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An artist masters a storied craft

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The Evanses' home reflects Argentine estancia architecture that is linear, rustic and relaxing. As Janis says, "It's a place where Frank can walk in with his boots on."

Unbridled Beauty

ARGENTINE ARCHITECTURE AND
ESTANCIA LIFESTYLE INSPIRED OWNERS
TO BUILD A RETREAT THAT IS THEIR 'AAH PLACE'

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Janis Evans never dreamed her husband, Frank, would be spending so much time with horses. While growing up, the now-passionate polo player didn't have an interest in running with the equine set. That changed shortly after the couple moved to the New Jersey town where the U.S. Equestrian Team has its headquarters.

"Frank said, 'If I'm going to live here, I'm going to learn how to ride.' He started taking lessons, and that led to his learning how to play polo. As someone who played hockey, Frank already had a natural swing with the stick, and he became obsessed," Janis muses, recalling her husband's introduction to the world of polo, which led the couple to

Windsor, where they purchased property and built a cottage and guesthouse close to the Equestrian Center.

Unlike the majority of Windsor's two-story residences that reflect the private community's signature Anglo-Caribbean architecture, the Evanses' single-story home bears a distinctive Latin American flavor.

"In 2015, Frank spent time in Argentina looking for polo ponies, and while he was there he immersed himself

Mahogany Dutch doors provide the perfect opportunity for one of Frank's inquisitive polo ponies to take a peek inside the courtyard.







The swimming pool at the rear of the property looks out over the Equestrian Center with its barn, stables and full-size polo field. It's a sight the Evanses never tire of.

in the polo culture,” says Janis. “He really loved the estancia style architecture, which is linear, a little rustic, sparse, comfortable and relaxing. It’s my ‘aah’ place. It’s also a place where Frank can walk in with his boots on.”

Vero Beach and Windsor were nowhere on the Evanses’ radar when they decided to look south for a winter retreat with equestrian facilities so Frank could play polo year-round. They spent time at Wellington and Palm Beach, but neither one seemed right. If it hadn’t been for a suggestion from someone they knew in Windsor, they would never have checked out the north barrier island community.

They’re glad they did.

“Windsor’s natural beauty and architecture visually attracted us from the very beginning. Everything just felt right. Not only are the Equestrian Center and the polo just

A courtyard connecting the cottage with the guesthouse is typical of a South American estancia that embraces open spaces and celebrates the view.

what Frank was looking for, but I’m a tennis player, and I met with Tom Fish, the tennis pro, and he showed me around. Everything clicked. It was the best of both worlds,” Janis says enthusiastically, noting there was an added bonus.

“During our stay here, Windsor put us up in one of the guest cottages, where there was a welcome basket filled with fruit, cheeses and banana bread that was over the moon, so I tell everyone the banana bread tipped the scales.”

The Evanses purchased property that looks out over the Equestrian Center’s stables and full-size polo field. The view couldn’t have been more perfect for a man who discovered a love of polo and excels at the sport.

On a recommendation from someone they knew, the couple met with George Pastor of Merrill, Pastor & Colgan Architects. Their initial conversations went well. They got even better after Pastor spent time at his drawing board developing various designs and coming up with one that captured the couple’s vision of an estancia-style cottage and detached guesthouse built





around a courtyard.

“With the Equestrian Center barn and paddocks the focus of the view, the Evanses’ polo cottage is perfect for the site,” says Pastor, who pored over reference materials relating to the centuries-old history of estancias and their defining architecture. Borrowed from Spain, Italy, France, England and Scotland, the South American farmhouses are a fascinating hybrid of European and Argentine cultural traditions that exude a historically rich, classic serenity. His research paid off.

“Courtyards are an integral part of estancias, with a separation between the main house and guesthouse,” Pastor points out. “Each bedroom has a view of the courtyard and fountain, and on the east side of the property there’s a little hammock of trees. There’s a farm-like quality to the house that’s charming.”

Phil Barth of Barth Construction took Pastor’s architectural design and made the charm become a reality. Landscape designer Sam Comer, owner of Hayslip Landscape, created an allee of willowy Alexander palms that flank the central sidewalk, with African iris and dwarf confederate jasmine adding color and fragrance.

Ground was broken on the Evanses’ 4,000-square-foot residence three years ago, and a little over 12 months later it was move-in ready.

The three-bedroom main house features an open living, dining and kitchen area, with an exposed-beam lofted ceiling. The guesthouse, with its welcome mat always out, boasts a bedroom, bathroom, kitchenette and small sitting area, perfect for friends and family members, who tend to visit often.

It’s a delightful departure from the couple’s historical country farmhouse up North, and Janis, an ASID interior designer, collaborated with Pastor, Barth and Comer throughout the project.

“We wanted to create an estancia-style house surrounding a courtyard. The creamy white stucco exterior, old-fashioned wood shutters, and cedar shake roof are all examples of the South American influence, and we continued to punctuate that with furnishings and accessories,” says Janis, whose artistic touches not only reflect the role estancias have played in molding the Argentine culture, they partner perfectly with her affinity for antiques, stone floors, marble and woven textiles.

An impressive limestone fireplace and mantel are the focal point in the lofted, exposed-beam ceiling great room, where matching sofas upholstered in Belgian linen, a striking kilim rug and South American textiles complete the south-of-the-border look Janis desired.

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In one corner of the master bedroom, a lounge chair upholstered in linen is not only comfortable, it is angled perfectly to capture a view of the polo field.

Janis is an expert at sourcing materials. An example can be seen in a hallway where a colorful horse blanket is draped over a vintage wood saddle stand. Tucked neatly alongside, well-worn riding boots await their owner and the next polo match.

So, let's take a closer look at the Evanses' polo cottage. From the street, one enters through a small courtyard, where the soothing sounds of water flowing from a fountain is music to the ears. A pair of mahogany Dutch doors open into a gallery where a large framed photograph of an Argentine rider astride a white horse commands attention. The photo was taken by German-born photographer Anne Menke, and Janis and Frank agreed it was a must-have the minute they saw it.

"Artwork is often the launching point for an interior, and accessories are paramount to creating a cohesive space," Janis points out, making sure to note the neutral palette and a pair of half-moon console tables, the bottom of their legs resembling hooves. The twin mirrors above were custom sized to fit the space. Add two decorative ceramic urns and antique jewel-tone

rugs and you have a rustic and relaxed atmosphere synonymous with estancias.

That same atmosphere resonates in the open great room sitting area, where an impressive limestone fireplace surround and mantel are the focal point for matching sofas upholstered in ivory Belgian linen. Janis partnered them with a pair of occasional chairs made of hair on hide with leather straps, evoking a sense of the Argentine gaucho life.

In the dining area, an iron bronze-finish candelabra sheds a glow over the custom wood trestle table surrounded by upholstered leather chairs trimmed with nail heads, adding to the home's organic feeling.

The adjacent kitchen features a dark wood island with marble countertop and a trio of leather upholstered

The master bedroom features a king-size bed with wool-covered headboard, matching stone lamps topped with linen shades, and an artistic montage of various herbs. A crystal chandelier adds a touch of sophistication.





For the kitchen, Janis selected a limestone hood, marble herringbone backsplash and custom cabinetry to complement the marble-top island and trio of leather stools that invite others to join in meal preparation and conversation.

stools, just waiting for someone to come and sit a spell while engaging in a lively conversation.

“At our home up in New Jersey, everyone always gathers in the kitchen, and I wanted them to do the same here,” says Janis, who went all out on high-end appliances, not only for her own culinary pursuits, but for those of her son-in-law, a professional chef in Manhattan. When he and her daughter come to visit, Janis happily turns over the use of pots, pans and anything to do with meal preparation to him. The soft shade of pavilion gray paint seen in the kitchen

transitions seamlessly into the master bedroom, where a king-size bed with custom wool-covered headboard, stone lamps topped with linen shades and Egyptian limestone floors carry through the South American theme.

In one corner, a chaise lounge upholstered in linen is angled to take advantage of a view of the Equestrian Center, where there’s never a lack of activity. It’s a sight the owners never tire of.

For the master bathroom, Janis continued the neutral palette, selecting a classic checkerboard tile floor, distressed



In the open dining area, a custom wood table, surrounded by linen-covered armchairs and a pair of distressed leather ones with nail heads becomes a gathering place for hungry friends and family.

wood vanity and a tub with metal surround, all fitting in with the established rustic ambiance.

However, in the powder room, Janis couldn't help but express her fondness for the Florida lifestyle by selecting wallpaper with a bold palm leaf pattern that never fails to surprise and prompt smiles.

Reflecting on the relative ease of how their polo cottage came to be, Janis has nothing but praise for Pastor, Barth and Comer. "I couldn't have asked for a more perfect team," she says.

"George really captured our vision and Phil and his

crew built it, coming in on time and on budget. Sam was a good listener who executed the kind of landscaping we wanted. Instead of having a lush tropical Florida look, we kept things neutral with grasses," says Janis, who added two large urns resembling olive jars to the front, further defining the desired Latin American farmhouse feel.

"We wanted a retreat, a place that's easy and comfortable, where Frank can play polo during the season and I can play tennis, and we got it. We've both made so many friends here. Windsor fits us perfectly." ❁



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At the end of the day, it's all about polo. The Evanses appreciated the intimacy and privacy Windsor provides. As Janis says, "We love coming here. Now Frank can play polo year-round. It's been a home run!"