

ENTERTAINING IDEAS

A Chappaqua Tudor's ingenious design suits homeowners who receive frequent guests yet are protective of their privacy.

By H. M. Epstein • Photography by Alec Marshall





(Previous Pages) The Hassells chose a stone and brick exterior for their Tudor home, built in 2002 by Paul Guillaro of Unicorn Contracting, Inc., in Garrison. Two massive stone chimneys, classic Tudor architectural features, anchor two sides of this Chappaqua home. The curved trellis sits outside the sunroom and below the master bedroom's curved balcony. The two-story tower of windows houses the main staircase. Homeowner, philanthropist, and gourmet chef Agnes Hassell takes a moment of repose in her busy kitchen.

(Above) A large Palladian window maximizes natural light in the living room, painted with Benjamin Moore's Surfin' Blue. The tray ceiling's pattern is echoed in the paneling along the walls. The Hassells requested that their new house be larger but proportionately the same as their previous one to accommodate their favorite furniture pieces.

homeowner, philanthropist, and gourmet chef Agnes Hassell has the confidence to do things her own way. "I don't cater," she says.

She means it—literally. Guests at the frequent formal sit-down dinners she hosts each year for banking executive husband Gerald's clients and employees, as well as holiday parties and buffets she holds, are treated to her home-cooked meals. "I love to cook," she says. "I even do all of the cooking for our annual New Year's Eve party"—an impressive feat considering the guest list includes up to 100 adults, plus children.

Although they value their privacy, the Hassells open their hearts and their 8,600-square-foot Chappaqua home to deserving charities. The couple has hosted fundraising events and an auction for various New York-based causes. They're two of the five co-founders of the Mount Kisco-based social-service organization, Neighbors Link, which was founded to meet the needs of 3,000 Latino immigrants who represent 26 percent of the town's total population. (Agnes hosts regular planning meetings for Friends of Neighbors Link, beginning each session with a cooking class.) She also serves on the Board of Directors for Leake & Watts Services, a social-services agency for vulnerable children and families in the Greater New York area.

When it came to building their Tudor-style home in 2001, this yin and yang pull between regular entertaining and a penchant for privacy led to the interesting butterfly layout for the Hassells' stone-and-brick home. To open up the public spaces and protect the personal ones, architect Ken Andersen of R. S. Granoff Architects, P.C., in Greenwich, Connecticut, set the entrance and kitchen in the center of the house with four asymmetrical wings. The public wings encourage a natural circulation pattern from entrance to living room, sunroom, family room, dining room, and kitchen—where, of course, most guests tend to congregate. Fortunately for the Hassells' guests, every inch of their 20-by-20-foot kitchen was designed to accommodate hungry hordes, from the 60-inch Viking range with its custom-designed hood to the worry-free Black Absolute granite counters.

Actually, this is the second kitchen designed for the couple by John Leontiou of Form, Ltd., a kitchen-and-bath design firm in Greenwich, Connecticut. Agnes liked her first one so much that when the new home was built in Chappaqua, she chose the same style and materials once again, this



time with two notable additions. The first, a classic 6-by-15-foot butler's pantry with soapstone counters, a farmer's sink, a second refrigerator, and two freezers, has plenty of open display for finding easily the right serving bowl or platter. The second modification was ensuring there were enough cabinets to house enough kitchen gear to outfit a small restaurant.

“Agnes has far too many kitchen gadgets,” Andersen jokes. Born in the Philippines, the lady of the house is renowned for a wide range of Asian and Southeast Asian dishes. “She’s an excellent chef,” says Andersen, who recently won a silent auction for a formal dinner party prepared by Agnes to benefit the Friends of Neighbors Link (FNL), Neighbors Link’s fundraising arm.

The Hassells’ house, with its five bedrooms and six bathrooms (plus three additional powder rooms), features several unexpected elements. “Tudors traditionally have a stately type of architecture,” says Andersen. The Hassells preferred a stone-and-brick exterior to the stucco that is the hallmark of the Tudorbethan style, also known as Mock Tudor, which is popular in much of Southern Westchester. Also unexpected on Tudor homes of any era: one wing of the house is anchored by a charming stone porte-cochère (a passageway where guests can exit their cars protected from the weather). Two massive stone chimneys, long-established Tudor architectural features, root two wings. A three-car garage with rooms above supplies the fourth wing’s anchor.



The kitchen features Black Absolute granite counters, a 60-inch stainless Viking range with a custom-designed vent hood, and high-gloss black ceramic backsplash tiles. A rack of well-used pans hangs over an island for easy access, not just show. Note the bottom of a pan embossed with a version of the great seal of the United States. “One of Gerald’s finds,” says Agnes.



The family's favorite space is a pie slice-shaped sunroom with a wide curved wall of French doors. The brick wall in the background provides ample "gallery" space for a piece from Gerald's collection of black-and-white photographs and antique tools.

(Top) "We needed lots of nooks and crannies to showcase all of the gifts we've bought for one another and received from friends," Agnes says. The "ball of happiness" on the lower right shelf, a gift from Gerald to his wife, consists of several freely spinning balls within balls all intricately carved from one piece of jade. The little plaster Buddha statue is a memento from a former Ossining neighbor. (Bottom) A small display of Early American tools and implements collected by banking executive Gerald Hassell





While the butterfly layout defines

the footprint, semi-circles, repeated throughout the house and gardens, offer a distinctive approach. The arch of the porte-cochère is echoed in the entranceway and in the archways that flow into and out of the living room and again in its untraditional but welcome wall-to-wall arched window. Curved patios and trellises, ridged with gardens that camber between each pair of wings, are a distinctive design element of the grounds—designed by landscape architect Robert Brehm, also of R. S. Granoff Architects, P.C., and executed by landscaper Anthony Guillaro of Phoenix Industries in Bedford—unseen by neighbors and passersby on the street.

Another motive for the butterfly-shaped floor plan was to site the structure so the homeowners could both save and savor a very special century-plus-old tree, a copper beech with a canopy 80 feet in diameter. “It was like another kid,” says Agnes, a mother of two grown children. The architect set the curved wall of windows in the sunroom and the curved edge of the master bedroom balcony to allow remarkable views of the majestic beech.

To make full use of the property’s natural light, the Hassells requested another feature uncommon in most Tudors: lots of large windows. The gardens on the 13-acre double lot “embrace this house,” says Agnes, creating

a natural screen so window treatments could be avoided in public spaces. The result is that every room becomes a gateway to lush gardens and green groves. The home’s integration of nature continues on the second floor, beyond the game room’s French doors, with a covered outdoor space that sits among the trees, akin to the famous Treetops Hotel in Aberdare National Park, Kenya.

Formal outside, informal inside, this Tudor is never fussy or stiff. “We wanted it homey with a country feel and with nothing shiny,” says Agnes. The interior design’s clean lines and crisp colors reflect the homeowners’ no-nonsense personal style. They didn’t hire an interior designer because the result “wouldn’t be us,” explains Agnes. Much of the furniture comes from their previous home, a 19th-century Tudor in Ossining. The rest, including Gerald’s extensive collections of black-and-white photography and Early American tools, were found on buying trips to flea markets and antiques shops. “We love to look together,” Agnes says.

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