



Old meets new in the living room and all through this updated version of a rural French farmhouse. The reclaimed antique limestone fireplace is French Louis XIII in style, while overhead lighting and art take a modernistic approach.



# FAMILY FIRST

A Builder Joins Forces With a Masterful Design Team to Create a Cozy and Welcoming Home for His Loved Ones

BY ROBERTA LANDMAN  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
WERNER SEGARRA



**GIVEN BOUNDLESS CHOICES**, what does someone who builds houses for others want in his own home?

In the case of the north Scottsdale home featured on these pages, the answer is clear: unpretentious comfort and carefully thought out design.

Working closely with architect Don Ziebell and interior designer David Michael Miller, well-known home builder Eric Linthicum planned and constructed the residence for his own family. And “family” is the operative word Ziebell and Miller, both Phoenix Home & Garden Masters of the Southwest, kept at the forefront of their designs.

The focus for this home was to have modest-sized rooms that family members - mom, dad and two teenagers - would enjoy being in together, say the interior designer and the architect. As houses get larger, people become more separated, Ziebell points out. This residence is a “very atypical

house” in that there is no large family room, he says. Instead, the family room is simply a small sitting area of the kitchen. For that intimate space, Miller designed twin custom bancos outfitted with comfy cushions in mattress-size proportions. He calls the area “a family cuddle room,” where one can plop down and relax.

The house evokes the feel of a rural French farmhouse, albeit with a more modern twist. Reclaimed materials, such as ceiling beams made from bridge trestles and fireplaces made of limestone, have the earthy patina of age and are elements of great charm. Against this backdrop, Miller fashioned an interior design scheme with a tempered Contemporary slant.

Of the homeowners, he reflects: “They wanted the house to reflect that they are young people. They wanted something with an edge - with an attitude.” Custom clean-lined kitchen cabinetry, for instance, has doors reminiscent of old-time bead-board, but with updated, exaggerated planks.

The home’s primary living space, the kitchen was designed to be a family gathering place, the architect states. “People are there all through the day.” Miller appointed the room with a timeworn antique wood table and old Asian workmen’s stools. By contrast, an outside rectangular lighting fixture above the table displays a distinctively modernistic look.

Throughout, rooms have an airy appearance, with a tone-on-tone palette of neutral hues that is both soothing and sophisticated. Walls are mostly greige, and textiles, mostly linen, have a natural coloration.

Miller says of the house in general, “It has a very humble kind of character to it, which I love.”

For his part, Linthicum applauds the success of the design team in creating a home of such scale and proportion that every room is well-used.

Summing up this atmospheric residence, he states: “It really hit a sweet spot with us!”

**This page and opposite:** Although fitted with high-tech appliances, streamlined cabinetry and a Contemporary chandelier, the kitchen, with its antique table, has a decidedly homey air. Interior designer David Michael Miller speaks of the home’s “sophisticated materials palette.” Here, flooring laid in a checkerboard pattern is made of tumbled basalt and limestone tiles, and countertops are of honed basalt. A wide expanse of the rear wall is covered with white Subway tiles. Iron-rimmed doors lead to the backyard.





**Above:** An upstairs paneled room is a casual setting, where one can unwind and enjoy a grouping of photos taken during time spent in Hawaii. Like framing simplifies the look.

## DESIGN SAVVY

How do you create a welcoming mood in a home without its looking faddish? Interior designer David Michael Miller offers the following design ideas:

I usually aim for interiors that are relaxed and comfortable. Natural fibers in fabrics, real wood and stone surfaces help to communicate an impression of welcome and casualness.

I love using architectural artifacts, tools or objects from other cultures and other eras in history. Sometimes an object considered to be quite unimpressive in one culture is beautiful and exotic when shown out of its normal context.

Be careful about following trends. Interiors treated like fashions will have a similarly short shelf life. Simple, understated materials will stand up over the longer term.



**Opposite:** In the snug family room, matching bancos topped with outsize cushions are stationed in front of a fireplace made of reclaimed limestone. Antique Spanish blue-and-white pottery adds color and character. The pendant light is made of steel.



**Opposite:** In the master bedroom, a white matelassé coverlet is paired with a sheet, accent pillows and seagrass rug in natural hues. Overhead, a gleaming metal light fixture lends unexpected contrast to the ceiling's rough-hewn beams.

**Above:** A free-standing tub and vanities made of honed-Calcutta marble and chromed steel lend the master bath a Contemporary sensibility.

*See Sources.*

*“They wanted the house to reflect that they are young people. They wanted something with an edge—with an attitude”*