

open house

AS EASY AND
ELEGANT AS
JEANS AND
A CASHMERE
SWEATER

Interior design by
SUZANNE TUCKER

Interview by
FRANCES SCHULTZ

Photographs by
EDMUND BARR

The dining room of this California house is a separate structure, a stone pavilion designed by architect Sandy Walker on a promontory overlooking the Pacific. Interior designer Suzanne Tucker furnished it with a Michael Taylor table made of walnut and cast concrete, and leather-covered chairs from A. Rudin. Carole Gratale chandelier. OPPOSITE: A vine-covered arbor connects the pavilion to the house. Walls are Carmel stone, quarried locally.





FRANCES SCHULTZ: There's such a wonderful ease about this house.

SUZANNE TUCKER: This was a big adventure for the owners, building a house on the central coast of California. They wanted it to be approachable, livable, in keeping with the setting, so that everyone who came in—whether a workman or the Queen of England—would feel at home.

Has Her Majesty visited?

No, she hasn't had the good fortune. But they're always having friends over, to the point where you wouldn't even call it entertaining. It's just a way of life. You feel so relaxed when you're with them. They're fun, they're funny, they love to have a good time. Usually after a dinner party the music'll come on and the shoes'll come off, and the dancing will begin.

I want to come! How do you design a house to be conducive to that?

I'm always looking at how the flow happens. Where are people going to gravitate? You have to create areas for them to go toward, even if it's subconscious. People are like cattle: they have to be prodded to move. So having a circular flow is ideal because the energy can keep moving.

Can you explain how that happens in this house?

Sandy Walker, the architect, designed it so that you can go out through the living room, circle back to the terrace where the fireplace is, come back into the family room, go out through the arbor to the dining pavilion, and then come back around through the doors that open to the view. There are multiple ways to go in and out, as well as several outdoor rooms.

A dining pavilion is such a romantic notion. How did it come about?

They didn't want a formal dining room, but they entertain so much they knew they needed a dining room per se. They also wanted it to be special, so the architect came up with the concept of the pavilion connected to the house by an arbor covered with vines and wisteria.

If the key to a successful party is making your guests feel special, that should do the trick.



ABOVE: The entry's light-filled vaulted ceiling, warm plaster walls, and flagstone floor, which flows from the exterior, set the tone for the rest of the house. Gregorius Pineo lamps. **OPPOSITE:** The living room's several seating areas accommodate large or small crowds intimately. Oak beams were lightly hand-hewn to enhance the textural quality. Mohair rug from Specialty Textiles; woven chairs from Wicker Works.

Very much so. Because it's a destination—a surprise element of, 'Oh my goodness, we're dining out here, in this little magical stone structure.' I always look at what colors are going to be flattering as the night goes on. The stone has these lovely French vanilla and *dulce de leche* tones that in candlelight make everyone look healthy and happy and glowing.

That's some table.

It's a table I've used often, and it's dear to my heart because it was a Michael Taylor table.

The late and legendary San Francisco designer who was your mentor.

Yes, and the table is modeled after his desk, which he used for many years.

Do you reckon they dance on it?

I would never put it past them.

And no neighbors to catch them at it.

Far from prying eyes, every window frames a see-forever view.

I'm a stickler for framing viewpoints, whether it's to the outside or the end of a hallway. What is your eye landing upon? I view the window as another piece of art in the room, because in the

daytime it is. And then you have to be sensitive to the views at night. Often in the country your views go dark.

Yes, what about that? How do you keep all those windows from becoming big black holes?

I make sure there's soft lighting to the landscape. I also use matchstick blinds that will filter light. Whether it's morning, with the sun streaming in, or it's evening and you really want to feel cozy, matchsticks give you the effect of having that softness but not being completely enclosed.

The textures and colors in the living room have an almost luminous quality to them.

Yes, it's inspired by the indigenous stone and the earth in the whole central coast area, as well as keeping on the warmer side because you do have those cold, gray days there. You want that inherent warmth in the room; you have to allow for that in foggy areas of California.

The bedroom feels so enveloping, like you're in a tree house, right up to the cedar planks on the ceiling.

A country house is very much about bringing the outdoor texture inside. We all think of bringing outdoor colors in, but I also look at things like the bark on the trees. It emphasizes the indoor-outdoor feel of a house and keeps the formality played down.

I'd love to end an evening here around that big fireplace. What is it about an outdoor fireplace?

For those who have the luxury of weather that allows it, an outdoor fireplace literally creates an extra room in your house. It's another place to go and to linger. I think it harks back to everyone's days as a child around the campfire. It's one of the most seductive things you can have, and it doesn't have to be big.

The whole house is seductive. Is that what you had in mind when you did it?

I always think of the seduction of a house, about how it will reveal itself to you. You don't want to give it all away immediately. It's much more interesting to experience a house fully as you walk through it.

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A ceiling of natural cedar brings the outdoors in and creates texture and warmth in the master bedroom. The silk and linen Stark rug adds plush softness. Curtains and bed skirt are Leopard by Raoul Textiles. Dome pendant light from Hilliard. OPPOSITE: An outdoor fireplace of Carmel stone makes the ultimate outdoor room. Multiple terraces and exterior doors encourage an easy flow in and around the house, making it ideal for entertaining. Teak chairs and ottomans from Summit Furniture. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES



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