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## Hillsborough California House Tour

In a contemporary home where the backyard is only a few steps from any room, there's no reason to go on vacation.

Lydia Lee



### Picture Perfect

Designed by TRG Architects

Photo credit: Bernard Andre

Few homes are fit to host large parties complete with a costumed relay race, a water-balloon toss and a Jell-O eating contest, but for homeowners Lisa and Michael Rubenstein, it's precisely the kind of celebration their house was designed for. With its broad layout and views of a sleek pool set into a seemingly endless carpet of emerald grass, the house has the feeling of a vacation getaway. There's a full complement of resort activities, including a mini-golf green and paddle-tennis court for the kids and a bocce ball court for the adults.


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### Visitor Hours

The family's life is centered on the pleasures of socializing indoors and out. "We always have people around," says Lisa, the busy mom of Ben and Lily, and an interior designer whose company is called Real Rooms. "We wanted a place where people could walk in and immediately feel at home—where you don't have to worry about the kids running around with juice boxes."





### Family Ties

Their son Ben, who uses a wheelchair, inspired the Rubensteins to think about a single-story home. Once they located the nearly two-acre property, a friend referred them to architect Randy Grange, the principal of [TRG Architects](#). The Rubensteins' project was quite different from Grange's previous projects. Not only was contemporary architecture a better match for their casual sensibilities, the family also had a modern-day interest in green building.

### Green Dream

"Michael was always driving the green innovations," says Lisa about her husband, a Silicon Valley entrepreneur. His ideas for the house included installing solar panels, sourcing materials within 100 miles, using a gray-water irrigation system for the native landscaping and adding enough electricity to the garage to power their cars in the future.







### Design Leads

Grange designed a low-slung house that would bring together all the Rubenteins' requirements. With hundreds of square feet of patios, the house is truly an indoor/outdoor home, which is what the homeowners had in mind. As a guiding concept, they asked Grange to wrap all the living spaces around a central courtyard. "It was one of the tougher things because there were so many rooms they wanted to look onto the courtyard," says Grange. "But almost every room does connect to it."

### Everyday Outdoors

In the U-shaped layout, the bedrooms are in the west wing and the family gathering spaces are in the east wing, with the living and dining rooms in between. Grange gave the few rooms that don't open directly onto the courtyard their own outdoor spaces: Lisa's office has a small terrace where she holds meetings, and the kids' play area opens onto an outdoor living room, playfully outfitted with Philippe Starck's Bubble Club sofa and armchairs.





### Mix It Up

Lisa's love of eclectic design continues through the interiors, the result of a collaborative effort with Leslie Lamarre, the principal interior designer at TRG. Lisa favors modern lighting fixtures such as the Cellula chandelier over the dining room table, and on the white walls are works by Warhol, Rauschenberg and Lichtenstein from the collection that she and Michael have put together over the years.

### Mismatched Magic

But Lisa's vision is less about the rigors of modernism and more about an unexpected mix. The furniture is a blend of transitional pieces and curvy antiques accented with exuberant notes of Hollywood Regency glam—including a gilded console in the hallway and an overscaled damask rug in her office.







### Sunshine Accents

The library and the living room both overlook the backyard and share a doublesided EcoSmart fireplace. In the library, two mismatched chairs from Todd Hase are covered in lemon yellow.

### All that Glitters

The kitchen and baths keep in tune with the modern rhythm, deftly echoing each other with a similar dynamic pattern of tiny Ann Sacks tiles. In the bathrooms, the mosaic is executed in bright ceramic tiles; in the kitchen, it's made up of subtle shades of marble.



### Alfresco Entertaining

Since they moved, the Rubensteins have tested their house's capacity to accommodate everyone and everything: They held a school fundraiser for 125 people. "We call it the 'Ruby Resort,'" laughs Lisa. "We always seem to be filling up."