard. (A glass ceiling had enclosed the courtyard; the space is now open and features a fireplace, fire pit, barbecue and built-in seating area.)

Inside, they opened the area by taking out the walls that blocked the kitchen from the breezeway and family room. Flooring unifies the indoor and outdoor spaces with a fired ceramic tile in an hourglass pattern imported from Spain – tile that is carried to the rest of the remodel.

"This tile I liked because it was sexy. It looks like a woman's figure, like Marilyn Monroe's," the homeowner said.

The area that was the breezeway between the kitchen and family room now features a zillij wall mosaic set off by a tiled barrel ceiling and a tile "rug."

Encinitas ceramic artist Laird Plumleigh crafted the family room's Moorish fireplace with pierced ceramic tile that was left over from the Plaza de Panama fountain he redid in Balboa Park. "To me, it's like a piece of history," the homeowner said.

She wanted that same tile on the backsplash in the kitchen, which chal-



**Jewel-toned Moroccan tiles from the homeowner's collection are the centerpiece of the bathroom remodel (left). The zillij wall mosaic, set off by the tiled barrel ceiling, which joins the kitchen and the family room, also came from her collection (right). "I always joke that in a former life I had Moroccan lover or husband," the homeowner said. PAUL DAVIS PHOTOS**

lenged the team to find the right material to fill in the latticelike tile and protect it from the inevitable cooking splatters. After a few attempts, they found a material that dries clear with a slight crackle to it. "It turned to glass, crystallized glass," the homeowner said. It also has a green tinge that accentuates the green granite counters.

The teak wood cabinetry in the kitchen and the dining area was inspired by the homeowner's dining table. Indonesian suar wood is used to top a circular cabinet attached to the island, as well as for an oblong eat-in kitchen table that juts out from

the island and a circular belly bar in the family room.

"When I saw (the pieces of suar wood), they were dusty and unfinished," the homeowner said. "They told me, 'When this gets polished, it's going to be like fireworks,' and they were right."

Gibson designed and created the chandelier above the kitchen table using the homeowner's antique Moroccan perfume bottles. Known nationally for replicating antique fixtures in the White House, Gibson fashioned other Moroccan fixtures from the homeowner's finds.

The entry and dining area features

Plumleigh's bright-blue tiles inserted among the hourglass tiles.

Davis gutted two of the home's seven bathrooms, making them showcases for the homeowner's jewel-toned Moroccan tiles from her collection.

The homeowner doesn't know exactly how she became enamored of Moroccan design but thinks it's the link to history that compels her collecting.

"Anything old with history is much more interesting than something new ... because it has a story, then you can make it your story," she said.

Sophy Chaffee is an Encinitas based writer.