



If you have lived in this area for any length of time, you have observed the remarkable transformation of our graceful rolling hills into “Wine Country”. And if you have ever been to Tuscany, the parallels are quite intriguing, both in climate and terrain. Just the “feel” of the place now can take us 6500 miles away without having to hassle airport security. And why not create this laid back, cozy, old-world, well-loved look in our homes, particularly in our kitchens and great rooms, where we spend most of our time?

Just what makes a Wine Country Kitchen?

First, there is a feeling of bringing the outdoors in – natural materials – roughed up wooden beams, rich stone floors and counter tops, and an old world plaster look to the walls are all important elements. Textures should be rich. Walls that have multiple layers of paint, with color washing and dry brush treatments enhance a hand troweled surface – these techniques bring a feeling that the home was not built yesterday. Wood windows and French doors are important for bringing the outdoors in – with a hand rubbed stain – perhaps distressed, again, to give the illusion of having stood the test of time, well aged like that yummy bottle of zin you have been storing all these years and now are bringing it out to share with your best friends.



Ideally, there needs to be a feeling of purposeful “space” – not just a big blank room. There needs to be at least one architectural focal point – either an archway defining the kitchen space from the dining and living space, or varying ceiling heights and treatments (dark open timbers in a portion of the ceiling and glorious soaring ceilings in another area as a complete contrast). Often, the fireplace in the adjacent “great room” serves as the focal point and is faced with natural stone or stucco. In recent years, the “mantle” hood has gained popularity – giving the stove/range a romantic feeling, reminiscent of a stone or plaster fireplace. We may see a bricked in archway over the cook top – again, a throwback to an old time cook-stove where one had to tend it with firewood. In any case, the cooking surface is a celebration! Gone are the days where the kitchen was just a separate, utilitarian room hidden from the guests. Now it has become a very important part of the house, especially since we all know the party ends up in the kitchen!

As to the cabinetry – it should be a rich wood, again, with multiple layers of hand rubbed stains, fly-specking, burnishing, cow tailing, and nicks, or a painted look that has been rubbed through to either the wood underneath or another color, so it has an appearance of multiple layers of paint. Often we go for the “unfitted” look where pieces are purposely mismatched to portray a kitchen that has been added to, and tweaked over the years. As to cabinet style – it can be a very simple inset door with a recessed panel, or it could be a heavy three-dimensional raised panel chunky look, or a combination of styles – again, to give that worn, well-loved look that only time (and experienced, creative cabinet makers) can give. Heavy, burnished metal knobs and pulls will add to the look.



And another must – a long family style wooden table – if there is room for this it could even



be in the middle of the kitchen and can serve as additional workspace until it is time to eat. And of course one has to have an open cupboard or armoire for storage of dishes, linens, utensils, and even dry goods. Hand painted pottery and copper kettles add to the rich textures and colors, as do garlic braids and hanging herbs, pasta and dried beans in glass jars, and interesting bottles of olives, mustards and tapenades. A few beautiful cookbooks will add to the charm and

hopefully inspire you to plan another great meal for family and friends in your charming, richly-cozy, new/old “to die for” Tuscan kitchen.

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