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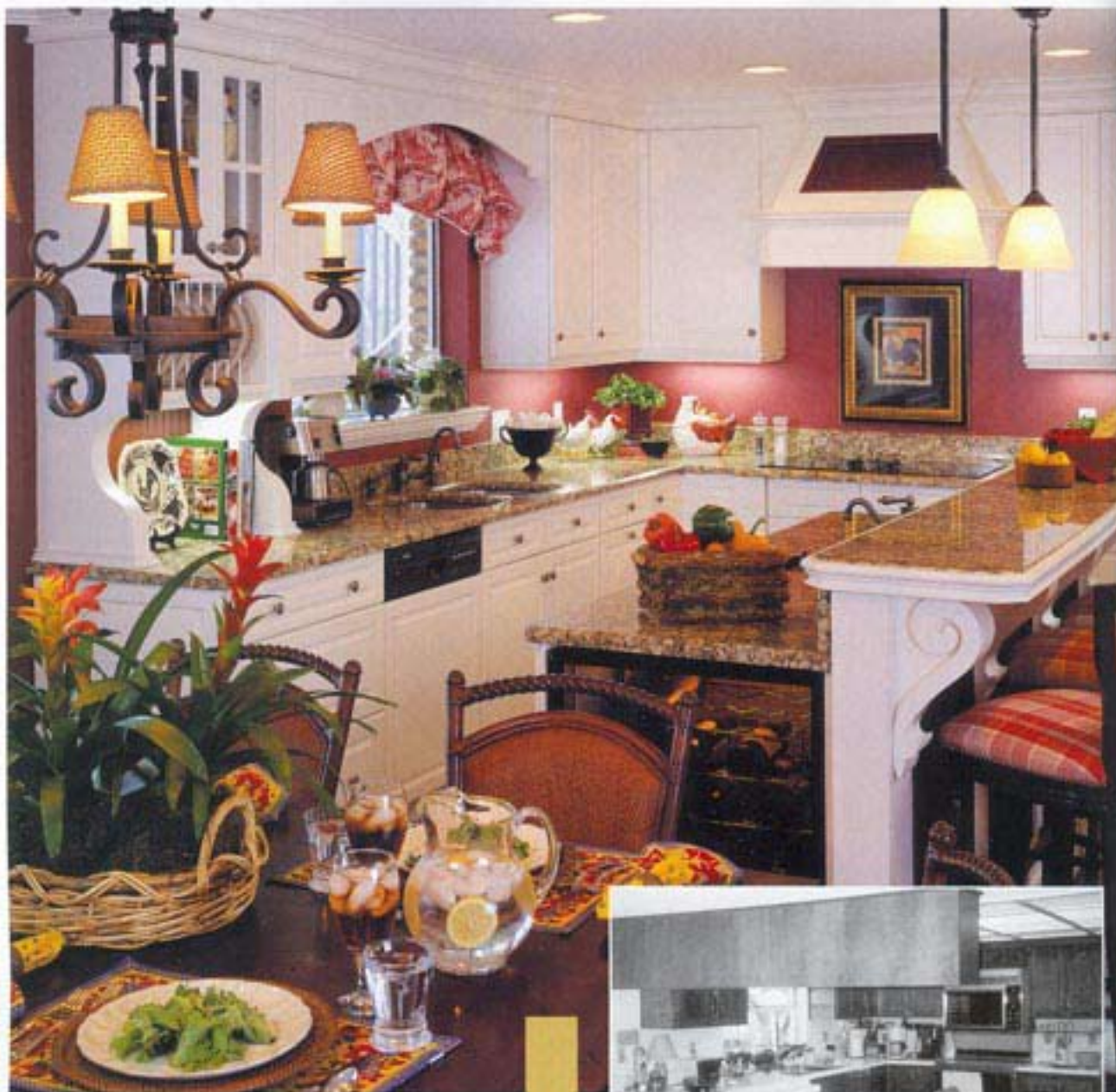
Amazing Transformations: Interior

Out-of-date spaces become showplaces with savvy interior remodels and style-setting design.

BY CHRISTY SMITH

This is the second in a two-part series on extensive home remodeling projects that result in a new-home appearance. "Amazing Transformations: Exterior" appeared in our April issue.





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Sometimes it's a look you once loved that has grown dated. Or perhaps you knew from the minute you bought the house that eventually your new home's interior would have to change. More often than not, it's simply a style that no longer fits your lifestyle. Whatever the reason, Central Florida homeowners are transforming their homes' dated looks into fabulous, more functional spaces.

It's no secret that high-end homes drive the remodeling market. According to Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies, about 90 percent of the growth in the remodeling industry over the past decade was stimulated by those with homes worth \$400,000 or more (in 2003 dollars). And while home remodeling is nothing new, skyrocketing house values have homeowners creating spaces that are far more lux-

Courtesy of Appleton Clark Interiors/Stephen Allen Photography



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urious than ever before. Remodeling spending has soared to a quarter-trillion dollars each year, with no sign of slowing.

Personal Style, Personal Spaces

Homeowners are placing significant emphasis on creating specialty areas to fit individual family needs, industry experts say. Homes continue to evolve into living spaces that meet the needs of each individual who resides there. It is not unusual to find remodeling projects that result in the creation of very specific areas for each member of the household.

A home library, media space, craft room, massage suite, spa area or wine cellar are but a few distinct "zones" that are growing in popularity in today's contemporary homes. Although the ultimate luxury consists of more "space," homeowners are not willing to sacrifice quality for quantity.

"Remodeling allows your home to be more conducive to your lifestyle," says Paul Gidus, co-owner of PSG Construction. "One area that has become really popular is wine cellars. It used to be just the really high-end homes. Now you're seeing it even in a moderate remodel."

There was nothing moderate about the PSG's remodel of a '70s-era ranch on Lake Jesamine. A brick wine cellar, tucked under a staircase and highlighted by an elaborate iron gate, was just one of the many touches added to this complete home renovation.

The former 2,700-square-foot home was transformed into a 6,400-square-foot two-story with a rustic hunting lodge theme, capturing the feel of the lakefront property dotted with pine trees and stately oaks.

An 18-foot-high vaulted ceiling and a wall of soaring glass windows frame the great room. The ceiling beams and fireplace mantle are constructed of authentic beams salvaged by PSG Construction from a barn built in the late 1800s in upstate New York.

The kitchen was updated with a rustic, country feel, featuring brick flooring, tumbled marble countertops and distressed hickory cabinetry. The wine cellar is conveniently located within this area for entertaining.

"In Florida, [stairs] are a great space to tuck in a wine cellar," Gidus says.

Both the master bedroom and bath also were renovated. The bedroom features a handsome, yet functional custom-made storage center crafted of cherry. French doors leading to a private patio were installed. The master bath now has a spa feel with an oversized shower and separate whirlpool tub. The floor was covered with Ubatuba travertine and black granite inserts. This whole-house renovation also included a four-car garage and a basketball half-court with an NBA-regulation maple floor.

PSG Construction remodeled another home's personalized space, where "family

friendly" takes on new meaning. The existing floor plan of the Altamonte Springs home was not serving the needs of the family, which includes four children. The kitchen was cramped, especially when the children's friends were over. And a much-needed recreation room was not fully utilized because it could only be accessed from an outdoor walkway.

In order to make the kitchen work better for the family, PSG Construction opened it up to the family room, improving the overall flow of the space. An 8-foot island was added to increase the utility of the area and provide enough space for the children and their friends to eat. To help the busy family during the remodeling period, PSG installed a complete temporary kitchen in an adjacent dining room.

To connect the kitchen and family room with the recreation room, an open breezeway was enclosed. With hardwood floors, beamed ceilings, casually elegant furnishings and open views, the new recreation room offers a relaxing space for the family. A new pool deck, reconfigured columns on the back porch and a refinished pool give the family additional entertainment space.

Kitchens and Baths Still Rule

While remodeling "personal spaces" is increasing in popularity, the two most desirable areas for remodeling continue to be kitchens and baths.

"Updating kitchens and baths make the

biggest impact, because they get dated quickly," Gidus says. "Those changes create the most effect. Reconfiguring to make the most of a good view also makes a great impact."

Gidus says that one of today's trends when renovating a kitchen is mixing stained wood cabinets with painted wood cabinets. Luscious cabinetry continues to be a focus.

"Stainless steel [finishes for appliances] continues to be popular, but others are beginning to hide their appliances behind cabinetry," Gidus says. "And granite countertops are a given now."

"Kitchens are gaining importance because there just seems to be more of a desire to do gourmet cooking."

"Everyone wants to be in the kitchen—

solid cherry cabinets. An island was added to house the dishwasher, sink and prep area.

Stylish granite countertops envelop the kitchen. "The granite color is Ubatuba—a dark green with mica flakes," Scribner says. "With the mica, different lighting makes the granite look black or green. In fact, Ubatuba is one of the most popular colors now." Stainless steel appliances completed the transformation, which took approximately two months.

"The homeowners wanted clean lines," Scribner says. "The style—it's not really modern or Old World. It's a blend of the two. Rich colors without being too striking."

According to Scribner, European-style clean lines are becoming more popular in

The original bathroom area contains a new double vanity for the couple. Elegant wall sconces bathe the room with light. Venetian plaster and a host of arches add the perfect Tuscan touch. Expansive glass windows were added so that the homeowners could enjoy a newly installed garden. Handmade decorative tiles top the 5-foot-tall English wainscoting. Italian-themed statues and vases were added as part of the décor.

Completed in three months, the once-diminutive bath was increased to 175 square feet.

Planning Open Floor Plans

Creating open spaces is one of the most consistent remodeling themes. Older

Master bath trends continue to focus on creating a spa experience at home. Steam showers, music and aromatherapy are popular additions.

that's where the action is," says Steve Scribner, president of Scribner Remodeling and Construction Inc.

Making a kitchen more open and accessible was the goal of Scribner's remodel in Windermere. The older kitchen was originally divided from the rest of the living spaces by a full-length wall with only a small door open to the living room. In order to create the open, airy space the homeowners wanted, Scribner's crew tore out the full wall and added a 15-foot knee wall. Thorough lighting was important, so recessed lights were added throughout, along with over- and under-cabinet lighting and pendants. Hardwood flooring in a light maple contrasts warmly with the

Central Florida. It's a modern look—sleek yet still warm and inviting.

Master bath trends continue to focus on creating a spa experience at home. Separate large showers and tubs now are considered standard. Steam showers, music and aromatherapy are popular additions.

In another remodel, in the Longwood area, the homeowners wanted to turn their bland master bath into a luxurious Tuscan spa experience. For Scribner Remodeling and Construction, that meant pushing out the outer wall of the 5-by-10-foot bath to install an addition. The added space houses a new whirlpool tub, water closet and a dramatic shower with body jets and a custom glass enclosure.

homes tended to section off rooms individually. Today, homeowners want spaces that are spacious and open and that visually flow into each other.

"We're taking a lot of walls down in older homes," says Kimberly Clark of Appleton Clark Interiors. "People today are really looking for a way to utilize their spaces for their families in a comfortable and inviting environment. Especially when we are redoing a living area, we're getting away from formal spaces."

The living and dining rooms were the focus of a home remodel in Winter Park. The dramatic transformation, complete with custom furniture and upholstery, took Appleton Clark Interiors about six

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