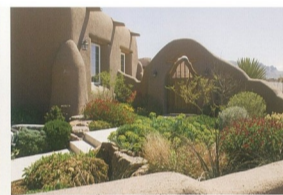




A Chance To DREAM

A beautiful pueblo-style home catches the eye and imagination of this Las Cruces couple

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This is not a story about a house. This is not even a story about a home. This is a story about a place in time. And it couldn't be told without a quiet cul-de-sac, a 50-kilometer road race, a pair of talented builders (who just happen to be great neighbors), and a gigantic fire pit named Bubba.

Mary Wells was training for a marathon. Her "wing man," Eddie Martinez, was driving the relay car, carrying a few dedicated friends to run in tandem. One at a time, he picked them up and dropped them off at strategic points along the course.

But Eddie found himself with time to kill. Since he and Mary had plans of building a home someday, he couldn't help daydreaming. A particularly beautiful pueblo-style home surrounded by a courtyard garden on an acre lot in a quiet neighborhood caught his eye.

The following day, Eddie and Mary came back just to peek in the windows and get ideas. They weren't going to buy it. After all, they had a perfectly good house not far away, and they weren't even ready to move.

But then they heard voices, and the voices said, "Would you like to see the inside?"

Kiki Suggs and her husband, Wayne, own Classic New Mexico Homes LLC. They are on a mission to improve the process of home building in the area and bring character and authenticity to the genre one structure at a time. They use a variety of native and reclaimed woods. They create homes that break the mold and help define the pueblo revival.

▲ A Douglas fir beam was through planned to a soft, weathered patina before being mounted on the interior adobe wall, which separates the kitchen from the main living room.

▲ An authentic adobe courtyard protects an abundance of wildflowers and native plants, which prosper in the rich humus, added during construction.

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They also happen to live right next door. The moment Mary stepped inside, she says she began "mentally moving my furniture in."

The home is made from a double-framed wall construction, which creates quiet interiors that are soundproof and weatherproof. It flows on four distinct levels with short flights of stairs and sunken rooms to enhance the scale and circulation. Interior walls of real adobe help define the living spaces while the intricate ceiling woods and wall details add artistry and architectural interest.

"We walked in, were here for two hours, and walked out and said, 'Uh oh, we're in trouble,'" says Eddie.

The couple had a few furling nights, but they sold their "standard stucco house" after having it on the market for only three days. The furniture that was mentally arranged fell into place, and the extent of their purchases was a pair of turquoise green benches and some home theater equipment.

"This was total happenstance," says Eddie of finding the perfect home when they really weren't even looking.

Which leads full circle and raises the question: What about Bubba?

As it turns out, Wayne and Kiki aren't the type of builders who abandon a project once the owners move in. The Suggses' policy is to perform an annual inspection of the wood finishes and get

feedback from their clients on how the home lives. But since they are neighbors, it isn't unusual for Kiki to enter through the zaguan gate, wind her way through the protected courtyard, and knock on the front door.

And Kiki is not the only visitor. The quiet neighborhood turned out to be full of new friends, and it is not uncommon for them to gather for drinks on the patio. It was during dinner one night that Kiki sketched Mary's vision of a kiva fireplace that would complete the space. Later, Kiki called and said, "I hope you wanted a really big fireplace."

Some local high-school kids needed a project, and Bubba was born from adobe bricks, emerging from the earth above a field of sandstone. His scale is somewhat intimidating until he begins gathering everyone in a circle of warm firelight that warms even the cold winter nights.

The large opening and tall chimney keep hot embers from blowing backward, and the smoke signals can be seen from the entire neighborhood. "If Bubba is going, the rule is 'come on over,'" she says.

Maybe this is really the story about how friends change everything. And every home is really just a place to celebrate the connections that keep us together.



See additional photos at www.fromhousetohome.com/articles/a_chance_to_dream

▲ Colorful dinnerware from diverse collections blends artistry with appetite in the dining room.

▶ "Our bad habit is Native American pottery," explains the homeowner. But these Casas Grandes ceramics showcased against the authentic pueblo architectural details prove it's a bad habit definitely worth keeping.

Interior walls of real adobe help define the living spaces while the intricate ceiling woods and wall details add artistry and architectural interest.



◀ In the master suite, an adobe pony wall separates the sleeping area from an adjoining "garden room," complete with sunny vistas and a comfortable tub.

▲▲ The home features three bedrooms, including this cozy guest space.

▲ The hand-glazed tile was used throughout. Here, in the sunny garden room just off the master suite, colorful accent tiles add intrigue.