



House and Garden  
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This bedroom in upstate New York pairs vintage paper cuttings with ikat pillows, some from Madeline Weinrib Atelier, NYC.

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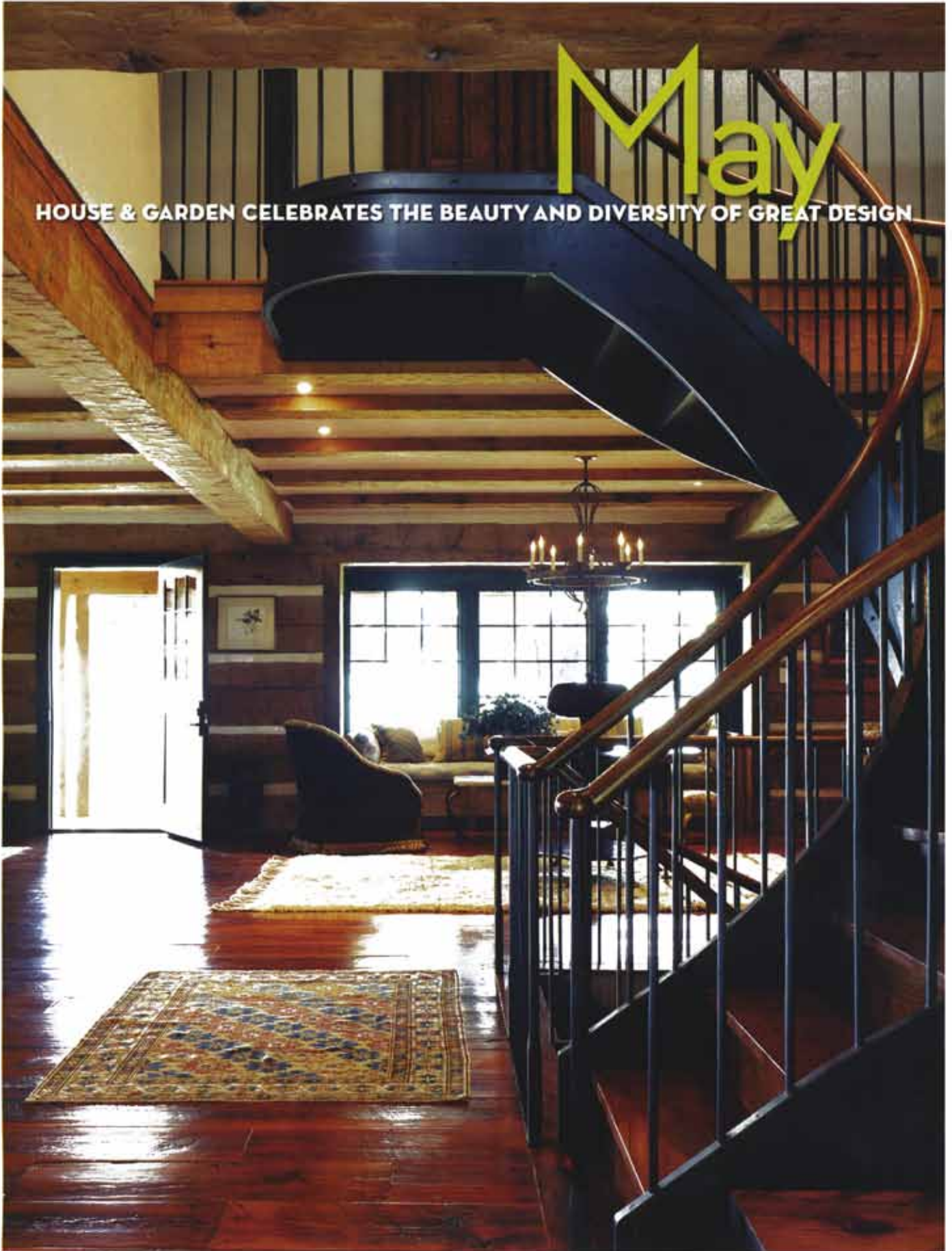
A chic country kitchen ("Couture Cabin," page 126) sports a Viking range, 19th-century Portuguese tiles, and custom cabinets. **PHOTOGRAPHED BY RAIMUND KOCH.**

### SOAK IT UP ON HOUSEANDGARDEN.COM

Whether it's soaking tubs, bath and boudoir mixes, or mosaic masterpieces you want, there's an inspiring bath gallery for you on our newly renovated Web site. Plus, editors' advice, weekly wine and food picks from JAY McHERNEY and LOBA ZARUBIN, Design\*Sponge's daily finds, and Web-only gardening tips from TOM CHRISTOPHER. We'll be looking for you online.

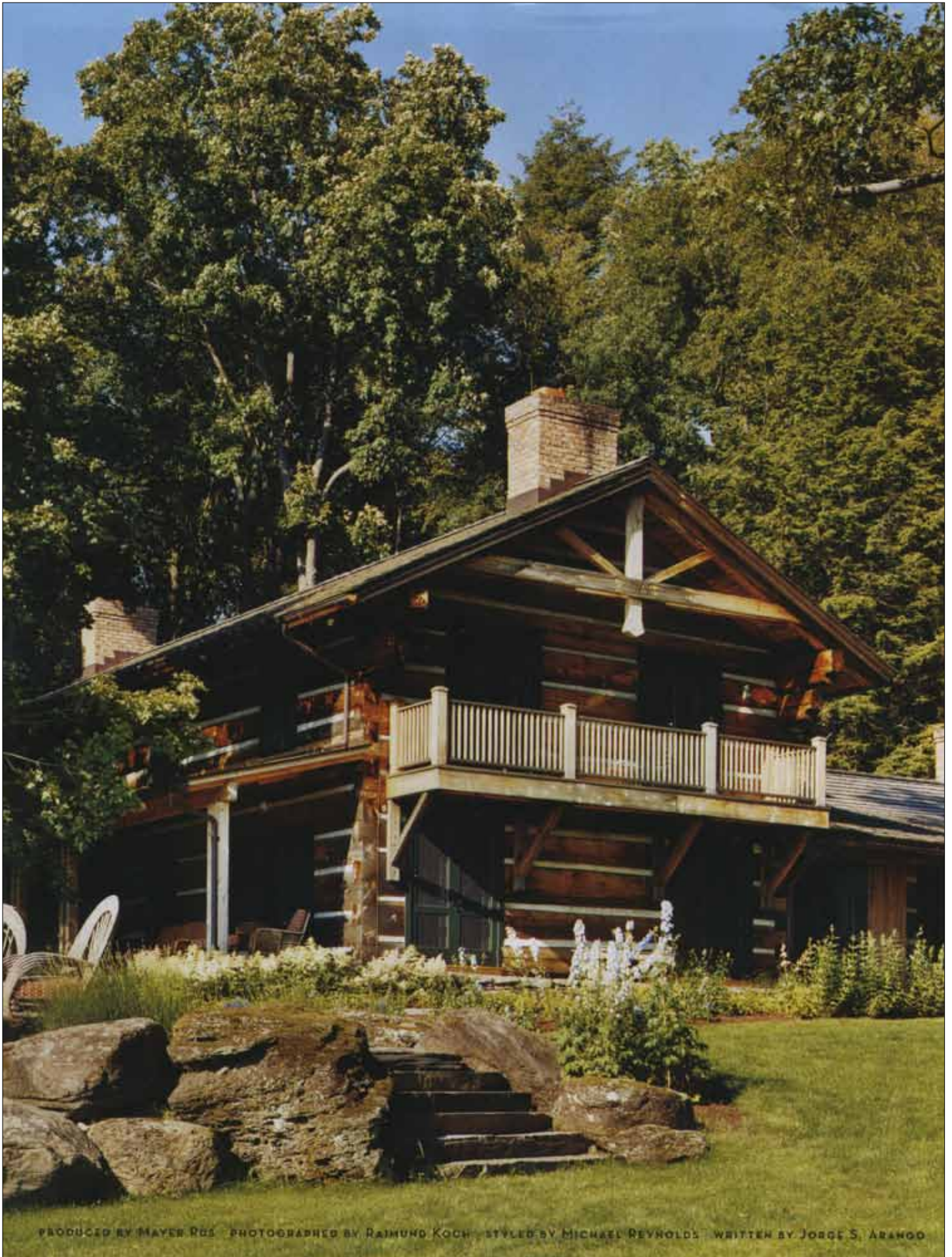
# May

HOUSE & GARDEN CELEBRATES THE BEAUTY AND DIVERSITY OF GREAT DESIGN



A steel staircase designed by Paul Alter and crafted by Ferra Designs, Brooklyn, is a striking counterpoint to the woody ambience of a house in upstate New York.





PRODUCED BY MAYER RUS PHOTOGRAPHED BY RAIMUND KOCH STYLED BY MICHAEL REYNOLDS WRITTEN BY JORGE S. ARANGO





The stalwart lodge in upstate New York was renovated using reclaimed antique timbers. A new porch, a bay window, French doors, and a balcony, opposite page, were added in order to open the house to the light and the views. A new stone walkway was built by Walter Lazarski of Hudson Valley Stonescapes, Middletown, NY. • A corner dovetail joint, this page, details the 10-inch-thick cedar logs used to form the walls.

## Couture Cabin

A rustic retreat in upstate New York takes on a striking and sophisticated new personality when placed in the hands of designer Sara Bengur and architect Paul Alter



# Is there an architectural style with more symbolic baggage than the log cabin?

It is North America's scrappy emblem of the frontier spirit—sturdy and solid enough to keep out all manner of hostile forces, from flaming arrows to harsh winters. Think Daniel Boone, Abe Lincoln, *Little House on the Prairie*.

These are the timeworn associations that architect Paul Alter and designer Sara Bengur had to play against in their work on a large log home in the Hudson River Valley. It all began when new clients of Alter's—a fiftysomething couple (he in finance, she in psychology)—showed him the 140-acre estate they'd purchased. "The main house was well-crafted and substantial," Alter says, "but totally unconscious of its spectacular surroundings. It was a sleeping giant that needed to be awakened."

The clients didn't hold fast to cabin nostalgia. Mario Buatta had decorated their Park Avenue apartment, and while the wife didn't want that brand of polish here, says Bengur, "they entertained a lot, so it had to be sophisticated and a little exotic." At the same time, the husband wanted to retain some of the structure's rustic character.

Built in the early 1980s, the house has walls of flat-hewn logs locked together at the corners with impressive dovetail joints. It sits on a ridge that faces west and south toward serene views of low fields and distant hills. But small

In the living room, the look is refined yet robust. Sofas in John Robshaw's custom Links in Madder are paired with an American ball chair from Niall Smith Antiques, NYC. Ikat pillow from Madeline Weinrib Atelier, NYC; Indian coffee table, ca. 1910, from Lief, L.A.; Moroccan tray table from Vieux Carre, NYC; an ammonite and a quartz cluster from Astro Gallery of Gems, NYC; reclaimed teak stool from Chista, NYC; Bakshaish carpet from Rahmanan, NYC.







Exotic fabrics blend with the cabin's frontier spirit to create the sort of panache that Teddy Roosevelt would have loved



windows scattered haphazardly throughout the chopped-up, fortresslike interior largely negated those views, and bland brick fireplaces and cheap wood floors looked merely drab. A kit-built log garage sat to the south, and a guesthouse, also bizarrely segmented into tiny rooms, lay to the north.

Alter's master plan, which the clients embraced wholeheartedly, called for rerouting the roadway approach through the woods and behind the existing structures, leading visitors to a new car barn. The move thus spared the vista from the glint of chrome and car enamel. Guests now enter what Alter calls "the domain of the walking person," crossing through a courtyard on stone paths to a new eastern entryway to the cabin—a stone and glass foyer designed by Alter that nestled within the L-shaped structure. This set up "a new pattern of movement into the house that," he explains, "goes toward the view, toward the light."

The architect gutted the first floor to create one large living area bookended by fireplaces that were amply enlarged and faced in fieldstone. He laid new floors of antique heart pine (hand-rubbed with stain and given a lustrous tung oil finish) and cut larger windows and French doors into the walls to bring in light and open up views. A wood staircase had connected this floor to the second level, while a dark narrow one led down to an unfinished basement. Alter ripped out both, creating a well of light extending from the top floor to the now deepened and refinished basement. A curvy, sculptural modern stair of steel (built in the Brooklyn Navy Yard) now connects all floors.

To add more light and offer visual relief from all the wood, Alter installed an overhead recessed pin spotlight system in the deep bays between the ceiling beams. Bengur—daughter of a Turkish economist and raised in Istanbul (*Cont. on page 184*)



A rustic bedroom with a cathedral ceiling made of dark wood beams. The walls are finished with horizontal wood planks. Two dark wood sleigh beds are positioned on either side of a central nightstand. The nightstand holds a lamp with a white shade and a vase of white flowers. A blue and white patterned rug covers the floor, with a larger, colorful geometric rug in the foreground. Three windows with light-colored curtains are visible in the background. On the left wall, two framed pictures of ferns are hanging.

A conversational grouping in the living room, opposite page, includes an armchair and window seat embellished with pillows made of vintage fabric from Virginia Di Sciascio Antique Textiles, NYC. The mahogany 19th-century American center table is from Historical Materialism, Hudson, NY. ■ A cathedral ceiling was added to the guest cabin, this page. The clients brought in matching sleigh beds. Curtains in Tyler Graphics' Fern in Forest, through John Rosselli & Associates, NYC; custom woven carpet from AM Collections, NYC. See Shopping, last pages.



# Trade Secrets

How a kitchen became the



AND UNIQUENESS," SHE SUGGESTS USING "MATERIALS THAT MAKE THE KITCHEN LOOK LIKE OTHER ROOMS IN THE HOUSE," ADDING WARMTH WITH WOOD FLOORS, USING ANTIQUE TILES ON THE BACKSPASH, PAINTING OR GLAZING CABINETS, AND ADDING BEAUTIFUL HARDWARE. SHE ALSO LIKES TO USE VINTAGE LIGHT FIXTURES—"ESPECIALLY IF YOU ALREADY HAVE UNDER-CABINET TASK LIGHTING"—INSTEAD OF SOMETHING "KITCHEN-Y." HERE THAT MEANT MID-CENTURY COPPER PENDANTS.

**VIBRANT COLOR** THE CLIENTS WISHED TO HAVE THE KITCHEN'S COLOR STAND OUT, IN CONTRAST TO THE HOUSE'S WOODY INTERIORS, SO BENGUR SPENT UNTOLD HOURS MIXING PAINTS TO CREATE THE RED HUE THAT SHE USED FOR THE CABINETRY. TO LEND THE RED SOME SYMPATHY FOR THE WOOD, SHE TOPPED THE CABINETS WITH A BROWNISH GLAZE, GIVING THEM "MORE DEPTH, AGE, AND WARMTH."



**NEW OPENINGS** ARCHITECT PAUL ALTER FITTED THE KITCHEN WITH WIDE FLOOR-TO-CEILING POCKET DOORS. BESIDES EFFICIENTLY VENTILATING THE SPACE (THE FLOW OF AIR IS DELICIOUS IN THE SUMMER), THE DOORS OPENED THE KITCHEN TO THE LANDSCAPE. THE GLAZED DOORS ARE TRIMMED WITH WEATHER STRIPPING TO PREVENT A CHILL IN WINTER, AND SCREEN DOORS ARE HIDDEN IN THE POCKETS FOR BUGGY SUMMER NIGHTS. WHY NOT USE REGULAR SWING DOORS? "THIS METHOD CREATES A SIMPLER APERTURE, LIKE A BARN," SAYS ALTER. "SO THERE'S NO VISUAL CLUTTER, NOTHING HANGING IN THE WAY."



**SMART SINK** ALTER DESIGNED AN INTEGRATED SINK MADE FROM THE SAME ENGLISH LLOWES LIMESTONE AS THE COUNTERTOPS. IT KEEPS THE PROFILE SIMPLE, HE EXPLAINS, AND PROVIDES A CONTINUITY OF MATERIALS THAT AVOIDS A VISUALLY CHOPPY LOOK. THE SINK'S PROPORTIONS ARE GENEROUS: "YOU COULD BATHE A CHILD IN THERE," HE JOKES, ADDING THAT THE STONE SINK ALSO LENDS "AN OLD-WORLD SENSIBILITY, AS IN AN OLD FARMHOUSE."

**CHIC TOUCHES** "KITCHENS CAN LOOK SO BLAND AND CLINICAL," SAYS DESIGNER SARA BENGUR. "I PREFER TO GIVE THEM CHARACTER

**CHATting SPOT** ALTER SEPARATED THE KITCHEN AND DINING ROOM WITH A WALL OF HICKORY AND PECAN WOOD, BUT CUT A PASS-THROUGH WINDOW INTO THE WALL THAT CAN BE CLOSED WITH FOLDING SHUTTERS. THE PASS-THROUGH ALLOWS THE COOK TO TALK WITH GUESTS AND FOLLOW THE GOINGS-ON IN THE DINING ROOM. TO LURE GUESTS TO THE WINDOW, ALTER CREATED A BAR FROM A CANTILEVERED SLAB OF POLISHED 300-YEAR-OLD OLIVE WOOD WITH A NATURAL TAPERED EDGE. BENGUR BROUGHT IN A SET OF FIVE BARSTOOLS FROM PARIS TO MAKE THE AREA EVEN COZIER.





sparkling gem at the heart of a woody lodge in the Hudson River Valley



The sink and counter, opposite page, top, are made of English limestone from Paris Ceramics. Faucet by Rohl. ■ French 1940s stools, covered in Christopher Hyland's Chilli Stripe, line the bar at the pass-through, opposite page, bottom. ■ A Viking range, this page, anchors the kitchen. Backsplash in 19th-century Portuguese tiles from Solar Antique Tiles, NYC. Grind and Brew thermal coffeemaker from Cuisinart.



# Nuts & Bolts

AT THE HEART OF BUILDING A HOME BY DAMARIS COLHOUN



## THE SPECIALIST: TILE MAKER

Bens Liman, owner of Mosaic House, is a model modern businessman, but his trade is more than 1,500 years old. With a retail space in New York City and a factory in his native Morocco, Liman designs, manufactures, and sells bright mosaic tiles, the kind found in locales ranging from Spain's Alhambra palace to the schoolyards of Fez. Liman is quick to point out that Moroccan mosaics, like those his firm supplied for the master bath in an upstate New York retreat ("Couture Cabin," page 126), are distinct from more commonly seen Roman mosaics. Italian-style mosaics, made by pressing ceramic or glass tiles into plaster, are well within the ken of DIYers. Moroccan mosaics require a master hand.

**EXACTING COMPOSITION** The tiles in Moroccan mosaic patterns are cut and arranged with the precision of an Incan wall. After a motif is drawn onto the surface of a ceramic tile, the composition is rough-cut and the pieces are laid out glaze side down. An artisan will then shape the individual pieces—and there may be thousands of them—so they fit as tightly as the pieces in a jigsaw puzzle. The completed arrangement is bound from behind with a thin application of cement and concrete. When the binder dries, the mosaic is flipped and applied as a unit to a flat surface.

**DECORATING SIMPLIFIED** Liman makes installation easier by carving large mosaic sheets into blocks that typically measure one square foot. As seen on the walls of the master bathroom at left, the mosaic squares align to create a surface that looks almost seamless—and wholly stunning. Mosaic House, NYC. 212-414-2525. [mosaichse.com](http://mosaichse.com).

<The Moroccan flavor of this master bath comes from mosaic walls, cement floor tiles, and Mosharabi fretwork from Mosaic House.

## LIQUID STONE CONCRETE IS ADAPTABLE TO A HOST OF KITCHEN SOLUTIONS

Concrete, a material once relegated to building foundations and retaining walls, has found a place in the kitchen. Celebrated for its postindustrial look, concrete, says designer Fu-Tung Cheng, of Berkeley, California's Cheng Design, will "create a new paradigm for kitchens." Few materials are stronger than concrete, he notes, yet it is a "liquid stone" that can be molded into almost any shape.

**THE MIXTURE** Concrete is made from cement, water, and aggregates like crushed pebbles and shells, which enhance the mixture's structural integrity and texture. Through polishing, designers like Cheng achieve sleek, mottled surfaces that belie concrete's utilitarian image and offer an alternative to granite.

**THE FORM** Once the design is conceived, the concrete mixture is poured into a melamine form, where it cures. "The quality of the surface depends on the quality of the form," says Cheng. The bottom of the form can be studded with turquoise or ammonites to create decorative inlays. In larger castings that need extra support, concrete is poured around steel rods. A form can also include spaces for sinks and drainage slots. Once the concrete is cured, the form is pulled off and the resulting unit is flipped upright and

