

Smart & Stylish

*A Beautiful Blend of
Technology and Design,
a Desert Home Raises
the Bar on Perfection*

BY TERESA ESQUIVEL PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT SANDLER



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This inviting flagstone patio outside the guest house contains a fire pit and stream. “The homeowners wanted their guests to have something beautiful to sit near and enjoy away from the main house,” explains Brandon LaCombe of Desert Springs Outdoor Environments.

WITH ITS BLEND OF SOUTHWEST AND

Rural Mediterranean style, strong indoor/outdoor connection and resort-like backyard, this north Scottsdale house is everything the homeowners dreamed of.

“Our Connecticut home is very traditional New England, so the most important thing was to have this home fit with the Southwest theme and not be remotely like anything we have on the East Coast,” says the man of the house. He and his wife purchased two lots in a planned community so that they could build a slightly larger home than one lot would have allowed. They liked the neighborhood so much that they were fine with following the community’s architectural guidelines, plus they knew the interiors and backyard were theirs for the making.

“They are a very dynamic, fun couple,” says Caroline DeCesare, of DeCesare Design Group. “They have a huge family, so this house definitely had to have that sense of fun and entertaining, and no detail was too small to think about. Everything needed to be beautiful, well thought-out and well designed. This was a labor of love for them, a project that they loved doing, enjoyed thinking about and sourcing; they just relished every aspect of the process.”

The house is pretty, for sure, but it’s smart, too. All functions of the home—including lighting, security, audio, video, HVAC, pool, spa and water features—are controlled by Savant, a home automation system that runs on any Apple IOS device, according to Brad Zoerb, senior technology adviser for VIA in Scottsdale. With nothing more than a tablet or smartphone, the couple can control the home’s functions from anywhere in the world.

“The only freedom I had was the audio/video budget,” says the man of the house. “And, oh, boy, did I use it. The ability to design the system from scratch and integrate it with how we expected to live in the house was very appealing. And being able to operate it with an iPhone or iPad is sensational. I am beyond happy with it.”

As high-tech as it is, the system presented no problems for DeCesare, architect Jeffrey Berkus, builder Kirby Korth, of CSE and Associates, or Brandon LaCombe, co-owner of Desert Springs Outdoor Environments. There was no control room to contend with, just an iPad mounted to the wall in an out-of-the-way space.

But just because it was business as usual for all involved, that’s not to say they weren’t impressed with the result. “This is the first time in 16 years that I’ve been able to operate an entire house system the day it was installed,” DeCesare says. “Usually you need a master’s degree to work those systems. This one is very intuitive and very easy.”

The homeowners, too, are happy with their new desert getaway. “You know that Harry Nilsson song where he talks about ‘going where the weather suits my clothes?’ We spent almost a year trying to make sure the design of the house fit what we expected our lifestyle to be,” the husband notes. “We had more fun than we deserved to have over the next two years working with Caroline and the rest of the team. Like Jeff Berkus said when we were on one of our final walkthroughs: ‘We nailed it.’” ■

Copper wainscoting imparts rustic charm to the Old World-style powder room. The vessel sink is bronze.





Opposite: Designed to be "a great gathering space," the kitchen features a custom hand-carved furniture-style island. The stools, which were selected for both style and comfort, offer swivel action, arm rests and cushioned seats. To satisfy the owner's request for Old World touches, interior designer Caroline DeCesare incorporated an Italian mosaic into the backsplash, a limestone range hood and heavily glazed, distressed cabinetry. A sink placed next to the range allows for easy filling and emptying of pots.

Right: The designer describes the living room as refined but not stuffy. "It's formal in a rustic way," DeCesare says, pointing out the rough wood of the ceiling beams.

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Top: Paneled in alder, this upstairs “man cave” includes a wall of bunk beds with privacy curtains, and a lounge area outfitted with a large television. An office lies beyond the old reclaimed Chinese doors on the wall adjacent to the bunks.

Above: Dining chairs upholstered in a custom metallic hand-stamped velvet highlight the persimmon red accent color the homeowners favor. The custom Murano glass chandelier was ordered by the homeowners from a factory they visited during a trip to Venice. The plank ceiling was hand-painted with a floral pattern to lend an Old World sensibility.



Above: The master bathroom features hand-painted tile wainscoting and custom wood shutters behind the copper slipper-style bathtub.

