

Interior designer Yvonne McFadden created a unique coffee table for Kristie Lilienthal's outdoor living room by setting a slab of custom concrete on top of found iron fragments. The iron gate leads to a pool.



Trading in city life for rolling hills, a homeowner calls on fond memories of Italy to realize her dream house and a whole new lifestyle for herself.

Country CALLING

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The lofty slopes and dense forests of the Blue Ridge Mountains stole Kristie Lilienthal's heart one Thanksgiving as



OPPOSITE: Architect Brad Wright designed the great-room around a large walnut wall unit from Kristie's previous home. The piece also inspired the dark, hand-scraped walnut flooring that flows throughout the main floor. **ABOVE:** To give the home historical heft, the exterior is crafted from seven different kinds of stone, all quarried in South Carolina or surrounding states.

she traveled from the Midwest to Florida. So when she had an opportunity four years ago to trade in the hubbub of Chicago for the quieter environs of the Southeast, she spent many hours combing online real estate listings and visiting mountain communities throughout Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

Kristie dreamed of a stone cottage that would remind her of Tuscany. "I love Italy," she says. "I would live there if it wasn't so far away! The homes there have such a feeling of substance and soul." But an exhaustive search of her chosen region failed to turn up the right combination of house and view, so Kristie started to think about building.

When her agent showed her a hilltop lot that featured a sweeping vista of Lake Keowee in South Carolina's Upcountry, Kristie knew immediately that she was home. "It was private without being

isolated—just perfect," Kristie says. The agent referred Kristie to architect Brad Wright, a South Carolina native and fellow lover of Italy, and Kristie presented her wish list: Tuscan arches inside and out, a generous outdoor living space, and a killer kitchen open to a great-room. Most important, Kristie wanted the shimmering lake at the back of the house to be visible as soon as she, or a guest, opened the front door.

The entry challenge had Wright wadding up sheets of paper until he came up with the ingenious solution of a see-through loggia that wraps around most of the house. The loggia, which is easily accessed from the great-room and kitchen, affords unhindered views of the lake from the entry, kitchen, and great-room. It also gives Kristie sublime outdoor eating, sitting, and cooking space.

Kristie hadn't planned on hiring an interior designer, but after seeing her home spring to life, she brought in Yvonne McFadden. "I didn't want the decorating to steal attention away from the architecture," Kristie says. "Yvonne has a great talent for creating quiet and calm. I wouldn't have been able to do that on my own."

Plaster walls in the entry and great-room were color-matched to the gently faded white finish of the kitchen cabinets. The calming background focuses attention on the public spaces' dramatic timbered ceilings and wrought-iron chandeliers. Kristie and McFadden collaborated on a mix of custom chairs and sofas, plus a few well-chosen antiques, to fashion a European country ambiance that's refined and relaxed. Mellow wool rugs and swaths of velvet, linen, and antique-tapestry fabrics soften the solidity of the home's wood, iron, and stone surfaces. "I wanted simplicity and substance—and I got it," Kristie says. "I love how graceful and elegant the rooms are and how the house feels like it's been here for forever."




The kitchen was designed to facilitate casual entertaining, such as the neighborhood cook-a-thons that Kristie frequently hosts. A library-style ladder provides access to high upper cabinets, while abundant natural light is delivered via south-facing windows, a skylight above the cooktop, and a quatrefoil window.



"I like to blend warm antiques and earth tones with gold accents like gilded mirrors and picture frames. It adds so much depth and richness."

—INTERIOR DESIGNER YVONNE MCFADDEN



THIS PHOTO: McFadden sought out distinctive tables to lend panache to the loggia's stock seating pieces. The 6-foot-diameter dining table is made from reclaimed elm and rests on a pedestal of salvaged industrial timbers. **OPPOSITE:** Wrapped in mellow alder wood and outfitted with an antique English drink table, a leather wing chair, and a button-tufted Chesterfield sofa, the library invites Kristie to grab a book and relax.

*"The home has substance,
but it's also graceful and
elegant. It's emotionally
quiet. It's just magical."*

—HOMEOWNER KRISTIE LILIENTHAL



LEFT: The master bath features a deep Roman tub with a smooth marble surround. Befitting the mountainous setting, however, Kristie chose a more rustic travertine for the walls, floor, and ceiling. **ABOVE:** A bound jute rug and linen draperies lend textural appeal to an upstairs guest room. An upholstered chair pulls up to an antique writing desk, which serves as an elegant and hospitable alternative to a traditional nightstand. **OPPOSITE:** Guests who stay in this bedroom are treated to an intricately carved and sumptuously dressed four-poster, plus a view of the swimming pool and Lake Keowee. The home's sloping roofline and dormers give its upstairs rooms idiosyncratic ceilings, highlighted by V-groove paneling. "The wood provides substance and texture that drywall couldn't have," Kristie says.

