

# La Dolce Vita

High in the hills of Montecito,  
an Italian Renaissance Revival manor gets a lighter,  
brighter reenvisioning of its villa-style estate.

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In the groin-vaulted entrance hall brightened by Benjamin Moore's Cloud White, Gregorius Pineo's Utrecht lanterns illuminate an antique oak console table topped with aged vessels. The sconces are from ADG Lighting.

**I**t's hard to define a timeless design, but you know it when you see it, and that's what my team strives for," states Jodi Fleming. This idea, the interior designer muses, speaks to a look that embraces a sense of history; a classic style that "sort of simultaneously stretches through time, forward and backward, and is immune to trends." Such a quality was at the forefront of her mind when recasting an Italian Revival-style property in Montecito for her Midwest-based clients. She and the homeowners agreed that the residence, built in the early aughts, offered a great architectural base. But the house also had heavier "Tuscanesque" design elements and, despite its 4-acre setting with sight lines out to the ocean and mountains, it "didn't relate well to the land or have a good relationship to the views," Fleming recalls. She eagerly seized the opportunity to make stylistic transformations that would reveal the property's untapped potential.

Essentially, the house "needed life breathed back into it, and we needed to enhance its access to the exteriors," the designer describes. To do so, she collaborated with general contractor Darrell Becker and his son, Andy Becker, who served as supervisor. Landscape architect Derrick Eichelberger, who works frequently with the Beckers, rounded out the team. The creation of a brighter, breezier aesthetic inside and out quickly became a shared goal.

As for the interior scheme, both Fleming and the wife believed that the spaces needed to honor the home's Italian heritage while reflecting more intimacy and emotional depth. Notes the designer of their discussions, "My client understood that the house had an Italian villa feel, but also wanted to see some contemporary furnishings mixed in with antiques to embrace the past and present of this home." Fleming made certain this desire would be reflected from the entry, where a trio of oversize iron-framed lanterns with a clean-lined aesthetic grace the groin-vaulted ceiling, illuminating an antique console topped with vintage vessels.

The designer further articulated this ethos through an edited palette of neutral tones. Materials that emphasize texture and depth became incredibly important: Throughout the home, expertly applied plaster surfaces create a clean and bright backdrop, while wide-plank French oak flooring as well as a weatherworn

composition of stones on the wall around the kitchen range reference a rustic yet refined vocabulary. Installing repurposed, hand-hewn beams in the main public shared spaces and primary bedroom "gave the spaces a more grounded feel, and helped relate them back to the exterior," explains Fleming. She also managed to retain the home's large-scale stone fireplace surrounds by cutting them down into proportion with the rooms they occupy—turning what used to be oversize ornamental elements into dignified design moments that no longer overwhelm.

Generously sized steel doors that separate but visually link the living, dining and kitchen areas are an intervention that seamlessly integrates contemporary materials into the architecture. "Reimagining this house with a modern twist for how we live today took a lot of the fussiness out," Darrell observes. A window-filled family room right off the kitchen further underscores that point. Fleming also points to lighting choices such as the contemporary silhouette of the dining room's black-glass-and-aged-brass chandelier as a key element that freshens the home's traditional moments. "The owners feel most comfortable in a classic setting, but they embraced modern lighting," she says. Of this alliance of old and new, Darrell concludes, "The changes we made to modernize this house still keep it congruent with the original architecture."

The ability to comfortably entertain indoors and out and to welcome guests with plentiful seating options was also important to the homeowners. To meet this need, Darrell and Eichelberger devised a powder-coated steel structure interlaced with olive branches to frame a large outdoor dining area. This space enhances the connection between outdoors and interiors while creating a casually elegant al fresco seating option. Eichelberger also came up with new plans for the grounds, which were overgrown. Part of his strategy included removing paving in the motor court in favor of limestone and gentler hardscape materials, as well as devising a decisive plant edit and adding mature olive trees and other Mediterranean plantings.

As the pieces came together, it was the design team's commitment to a shared set of values and concepts—via quite a few mood boards—that led to the pride they feel in this home's new chapter. "Our theme of keeping everything clean, pure and honest is consistent throughout the interior to the exterior," Fleming concludes. "It all relates." ■

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Designer Jodi Fleming customized the living room's sofa, leather ottoman and marble coffee table, as well as swivel chairs dressed in a blue *Liaigre* fabric. The iron-and-wood coffee table is *Formations* and the lounge chair and chandelier are *Gregorius Pineo*. A photo by Victoria Aguirre and art by Lynn Sanders adorn the far wall.





**Above:** Limestone creates a rustic focal point around the kitchen range, which Fleming paired with leathered Taj Mahal quartzite counters atop dual islands. The Urban Electric Co.'s Double Arm Baldo lighting fixture hangs overhead. The counter stools are by Fyrn.

**Opposite:** Contemporary steel-and-glass partitions define the home's public spaces. In the dining room, a Formations table joins chairs by Gregorius Pineo underneath Julian Chichester's Bacco Chandelier.





**Above:** Antiqued Calacatta marble lines the vanity and Waterworks bathtub surround of the primary bathroom. The tub faucet is also Waterworks. The console table and chair are custom designs by Fleming and the stool is a find from the Round Top Antiques Fair.

**Opposite:** For the owners' bedroom, the designer selected the four-poster bed, bench and Kelos armchairs from B&B Italia. Rosemary Hallgarten fabric curtains billow beside the deck doors. The tulip table is RH and the bedside sconce is from The Urban Electric Co.





**Above:** An elegant second-floor outdoor veranda draws guests outside to lounge on David Sutherland sofas and chairs. The coffee and side table are both Formations. Gregorius Pineo lanterns fill the arches above.

**Opposite:** Chaise lounges from RH line the head of the pool deck, where landscape architect Derrik Eichelberger redesigned all the paving. For an ageless effect, general contractor Darrell Becker painstakingly treated the exterior to multiple washes of paint to achieve a soft plaster color complemented by the warm wood frames of the windows and doors.