

# Feature Home of the Month

## LA DOLCE VITA IN THE FOOTHILLS

BY BILL WALTERS  
PHOTOS BY CLEAR IMAGE



THIS MONTH'S FEATURE HOME IS A FAMILY AFFAIR, BUILT by Crosby Construction for owner Chris Crosby's parents. Nearly all the living space in the 5,100 square-foot home—five bedrooms, three baths, a den, and a four-car garage—is on a single level; stair-climbing is not required. Its Mediterranean palazzo style—featuring high ceilings, lots of natural light, and multiple sun decks—is especially apt for the bright, arid summers and rolling hills of Shingle Springs. It showcases both technical innovations and lovingly handmade surprises that suggest old-world craftsmanship and tradition.



Chris Crosby

The visitor's eye is first drawn to the imposing columns that guard the front entrance. As massive as they seem, the columns are neither marble nor granite. They, along with their counterparts inside and out, are sturdy structural foam surrounding readily available 4x4 or 6x6 lumber. These wood-core foam columns, executed by **FOAM Builders**, (see page 40) received a tough, hard outside coat and the same paint treatment as the rest of the house. (Exterior and "textured" interior paint is by Boswell Painting.) Many of the columns serve as structural elements, but all are aesthetic attractions.

The home's front entrance is also its atrium. The glass-panel ceiling is a lofty 25 feet. The outdoor light streams in and nourishes the thriving plants that populate the floor level, the sconce-style wall planters, and the ledges at second-story level. Visitors are greeted at eye level by the gurgle of three tranquil fountains. Depicting Greco-Roman bathers, the fountains impart a sense of calm and of distance from the city bustle below.

When leaving the atrium and entering the house proper, the first attraction is a cut-marble mosaic, six feet in diameter, depicting a pair of roses in full bloom. The second is a double-recessed, arch-topped niche in one wall of the dining room, the perfect place to show off a prized piece of sculpture. Both were painstakingly done by **Crosby Construction**. (see ad page 27) The surrounding floor in the dining area is travertine stone from Sacramento Tile & Stone. Extensive foot traffic (from entertaining and platoons of visiting grandchildren) have proven the stone's easy-care qualities. Elsewhere, visitors' feet are coddled by plush carpeting (with high-grade padding) from Contract Carpet.

In the spacious living room, more wood-core columns are topped by subtle arches beneath majestic 19-foot ceilings, and highlighted by well-placed recessed lighting (installed by Grant Tueller Electric). However, the dominant feature is the gas fireplace, executed in cast stone by Capital Fireplace and topped by a four-foot-deep arch moulding. The hearth bisects two halves of a massive display cabinet, custom-built for the space by Crosby Construction.

A spiral staircase leads from the living room up to twin sliding-glass doors and a balcony beyond. From there, another door accesses the two sun decks that top either side of the atrium. The sun decks are tiled to match the Spanish-style tiles of the roof. Although they resemble distressed marble, the mini-columns that support the railings on the balconies and decks are actually concrete castings from **Euro-Cast Stone** (see ad page 29).

The family room offers a contrastingly cozy feel with its relatively modest ceiling height and unassuming cast-stone fireplace. It features a substantial oak entertainment center, also custom built by Crosby Construction.

Many of the home's windows (by Alpine) have multiple panels, transoms and/or arch shapes. The numerous recessed lights, along with the ornate, organically inspired wall fixtures and overhead lamps, are from Lighting Unlimited.

Any longtime Sacramentan can vouch for the difficulty of keeping a home's interior warm through our damp winters; imagine the added challenge when the space to be heated (or cooled) soars 19 feet or more. Yet the utility bills are no more exorbitant than for a smaller, mass-produced tract home. Many factors contribute: the tile roof, the windows' LoE energy-efficient glass, and the thick insulation (estimated at R24 in the walls, and R38 in the ceiling). Capital Heat and Air installed a heating system that uses separate temperature controls for different wings of the house, and registers placed at differing heights for maximum circulation.

Tracking back through the dining room, the visitor finds a multi-faceted kitchen that offers a study in redundancy. It features two full-size ovens, two dishwashers, and two sinks. Chris Crosby feels this repetition offers an advantage for the demands of a dinner party or an extended family visit during the holidays. The twin ovens and dishwashers, along with the full-feature refrigerator and five-burner Kitchenaid gas range, are from Capital Wholesale Electric.



After double vision passes, the massive countertops take center stage. The cool, dark, polished granite forms the kitchen counters and backsplashes, the breakfast bar, and the center island. The kitchen's final surprise is the least obvious, but perhaps the most impressive: a monolithic range hood in cast stone, hand carved along its rim with a grape leaf and cluster pattern. As with most of the home's other handbuilt touches, this is the product of Crosby Construction.

At the end of the home's bedroom wing is the master suite. It includes a sitting bay with ample room for matching armchairs, a dramatic round, cast-stone fireplace, and a "walk-in closet" that stands on its own as a spacious dressing room. The dressing room is large enough to accommodate its own stone-topped center island and a handy settee.

Adjoining the master suite is the master bath, with more travertine flooring and countertops. Twin vanities are backed by several square yards of mirrors. A sunken tub is jacuzzi-equipped and framed by the familiar wood-core columns.

The separate shower is also travertine and employs six-count them, six-shower heads. The heads all have separate controls and can be used in any combination. The shower installation is by Atlas Shower & Mirror; the home's plumbing is by RC James Plumbing. Most of the plumbing fixtures are by Kohler.

You may not find pine trees in Palermo, but this foothill home, with its sun-drenched ambience and artisanal touches, is otherwise reminiscent of the slower, sweeter life along the Mediterranean. **CHB**

