



Top: The homeowners wanted aged-looking brick facings for the great room, and adding still more character is the balcony of old and knotted salvaged wood. **Above:** An ample archway of synthetic travertine connects the great room with the kitchen and dining room and boasts a head of Neptune keystone. The large, primitive dining room table was inspired by one at Robert Mondavi's winery in Napa Valley.

RSVP ROOM VIEW

Interview by Kelly Cox | Photos by Steve Roberts

A touch of Tuscany can be found in Fayette County, in a family home near Eads. When the homeowners moved in seven years ago, the interiors were very plain, defined by a restrained gold wall color and good structure but little character. Inspired by their passion for Napa Valley and their shared Italian heritage, the couple who own this house worked closely with Tim Disalvo & Company to remake their home in the mold of an Old World villa in the heart of wine country. The great room anchors the design, as if they had stumbled upon an existing fragment of a Tuscan estate and built the house around it.



In a team effort, architect Jeff Bramlett suggested the exposed beams in the dining room, the husband of the household had the idea for copper ceiling panels and his wife found the leather shield tapestry (pictured below) in Mississippi.



RSVP: When did you come up with the plan for what we see today?

Homeowner: We had the idea from the very beginning. We would've loved to have done this from day one, but it's a blessing that we didn't. Tim Disalvo & Company came in and made all this happen. They did the transformation we wanted. I wouldn't have attempted this without somebody who really knew how to do it. It could go very wrong. What was helpful was that Tim understood exactly what I wanted, and we worked together until we got it. It was really a team effort.

RSVP: Can you tell me about the distressing process you used here on the walls?

Homeowner: I worked very closely with Tim, and we did eight to 10 different samples before we got started. We discussed starting in August 2011, but because of the holidays, we pushed it to February. What that gave us was the time to explore all these different textures. I went downtown and took pictures of wall failure and told them this is what I want to recreate. What you see here are brick pavers. The lower weight of the pavers allowed us to do this big wall. Tim put together a sample with the brick and the veneer, all nicely done as a contractor does it, and I took a hammer to it and started crumbling. I said, "This is what I want!" and they said, "Ah, I see it!" And then it fell apart, so that technique wasn't going to work. They wound up hand-breaking each individual brick and piecing them back together to create these failure lines. To keep it from looking too hand-made, I suggested putting a string in the cracks and letting the mortar harden over it just a little bit, then pulling the string out. It crumbled just perfectly, like it had crumbled over centuries.

RSVP: How long did the project take from start to completion?

Homeowner: Tim quoted me three months, and it was three months to the day. That was of tremendous value to us because when it comes to construction we've all heard the runaway stories. Through the construction, with stuff all over the floor, I would sit

right here in the great room in a lawn chair, just feeling it come together. Now, I like to sit here in the armchair with a glass of wine and just let my imagination run.

RSVP: Tell me about the head of Neptune in the arched entrance there.

Homeowner: One of our favorite restaurants in Boston is the Neptune Oyster. It's in the North End, the Italian historical district. That Neptune was inspired by the one at the restaurant. I didn't want just the old, traditional keystone. I wanted something a little unique. No lie, when that went in, the dog went crazy, like "Hey! Where did YOU come from?" These archways were made by European Stone Werks using a synthetic travertine that Mark Pepke created. It replicates limestone, but it's a fraction of the weight and cost. I like it better than limestone because he controls the pitting. We can get all these effects, whereas with limestone you take what you get.

RSVP: Are the murals in your house also from your favorite places?

Homeowner: The murals are based on places we've been in Napa Valley. Our Italian family names are incorporated into the mural off the kitchen—my grandmother's maiden name, from Genoa, and my wife's maiden name. When we look at these murals, we have the memory of somewhere we enjoyed. It gives us another level of connection. Artist Victor Moore did all the murals in the house, all the finishes, all the glazing. He's phenomenal. He faux-finished the speakers so they match the grain of the wood of the balcony they're set in. That's old, salvaged wood. You can see all the knots, the cracks. That's what we wanted: the character. RSVP