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# ON A BUDGET

THE JUST RIGHT HOUSE™



**OPPOSITE** Brocade chairs provide the sole touch of pattern in the dining area, which is dominated by a rosewood table. **THIS PAGE** in the living space; white linen dresses down a pair of 18th-century chairs, while a hemp rug and slipcovered sofa echo the hues of the sandstone fireplace surround, which was crafted from rocks found on the property.



**OPPOSITE** Rugged fir trusses lend a sense of scale to the great room, where guests can gather at the impressive dining table or sidle up to the island while the hosts prepare dinner. **RIGHT** "We just went with clean, crisp, and white Shaker-style cabinets," says homeowner Adrienne Carrere, "and it works." Travertine tile counters felt more traditional to the couple than slab-style ones. **BELOW RIGHT** Cleanup takes place in a kitchen nook.

**LEON AND ADRIENNE CARRERE LOVED**

spending weekends near Santa Barbara, California, and dreamed of owning a permanent home there someday. Although their funds were limited, the Los Angeles residents didn't let that deter them. After all, Leon's father and uncle were both Hollywood art directors: Bringing fantasies to fruition was practically a family tradition.

Unfortunately, real life doesn't always resemble reel life. The couple spent a year

looking at houses without success. "We weren't seeing things we liked that were in our budget," says Leon, a retired film editor.

Then Adrienne, a landscape and floral designer, ran into an acquaintance. "My buddy has over an acre for sale and you ought to see it—right away," he said. Adrienne wasted no time. "I saw the property, heard the price, called my husband, and said, 'I found it.'" Soon the lot was bought; then it was time to build.

Because he had some drafting experience, Leon sketched the floor plans himself, only bringing in a professional draftsman to produce the final construction drawings. The 11-month building phase yielded a 2,200-square-foot Spanish Colonial-style home that may not be the largest in the neighborhood—"some places around here have guesthouses bigger than this," Leon says—but is an ideal size for the couple and their 9-year-old daughter. A vaulted great room crowned with stocky fir trusses comprises the living, dining, and kitchen areas; three bedrooms, two baths, and a home office occupy protruding wings in back, which also shelter an intimate patio behind the house. Out front, a shady recessed porch greets visitors.

Bright overhead lighting was avoided; lamps and an heirloom chandelier lend the interiors a warmer feel. A masonry fireplace faced with local sandstone anchors one end of the great room, while at the other end, the kitchen has a cooking zone that's open to the living area and a cleanup station in a corner hidden from view. "We can have guests over, and if someone is in that area doing dishes it's not disruptive," says Adrienne. Across the room, another nook offers a cozy retreat for reading or watching TV, and displays the Oscar that Leon's father won for *Camelot*.





Leon acted as the project's contractor, purchasing materials from primary sources like lumberyards and stone yards instead of home improvement centers and showrooms, so he didn't have to pay a middleman's markup. The Carreres found ways to lend character to even the most pedestrian materials. They had the roofer install the clay roof tiles in a perfectly sealed but imperfectly aligned manner to impart an artisanal flavor, and persuaded a skeptical worker to lay the bathroom's travertine floor tiles wrong-side-up, exposing the textured (but still waterproof) finish underneath. "Once we flipped them over, it added a hundred years," says Adrienne. Wall sconces, bought incomplete and unfinished, were rewired and sealed. The otherwise unfinished fir flooring was "distressed" by the paws of the homeowners' dogs, Norman and Clementine. "We're 'Labradorizing' it," Adrienne notes with a grin.

Ivory walls, solid fabrics, and pale wood furniture contribute to the home's serene look. Adrienne has loved antiques from an early age, but she uses them sparingly, creating spaces that feel at once

historic and contemporary. A 17th-century French door panel serves as the headboard in the master bedroom. In the living room, 18th-century armchairs are paired with a casual slipcovered sofa. The commanding rosewood dining table was bought from a store that sells them decorated "with frescoes, flowers, and leaves," Adrienne notes. "We said we wanted it without any painting on it whatsoever. They thought we were crazy, but we think it looks terrific."

From the front door you can look straight through the house to the tiered terrace out back, where an alfresco dining area cozies up to a fountain framed by lacy California pepper trees. "I wanted the garden to look purely California," says Adrienne. She planted a grove of dwarf citrus trees by the decomposed-granite terrace and framed windows with trails of scarlet bougainvillea. "When we finished the house, people would come up here and say, 'You did a wonderful job remodeling this old home,'" Adrienne recalls proudly. "That's exactly what we wanted—a place that looked like it had been here forever." ■