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*Home for the
Holidays*

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A perennial stunner in both its decor and architecture, the living room of this home is especially lovely at Christmastime. Topped with a gathering of bows, the faux St. Catherine's pine tree is lush with iridescent "oil slick" glass ornaments, bright-red glass balls, streams of gauzy ribbon, pinecones, berries and many other delights. The fireplace wears a sweeping garland of pine boughs and pinecones, crabapples and red ornaments, and scarlet velvet ribbons galore.

Christmas Custom ❄ Made

*Hired for the Occasion, Holiday
Elves Perform Yuletide Favors*

BY ROBERTA LANDMAN PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARRETT COOK

Right: An extraordinary mountain backdrop merges with the artistry of man at the home's entry. A cantera fountain is the first of multiple focal points, which include copious stone balusters and stairways with formal European appeal.



Opposite: The groin-vaulted ceiling and an enormous crystal chandelier lend the dining room a dramatic presence. The two-way fireplace is shared with the adjacent living room. To the left of the fireplace and beyond, the foyer is defined by a colonnade of arches.

TWIN STAIRWAYS EMBELLISHED WITH CURVING STONE balustrades rise to meet each other at the entry of this mountain-backed, 12,000-square-foot north Scottsdale home.

Visitors admiring the grand point of arrival have told homeowners Mary Ellen and Bob Gawlik that they remember having seen something like it in France or Spain. The couple's 6-year-old grandson had his own ideas about this front-of-the-house stone feature. "It was like a fort to him," the amused Gawliks recall.

The little guy will have a chance to reevaluate his impressions of this Mediterranean-style residence when family members—including other grandbabies and the Gawliks' grown children—gather there for Christmas. The home will be sumptuously dressed for the holiday season after designer Paul Folk and his helpers do their special gussying up. (The photos on these pages show their artistry from last year, and this is the fifth Christmas season that the homeowners have enjoyed the services of Folk and his team.)

Folk is the owner of Rustic Stuff, a Scottsdale emporium offering fine furniture, out-of-the-ordinary bric-a-brac and much more. He never planned this Christmasy aspect of his entrepreneurship. "It's just what happened," Folk says. The way he decorated his store for the holidays some years back drew admirers. Some asked if he could do the same for their homes, and the few became many. The Gawliks are among them.

As much as a Hollywood makeup artist makes a beautiful movie star even more stunning, Folk often adds Christmas decor to extraordinary dwellings. This home clearly falls into that category, he indicates. Designed by architect Mark Candelaria, a

Phoenix Home & Garden Master of the Southwest, the residence was built by Tom Argue. Mary Ellen, who once had a career as an interior designer, put her personal stamp on it and also consulted with interior designers Chris Benac and Mike McDaniel. For the holidays, she gladly lets Folk and his elves take over. The living room, part Traditional and part eclectic, as she describes her style of decor, becomes home to a 12-foot-tall, richly decorated Christmas tree. Elsewhere, naturalistic holiday garlands grace fireplaces and mirrors. Even the kitchen gets a touch of seasonal cheer. Arms of its outsize chandelier are festooned with pine branches, berries and bows.

Set under a soaring brick-lined domed ceiling, the room contains two marble-topped islands and cabinetry with definite French appeal; it is Mary Ellen's dominion. She loves to cook, and "with a lot of wine and lots of garlic," she adds with a smile. Among favorite dishes are lamb ragout and smoked brisket. But for Christmas, there will be roast turkey and all the trimmings.

Her husband, meanwhile, looks forward to the festive atmosphere brought by holiday decorating inside and out. Hiring Folk to do it has worked out very well, he reports. In a practical sense, he notes: "With just the sheer size of the home, we weren't going to tackle it ourselves."

Folk and crew put up the yuletide trappings—all of which were obtained through Rustic Stuff—and later will take them down and pack them in boxes that are labeled with their contents.

In a purely aesthetic sense, the man of the house reflects: "Personally, I'd leave the Christmas decorations up for four months." ■





A dining room console displays blue-and-white porcelain, beloved by the lady of the house. Adding holiday glam, an asymmetrical pine garland features wide ribbons, gold- and copper-hued glass ornaments, pinecones and berries.

CHOOSING A HOLIDAY DECORATOR

There are those who consider Arizonan Paul Folk a sort of Christmas angel. He tends to the needs of a variety of folks who want help decorating their homes for the holidays. Following are some tips for those seeking such assistance:

- To find a holiday home-decorator, ask for a recommendation from someone you know who has used such a service. In the case of the owners of this house, it was their builder who had personal knowledge of Folk's expertise.
- Make sure a provider understands your style preferences. Folk says he asks prospective clients about their "likes and dislikes, and then I design accordingly."
- If you are buying new holiday decorations and want them installed, be sure you are clear about your expectations—the scope of the project and if it includes installation along with removal and packing up of decorations with identifying labels when the holidays are over.



OPPOSITE: An inviting fireside sitting area in the family room gets a touch of holiday finery. Adding color against the rustic stone wall is a garland of branches and greenery laden with berries, silvery ornaments and opulent ribbons. Amaryllis blooms fill Asian vases.





Opposite: Located between the kitchen and family room, this dining area is less formal than the main dining room but luxuriously comfortable in its own right. Reflecting the room's attributes—custom furnishings and a chandelier fancied up for the holidays—the peaked ceiling is clad with antique mirrors.

Right: Straddling a centerpiece skylight, bricks of the kitchen's high domed ceiling are set in an intricate herringbone pattern. The candle-style iron chandelier echoes a holiday theme; its arms are decorated alternately with festive bows and pine branches with berries. Homeowner Mary Ellen Gawlick wanted the room to be functional as well as beautiful, and casually French in spirit. Toward that end, dual islands with carved antique pine bases and Carrara marble tops cater to food prep and casual dining. Cabinetry has a painted and distressed black finish, and counters and stove back-splash are marble.





This intimate patio awaits family members who want to “chill out” next to the raised cantera fireplace and plants dotted with sparkling Christmas lights. French doors are capped with

cantera cornices. Reflected in a “window” mirror (opposite), a boxwood topiary and lanterns star in an outdoor vignette. *See Sources.*

