

THE ART OF LIVING WELL

PART THREE

INDULGE

AUGUST 2006

Keeping it Casual

Although luxuriously appointed, Nicole and John Zimmerman's Montserrat home is a beacon for entertaining, both inside and out.



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A long porch along the back of the home provides one of many gathering spaces. Nicole and John Zimmerman are pictured with Jack, left, and Sarah Katherine along with the family dogs, Sammy, with Sarah, and Woody.



HOMESTYLE

Welcome ... Home

BY TIFFANY FIGUEIREDO PHOTOS BY RON T. ENNIS

John and Nicole Zimmerman's Montserrat home is the ultimate place for entertaining friends and family.

If there is one survival strategy Nicole Zimmerman has learned after 13 years of marriage to a real estate developer, it's that, "We never unpack all of our boxes." When pressed to name the number of times she and husband John have moved since leaving Arkansas after college, the couple stop and

think, look at each other, say two different numbers, then laugh. "We're really not sure," says Nicole. "But this is the seventh house we've either built or completely renovated ... or is it the eighth?"

The house in question is the one they are busy putting the final touches on, a 7,330-square-foot stone French Country-style home

MORE ON L4



Copper crosses add a Gothic accent to the roofline of the 7,000-plus-square-foot home. Below, the metal accents continue inside with these copper awnings, used instead of traditional window coverings, and which provide ample decoration without sacrificing the view of the pool outside.



HOMESTYLE

Welcome ... Home

CONTINUED FROM L2

set on 2 parklike acres in Montserrat, the west Fort Worth luxury development that has been John's current project since its opening in 2004. Architect Dale Grandmaison of Grand Home Designs finalized plans for the home after major, yearlong input from the Zimmermans, who after seven — or eight — such projects knew exactly what they desired.

"We wanted to build something that would be a really great entertaining and family house, but something that would fit into the

land," says John (Montserrat is built into the tree-lined hills outside of Benbrook). "We wanted our kids to have their friends over and just have fun." They seem to have succeeded, for a day spent at the home is a day spent meeting new people, as a steady stream of folks — friends, neighbors and playmates of the couple's children, Sarah Katherine, 8, and Jack, 7 — flows in and out through the massive glass and iron front door.

Guests are greeted by Sammy and Woody,

MORE ON L6



A tiled niche in the breakfast room holds a collection of artfully placed antique books, dessert plates, saucers and a bird's nest.

HOMESTYLE

The kitchen light fixture is made from copper dairy funnels found in San Francisco; the bracket was custom made and hard-wired to create a unique chandelier. Granite countertops and wood-faced appliances keep the kitchen, which opens up to the living room and breakfast room, warm and cozy.



CONTINUED FROM L4

the family's two Cavalier King Charles spaniels, and led into a two-story entryway that, despite its grand scale and ornate staircase, is warm and welcoming thanks to a muted color palette. The soft colors are carried over throughout the house, including in the sitting room, where pastel blue, green, coral and gold furnishings and an oversize, antique Gothic-style stained-glass church-window-turned-mirror dominate the space.

In the open kitchen and family room, impor-

Welcome ...Home

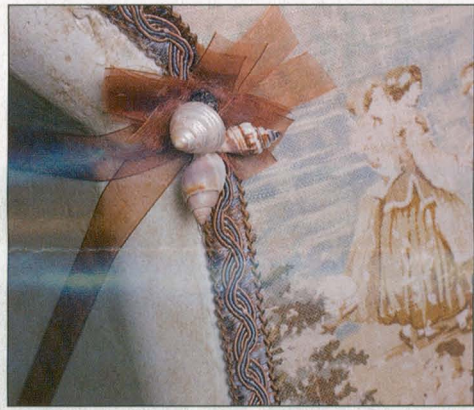


Dark, hand-hewn fir ceiling beams throughout the house contrast nicely with the home's soft color palette and add visual interest to the open rooms.

ted travertine marble floors in pale cream, rugs and furnishings in pretty pastels and tans, and softly glazed Venetian plaster walls create an airy atmosphere that is highlighted by the overhead framework of large hand-cut fir ceiling beams stained a rich, dark brown.

Granite-topped knotty alder woodwork in the kitchen is glazed a light golden brown, while the center island is antiqued in a complementary spring green. The focal point of the kitchen is a custom light fixture made from two antique copper dairy funnels. The copper is echoed atop the adjoining family room windows, where three rounded awnings with scrollwork detailing make for unique window treatments that don't obscure the view of the back yard.

Both the kitchen light fixture and the awnings were ideas of interior designer Ally Arlington of Tallulah & Co. Design in Fort Worth, who, after working on four houses with the Zimmermans, has



A cozy powder room features a faux painted wall behind the commode adorned with ribbon and seashells to contrast with the padded toile-covered walls.

become both a trusted decorating adviser and a close friend.

"They are pretty open to whatever ideas I come up with," she says. "I think their one big thing is that everything has to be comfortable because they love entertaining and having lots of people around. They have very nice things, but there's nothing in the house that the kids aren't allowed to be on." Nicole agrees, adding that, "John won't have a piece of



The corbels on either side of the doors leading to the back yard are of Bacchus, the Roman god of wine, which is fitting, as the back yard is where most of the Zimmermans' entertaining takes place.

furniture that he can't put his feet up on."

That attitude toward relaxed style is evident throughout the house, where soft, overstuffed pieces, many from Simple Things custom furniture store in Fort Worth, encourage settling in for a glass of wine and good conversation or snuggling up with one of the dogs, who can often be seen dozing on the best seat in the room.

Nowhere is the feeling of comfort greater than in the upstairs media room, which has a fun and funky feel. An anteroom, complete with peacock blue cabinetry housing a small refrigerator, sink,

MORE ON L8



There's more to Hill Country than the limestone bluffs of Possum Kingdom State Park. It's a place for back porch gatherings and nature hikes; power boating on Lake Travis, an hour west of Fort Worth.

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Off the media room is a snack station, complete with a popcorn machine, all the favorite snacks, a small refrigerator for drinks and peacock-blue glazed cabinets.

Welcome ... Home

CONTINUED FROM L7

popcorn machine and storage shelves, leads to the media room, where the focus is a huge custom daybed made by Fort Worth-based Kisabeth Furniture. The room can be shut off by a pocket door, leaving wall sconces set on dimmers, a large projection-screen television and the occasional glint of copper in the metallic-glazed walls the only sources of light.

"This is probably our favorite room in the house right now," says Nicole. "We can all fit on the daybed and watch a movie together. And since it is so comfortable and the room is so dark, it's a great place to take a nap."

Another soothing place in the home is the master bedroom, where an antiqued pine tongue-and-groove cathedral ceiling, hand-scraped teak floors and a fireplace accent a calm cream-on-cream color scheme. A large fireplace warms the spacious but cozy master bath, the highlight of which is a walk-in closet



In the sitting room, the tufted niche seat holds Nicole's great-grandmother's bright green and gold-rimmed Old Royal China from England.

filled with beautiful dark-wood-and-glass cabinetry. A sunken tub sits adjacent to a two-person travertine shower complete with "picture" window overlooking the tub.



Jack's room features a distressed corrugated tin ceiling, custom-made pine log beds and a kids-only loft that has more bunks for when friends sleep over. A slide leads from the loft to the bedroom though the wall opposite the beds.

Upstairs, the children's bedrooms received as much, if not more, thoughtful planning as the rest of the house. The bunkhouse theme in Jack's room features handmade pine log beds, an earthy paint scheme and a soaring ceiling cleverly covered in old corrugated tin, which Jack has learned to like after his initial concern over how "dirty" it appeared.

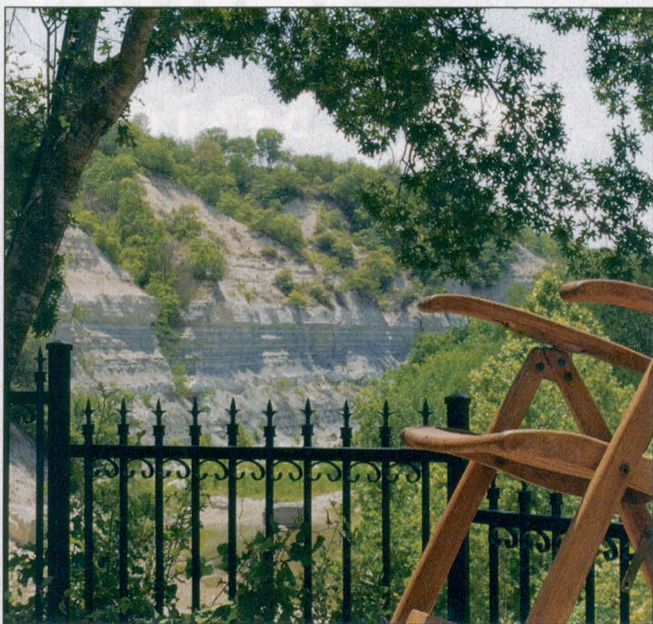
The Zimmermans took advantage of the room's overhead attic space and created a large loft accessible by a metal, kid-size staircase. Jack's young friends (and the occasional grown-up) are thrilled to learn that a slide built into the wall can swoop them from the loft down to the bedroom.

Down the hall, Sarah Katherine's Paris-inspired, black and pink bedroom also has a loft, complete with a disco ball, karaoke machine and comfortable bean bag chairs where she and her friends can lounge. Back down in her bedroom, a soaring window seat featuring plump pillows and cushions provides an extra sleeping space or a quiet spot to read a book. A

MORE ON L11

HOMESTYLE

Welcome ... Home



A secluded corner of the back yard features a large flagstone seating area, raised fire pit and relaxing views of Mary's Creek and its limestone bluffs.



The saltwater pool beckons visitors through the back windows. At the far end, a covered outdoor living space features a wood-burning fireplace and seating areas. At left is a part of the Zimmermans' parklike back yard. Trees and an inlaid concrete chessboard dot the landscape.

CONTINUED FROM L9

beautifully detailed armoire, personalized by Ally Arlington's mother, decorative painter Michelle Duwe, houses special treasures and a television. Duwe also silver-leafed and monogrammed the claw-foot soaking tub in the black-and-white-tiled bathroom.

While the children's friends have fun playing in the bedroom lofts, adult visitors usually can be found outside by the expansive pool, already the site of several elaborate parties and many impromptu get-togethers. The pool is flanked on one side by a large expanse of grass and native trees, at the center of which is a life-size chessboard made from stone squares set into the grass. On the other side of the pool is an outdoor kitchen and bar, behind which sits the two-story guest/pool house.

The guesthouse has a comfortable sitting area, a pool table, a small kitchen downstairs and a bedroom painted a refreshing bright green upstairs. The bedroom also boasts a projection television so guests can watch movies while lying in bed. Lining the staircase are framed black-and-white photographs of John's grandfather on hunting trips in his native Arkansas.

Beyond the pool is an outdoor living room complete with wood-burning fireplace, seating area and dining table. The covered space was converted into a stage for a live band at a post-Colonial golf tournament party hosted by the Zimmermans this year. The couple say they lost count of the number of people who attended after around 400.

The star of the back yard, most everyone agrees, is the view of Mary's Creek from another gathering place in the far corner of the Zimmermans' yard. Large stepping stones lead to this casual gathering spot featuring a fire pit and seating area set back some distance from the house. Looking down into this surprisingly wide section of the creek, which runs behind the property, it is hard to believe that such a rugged and untamed landscape is part of Fort Worth proper. It is the perfect place for the family to relax or to entertain friends by the fire, something they hope to do more of once the weather cools.

When asked if they'll settle down in this house for a while since it is seemingly everything that they had hoped it would be, the Zimmermans smile mysteriously and shrug, although Nicole does mention those boxes she has yet to unpack.



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