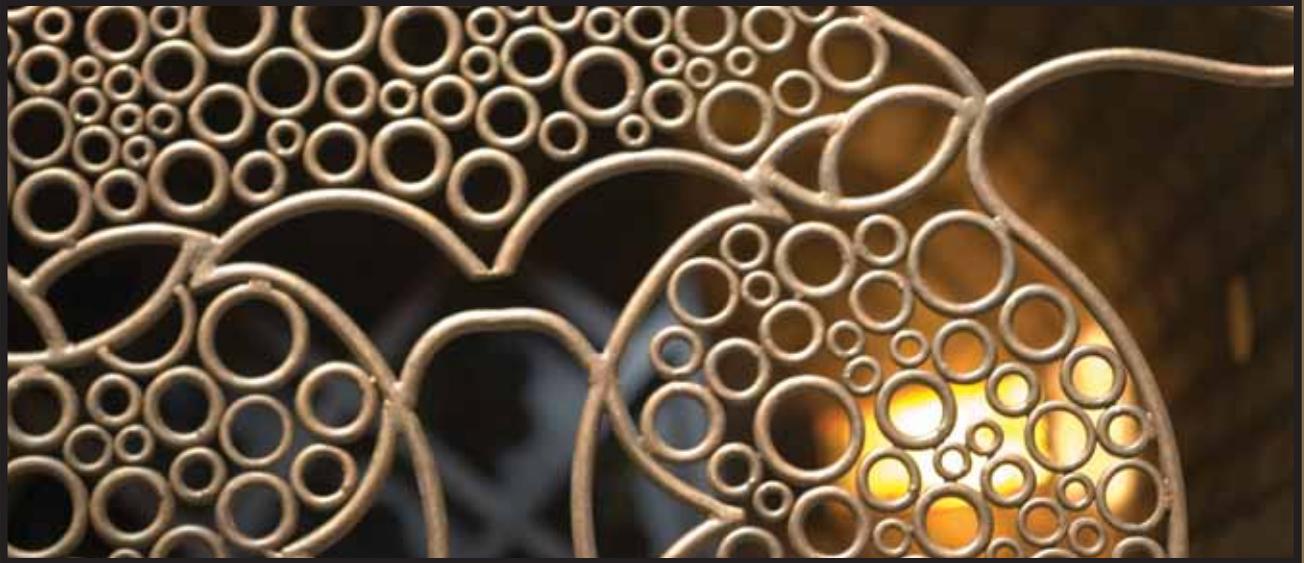




Designer Lorena Gaxiola chose unique elements to add distinction to this dining room, such as hammered copper squares on the ceiling and a hand-wrought iron gate separating the attached wine cellar. For the complete story, see page 14.

D Distinctive dining

As a unique location in the home, the dining room is where culinary creations collide with entertainment and conversation. A great dining room is the centerpiece for holidays, dinner parties, special events, and family dinners, a place where people can sit and talk for hours, lingering over hot beverages and sweet post-meal treats. ♦ Dining rooms can be formal or informal and can range in styles from glossy and modern to elegant and beautiful to comforting and warm. The rooms that grace the following pages showcase the variations in style and beckon all to enter and enjoy wonderful foods and the company of friends and family.



Dining in Fine Detail

HOW ONE SAN DIEGO DESIGNER BROUGHT HER CLIENT'S HISTORIC
ARTS AND CRAFTS VISION INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

WRITTEN BY ROBYN ROEHM CANNON | PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDWARD GOHLICH

When interior designer Lorena Gaxiola was contacted by custom homebuilder Jeff Beucler to collaborate on the interiors of his private residence in the mountainside community of Fallbrook, just outside San Diego, she was put on immediate notice that he had the very highest expectations for her creativity.

“Jeff didn’t mince any words,” she recalls with a chuckle. “We had known one another since I was a very young designer right out of school, and he had seen my growth. He liked my work, but he said to me, ‘Lorena, I want to give you this project, but you have to do your homework. When you make a presentation to me, I don’t want to see anything that another client has anything similar to. I want complete originality!’”

For Gaxiola, owner of the widely respected Kuatro Design, in San Diego, it was like giving a kid free rein in a candy store. “I love it when the client has such a strong vision,” she says. “It results in a much better project. I was up for Jeff’s challenge, and he motivated me to be my creative best.”

Beucler comes from a legacy of fine homebuilders and put the utmost level of craftsmanship into his home. “Jeff really studied the arts and crafts period that he was interested in,” comments Gaxiola. “He pulled details from books, which required me to design on

an architectural level first and to give the project my attention from the framing stage to its finish, nearly two years later. It was a fabulous project for me, and he was thrilled with the result.”

With a team of specialty trades people, from metal forgers to painters, woodworkers, and furniture builders, the designer set to work creating a home that was inspired by Gustav Stickley and Frank Lloyd Wright designs of the early 20th century, updated with today’s features and conveniences.

Gaxiola was charged with the interior design of the entire residence and designed all of the millwork, casework, and staircase from a variety of hardwoods. Each had to be matched with a custom dark walnut stain, which proved to be one of many difficult tasks, since every wood took the stain differently.

One of the most challenging and beautiful spaces in the house is the dining room, which combines a formal dining space, a butler’s service pantry to bridge the gourmet kitchen with the seating area, and a wine cellar accessed through the dining room via a hand-wrought metal gate.

“Jeff loves the use of distressed metal,” Gaxiola says, “so we brought the warmth of copper into various rooms—a solid copper fireplace surround in the family room, a custom copper

stove hood in the kitchen, and touches of copper in the living room. I wanted to carry that theme through to the dining area, but the problem was finding which surface to do it.”

Gaxiola’s solution was to cover the dining room ceiling in 24-inch hammered and hand-distressed copper squares, which were cut from 4’ x 8’ sheets and joined by copper strips to create a diamond pattern. Even the fasteners paid respect to the craftsmanship detail one would have found in the 1920s. Solid copper nails were used as a finishing detail.

She then found a handmade Tiffany-style chandelier as the centerpiece for the magnificent ceiling and carried the theme forward to wall sconces, making the lighting scheme into a sparkling lively element in the formal room.

To glamorize the dark space and carry the metal detail further, Gaxiola had the painter coat the walls dark blue and then follow with Venetian plaster tinted with a copper glaze to soften and patina the surface. The result is a luminous wall with a high degree of sheen, reflecting natural light from oversized windows by day, and glowing by night with the various colors of the Tiffany lamps, which bounce light off the copper ceiling.

Gaxiola resisted covering the walls in artwork, only placing a large framed mirror on one wall to extend the viewpoint of the space. “We also had a custom arts and crafts hutch designed for one wall for tableware and collectibles,” she notes.

Table and chairs were handmade to client specifications of solid alder stained to match the casework, then upholstered with soft caramel leather seats. Host and hostess chairs are covered in subtle paisley silk and wool chenille that cues into tones in a hand-knotted Tibetan area rug beneath the table. “My style is a bit eclectic,” the designer admits. “I like to choose a focal point and treat it like a piece of art, drawing color inspiration from that single piece. In this case, the rug fills that role, serving as the dramatic pattern in the room.”

The custom hand-wrought iron gate to the wine cellar is as much a piece of sculpture as a passageway. Metal artist Brian Vincent of San Diego, who has followed Gaxiola and often contributes his work to her design projects, invested hours of labor into the project.

“Brian hated me at the end of this creation,” Gaxiola laughs. “The gate has extraordinary detail, and each little circle was joined by hand. It was a lot of hard work!”

In the end, Gaxiola was able to successfully pull off her client’s vision of an arts and crafts-style dining room, but she cautions those who wish to pursue a design period to choose the details very carefully. “Don’t overdo it—less is more, sometimes,” she says. “You can take your inspiration from a period, but mix it up with today’s lifestyle and materials to contemporize the feeling of the room and keep the design fresh. Select one dominant piece of furniture or art that carries the weight and allow all your other details to have their own personality and identity. Then, everything else in the room will just fall into place.” ■

OPPOSITE: Metal artist Brian Vincent joined each circle on the metal gate connecting the dining room to the wine cellar by hand.

BELOW: The Tiffany-style chandelier and hand-distressed copper squares add a lively, glamorous element and serve to bounce light around the dark room.

