





The ruddy glow of claret walls at sunset,

the brilliance of glossy white cabinets in the morning, and the rich luster of wood flooring in the afternoon—after years of living in a too-dark home, the owners of this Mokena residence are reveling in a varied tapestry of natural light.

“We moved from a house that was surrounded by tall trees, which gave it a very dark interior,” says the homeowner. “We really wanted our new home to take advantage of the light, so that influenced everything from the colors we chose to the types of window treatments.”

The roomy brick two-story sits on a secluded lot outside this growing village on the edge of the southwest suburbs. The hillside location provides spectacular views of the neighboring forest preserve and woodlands. Designer Kenneth Walter, who was involved in the project from the blueprint stage, says the views figured prominently in the design process. “The vistas are just magnificent,” he notes.

Framing those views with distinctive window casing and simple, yet elegant, drapery treatments was important, explains Ken. “When you go to a tailor to have clothing made, you want something that fits well and shows off your figure, and it’s the same with window treatments.”

BY LISA SLOAN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID SCHILLING

Illumination

(previous spread) The soaring 20-foot ceiling in the living room, coupled with the nearly floor-to-ceiling windows, creates a wonderfully expansive space. The wall color, fabrics, gilt-trimmed side chairs, Aubusson-weave carpet, and even the accessories, like lamps and picture frames, all feature golden hues, which give the room a luminous glow, no matter the time of day.

Many of the windows are arched and the casing follows suit, calling attention to a decorative keystone at the top of each arch. Cognizant of the fact his clients did not like fringes and trims, Ken designed most of the draperies as straightforward pleated panels, which provide privacy and light control when needed, but move back to leave the windows completely unfettered.

In addition to the window casing, Ken also assisted the couple with other molding selections, such as crown, wainscot, and raised panels, to give the new home a bit of vintage character. All of the woodwork was custom milled, and the material choices suit each room. For example, the family room, with its rich, red walls and towering stone fireplace, has quarter-sawn oak trim and wainscot. The mantelpiece, built-in cabinetry around the fireplace, and beams in the trussed ceiling are oak, as well. "It adds to the overall appeal of our home," suggests the homeowner. "And because it's all custom, it's trim you wouldn't see anywhere else."

Every room features a different ceiling, including a tray ceiling with skylights in the master bathroom, a domed ceiling in the breakfast room, a barrel vaulted ceiling in the study, a platform ceiling in the dining room, and a grid ceiling in the living room.

Ken and the homeowner also created interest underfoot with selections of distinctive flooring. The kitchen and breakfast room feature wide-plank hickory, hand-scraped for a more rustic look. In the living room and dining room, Australian eucalyptus offers a variegated look—with each plank of eucalyptus accepting stain a bit differently.

The home's floorplan keeps both comfort and entertaining in mind. With the master bedroom downstairs and the spare bedrooms upstairs, overnight guests have a private getaway and the homeowners need not worry about disturbing the entire household if they rise early. "We specifically requested a layout with a master bedroom on the first floor because we wanted something that would be accessible in the future," says the homeowner. "We have two adult children, so the second floor is like a guest quarters for them."

The master suite was designed to be sophisticated, yet comfortable. The room was positioned within the house so it would receive morning sunlight, and its neutral color scheme of taupe, greens, and russets reflects the natural landscape—deer even cavort among the foliage on the curtain fabric, just as they do in the woods outside

(right) Every room in the home has a different ceiling style—here, in the family room, the trussed ceiling features exposed beams in the same warm oak tones as the trim, built-in cabinetry, and wainscot. The distinctive fireplace stone was quarried in Wisconsin.





The homeowner loves the built-in cabinets that flank the fireplace because they provide a place to store her voluminous collection of family photograph albums. The transoms at the top of each cabinet break up the wall of white and echo the design found on the entry door.

the window. A spiral staircase in the room descends to an exercise studio in the light-filled walkout basement. "We wanted to recreate the experience of staying in a beautiful hotel," instructs Ken.

In fact, the master bath is similar to one at a Caribbean resort the couple once visited. It features a deep, two-person tub, his-and-her vanities, and radiant-heated limestone floors with a contrasting marble border.

The remainder of the first floor is set up for entertaining, with the more formal living and dining rooms across from each other and the kitchen, breakfast room, and family room grouped together at the back of the house. Though the kitchen and basement (a walk-out with a full kitchen, poolroom, and fireplace) are favorites for large family gatherings, the first floor is suited to entertaining small groups of friends. "It's roomy, but small enough for intimate parties without feeling overwhelmed," observes the homeowner.

Everything flows together by design. "The first thing we did was to plan the layout for every room, then we began to shop for furniture and simultaneously selected fabric, wallcoverings, and textiles," says Ken.

As for colors, they made selections that were inspired by nature and corresponded to the way light shifts in different parts of the house at different times of the day and seasons. For example, the kitchen gets a lot of morning light, but the yellow wall color ensures that it has a warm look throughout the day.

The homeowner had long dreamed of a bright kitchen with white cabinetry. Vince Baggetto, of Kitchens by Design, created a dynamic and accessible space with customized frameless maple cabinets in a low-sheen, off-white painted finish.

Because the homeowner enjoys cooking and baking, she wanted large counters and multiple food preparation areas. The peninsula features a small prep sink, and the island contains the cooktop. The homeowner often sets out appetizers on the peninsula, which visually separates the kitchen and family rooms, then finishes cooking the meal while guests gather. "I wanted the ability to be working in the kitchen while family and guests are here and still be part of the activity," she points out.

The room shines in the smallest details, including French pewter drawer pulls, a light fixture that combines a chandelier, downlights, and brass pothooks, and a backsplash of handmade tiles with a crackled glaze finish.

Though they have a formal dining room and seating at the peninsula in the kitchen, the homeowners eat most of their meals in the hexagonal breakfast room, at the expansive oak-topped table with a cement base. The table was designed by the late designer Michael











Taylor (1927 to 1986), known for pioneering the “California Look” that is characterized by white walls, overscaled furniture, and an abundance of natural light.

One of Taylor’s oft-quoted credos was, “if in doubt, take it out,” a phrase that aptly captures the homeowner’s own decorating philosophy. “I like a clean look; there isn’t a lot of clutter in my home,” she observes.

Indeed, the homeowner chooses accessories judiciously, and several rooms have built-in storage cupboards to keep things contained, including the living room. There, the fireplace wall is a focal

(previous spread) While dining in the hexagonal breakfast room, the homeowners can watch equine antics in the neighboring horse pasture. The room’s centerpiece is a distinctive table with an oak top and concrete tripod lyre base from Michael Taylor Designs.

(above) Café curtains on the lower half of the kitchen windows offer a bit of privacy while still allowing the homeowners to enjoy the view. The pewter light fixture above the island does triple duty—it offers brass hooks for hanging pots as well as both ambient and task lighting.



(above) The frameless off-white custom cabinetry with pewter drawer pulls gives the kitchen the clean, simple look the homeowner loves. A handmade ceramic tile backsplash, granite countertops, and hand-scraped hickory flooring add texture and a natural appeal to the room.

point, with its black marble facing, custom-built mantel, and cabinetry with backlit leaded glass transoms.

But the most arresting features in the room are the 20-foot lighted ceiling and a wall of windows that offer panoramic views of the landscape. For those reasons, it's among the homeowner's favorite places for quiet reflection. "You can sit on the sofa and look out the window and get the sense that the room is expanding far above you," she notes.

Like the rest of the home, this favorite retreat spills over with warmth and fulfills the homeowner's dream that light illuminate every corner. **CHG**