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Coastal Inspiration

Janna Woods fell in love with south Florida's older Mediterranean-style estates as a college student 25 years ago. The architectural beauty of those coastal homes stuck with her, so much so that when Janna and her husband began constructing a house in Houston, they carefully selected and incorporated the features they most loved about Mediterranean design. In particular, arched doorways and loggias, wrought-iron railings, red-tile roofs, and broad, bracketed eaves reminiscent of the Italian Renaissance took center stage.





Circular windows placed high above a limestone fireplace invite light into the living room.



LEFT: Five sets of tall French doors bring light into the living room. Topped with 3-foot transoms, they open to the patio, pool, and a bayou view.

OPPOSITE: A 19th-century, hand-carved French architectural piece frames a mirror and balances the dining room space, which is dominated by an 84-inch, round Italian walnut table.

ELEGANT IDEA

Think light wherever possible. When light enters a home through a variety of windows and doors, it provides warmth, beauty, and an intimate connection to the outdoors. Oversize windows offer spectacular views and bathe a room in natural light. Smaller openings bring in additional light while protecting privacy. The owners of this home embraced light in nearly every corner, adding high circular windows, 9½-foot-tall French doors, and floor-to-ceiling window panels that make the most of beautiful outdoor views.

Janna and architect Brent Nyquist traveled to Florida several times to seek further inspiration from the architectural elements that define homes there. One example was cut stone, which Nyquist used for the living room's large, stately fireplace surround. Stone also played an important role in the choice of flooring. "Many of the older, finer homes in Florida use a coral stone on the floors," says Nyquist, who joined Janna in a fruitless search for the rare, now-protected shell. Instead they used a rough-textured Italian travertine with a classic Mediterranean look on most of the home's main level.

A pie-shape lot limited building space and prevented slavish adherence to any one style, so the house features a branching floor plan that splits formal and casual spaces downstairs and the master suite and guest quarters upstairs.





Inside the home, the ceilings rise to 14 feet in the living room and to 12 feet elsewhere on the main level. Every room on the upper level feels grand thanks to the 11-foot ceilings and expansive windows and doors.

One glorious feature, natural light, is abundant throughout the home. It pours into the living room through five sets of French doors and high circular windows. Often, windows stretch from floor to ceiling, offering nearly uninterrupted views of the outdoors. Nyquist says the living room embraces the qualities he most appreciates in an indoor space. "Having light enter from three sides of a room is a luxury," he says. "It's the most successful corner of the house." The family room is especially intimate because of natural lighting choices. A built-in window seat presses up to a bayou view, and a breakfast table placed near paneled windows allows diners to peer into the back courtyard.

Although Janna's husband, Jack Hamilton, had some input into the design of the home, he says he left most of the decisions to his wife. Building the home, after all, was the latest endeavor in her long-standing affair with Mediterranean design. **EH**

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ABOVE: When the homeowners dine on their own, they enjoy a view of the back courtyard through expansive paneled windows.

RIGHT: The back of the pie-shape home creates a courtyard that affords the patio, loggia, and terrace privacy from neighboring houses.





SOMETIMES THE LOT SIZE is less important than the shape. For these owners, a pie-shape lot with limited building space presented a unique design challenge. A branching, triangular floor plan places the front entrance at the narrowest part of the home. Left and right branches separate distinct living areas both upstairs and down. The arrangement allows the homeowners to take advantage of the bayou views behind the house.

