

EXECUTIVE LIFESTYLE

© 2004 New Business Today, L.L.C. All Rights Reserved

NEW BUSINESS TODAY



AUGUST 2004

Marilynn Berke: Master of Design

The North Palm Beach-based designer is best known for customizing interiors to her discerning clients' style and needs.

With years of experience designing the interiors of luxurious homes in South Florida, there is no challenge too great for the Marilynn Berke Interior Design team. For example in a grand home with soaring ceilings, the acclaimed interior designer has instilled the formality that characterized Palm Beach when it became a resort town in the 1890s during the Gilded Age. Then, with just the right textures and tones, she transformed formality's rigidity with a welcoming warmth and tranquility.

"The scale of this home was perfect for a more traditional look that nonetheless is comfortable and not intimidating," says Berke of the Palm Beach Gardens country club community with soaring ceilings and floor-to-ceiling windows. "If we've gotten it right, you should walk in and sense a feel that hearkens back to turn-of-the-century grandeur but also reflects the present-day era of home, family and togetherness. Achieving that was a challenge we embraced with open arms."



Kitchen designed by Marilynn Berke

frame chairs upholstered in a soothing tapestry print in eggplant, gold and green. Above, a large iron and bronze chandelier holds cream-colored silk shades trimmed in gold. One wall is home to a floor-to-ceiling wood cabinet detailed with carvings and twisted column sides, while another wall showcases an original oil painting by a Peruvian artist the couple met while traveling in South America. Typically, the dining room table is set for more formal gatherings with antique crystal goblets, sterling silver Waterford stemware and antique English china rimmed with aqua and 24-carat gold.

The kitchen, on the other hand, is informal, a place where friends can sit at the counter in the large room and sip wine and help cook. "It's really the husband who loves to cook the most and we talked at length with him about the kitchen," says Berke. The kitchen's glazed custom walnut cabinets gleam with silver hardware. Counters showcase fine granite with stone-set back splashes. A stunning walnut hood accented by an appliqué pattern caps the commercial cooktop stove. "The kitchen is good for both entertaining and cooking," says Berke. "I should know. As pleased as our clients were with this home, they've invited us to dinner several times!"

Joining her in the challenge was her talented design team at North Palm Beach-based Marilynn Berke Interior Design Associates, led by Marilynn Berke. The showpiece, 5,000-square-foot home on a lush half-acre parcel was one of hundreds the firm has designed in premier communities

"As the saying goes, you're only as good as your last project, which is why this recent one holds particular meaning for us now," says Berke.

Upon entering the large home overlooking an alluring outdoor loggia, a free-form pool, lush landscaping and a golf course, there is an immediate sense of majesty and comfort. Throughout are shades of gold, champagne, sage-green eggplant and plum. Silk draperies, plush tapestry-print furnishings, velvet-lined throw pillows, Satamia marble floors and large-scale wood tables with hand-carved bases detail main living areas, blending Old World luxury with humility amid 15-foot ceilings. Berke carefully incorporated her clients' art collection, unique pieces the husband and wife acquired on the worldwide travels. She also worked with the home's architect on such interior appointments as the living room's custom floor-to-ceiling cast-stone fireplace with its exquisite mantel carvings. In fact, with the builder, she customized many features including the wood-framed glass entry doors embellished with beautiful wrought-iron filigree. "We customized many things based on the tastes and way of life of this particular couple," says Berke. "One of the things that was really important to them was making all living areas conducive to comfortable socializing."

In addition to their careers, entertaining is a big part of their lives. The duo loves to cook and considers cooking and gathering with friends in the kitchen to be a bona-fide social affair. The dining room is gracious with deep wood tones and large-scale furnishings. Around the wood-topped, stone-base table are stately high-back, wood-



Dining Room designed by Marilynn Berke