

HOME IMPROVEMENT

Transform your home from everyday to elegant in minutes

Where's the hottest hangout in town? For many, it's their own living room.

According to a recent survey, more than three out of four Americans (aged 21 to 39) prefer to spend an evening with friends at someone's home rather than at a bar or club. When it's your house that's become the destination for the evening, a little planning can make preparing for the party more relaxing. "Everyone stresses about having company, but by making just a few preparations and using everyday furnishings in new and different ways, the perfect party can take place in even the smallest of living spaces," says furniture expert Penny Eudy. "Whether having the family over for dinner, hosting a cocktail hour or inviting the neighborhood over for game night, you'll appreciate smart furnishings that can adapt from everyday décor to the changing needs of guests in a snap."

Create Conversational Clusters
The typical living room is set up for comfortable viewing of the family television. To entertain guests when the television isn't the center of attention, encourage them to mingle with conversational configurations, suggests

Eudy. Sectionals such as the Inspired Living by La-Z-Boy "Benjamin" feature modular pieces finished on all sides that can be arranged and rearranged, to offer dozens of options and endless opportunities for conversation.

Long bench ottomans and small chairs should come out from the wall on special occasions to form intimate groupings for friendly conversation. "Combine ottomans and small chairs with larger furnishings to create groupings throughout a space, with the furniture facing each other," says Eudy. "These conversational groupings will encourage guests to sit and relax, instead of flocking to the kitchen, as we're always so tempted to do."

Maintain a Friendly Flow
While creating extra seating for guests is important, maintaining open space for impromptu gatherings, dancing and simply milling about also is vital to the life of a party. "When rearranging furniture for a gathering, consider the flow of traffic through the room and where crowds will congregate," recommends Eudy. "Sizeable walkways between furnishings and clear paths to buffets, bars and seating areas promote friendly mingling and make guests feel more at home."

Avoid Clutter Chaos
Organizing your everyday clutter and cleaning house for company can cause quite a stir after all is said

and done. Keep clutter out of sight, but close-at-hand, with storage ottomans. Not only do ottomans such as the La-Z-Boy "Cory" hide away everyday messes, they offer even more seating for your guests and can be moved throughout the evening to spur conversation and create table top space for board games and the occasional euchre match.

Adjust the Atmosphere
Ambience is key to any gathering. Create the mood, whether fun and funky or calm and serene, with adjustable lighting. Well-placed table lamps and floor lamps make light quantity and quality easy to control. Strategically placed candles can add a special glow to a room. Put lighting on side tables that will also lend themselves as resting places for beverages and plates of hors d'oeuvres.

"By making just a few easy adjustments to your space and keeping a party's theme and menu simple, anyone can become the 'hostess with the mostest,' no matter how often your home becomes a hot spot on the social scene," adds Eudy.

More Information
You can learn more online at www.lazboy.com. Encourage guests to mingle with conversational configurations and sectionals that feature modular pieces that can be rearranged. ■

DECORATING TRENDS

Ceramic tiles evolve into an art form all their own

Ceramic tiles have evolved from a practical kitchen and bath utility into an art form all their own.

Ceramic tiles are taking a big step forward and moving out of the kitchen and bathroom into other rooms of the home. Much of the reason for this is the popularity of the traditional classic Spanish design, which is now finding new energy and life throughout the U.S. This has led to some of the most interesting and creative design concepts the world has ever seen.

Equally as important as this innovation is, however, the tile industry has come to realize the importance of educating consumers in regards to the benefits of using ceramic tile. Casa Decor, for example, an international producer of interior design exhibitions, realizes the significance of this and has made both ceramic innovation and education its goals with every showhouse it produces.

Ceramic Tiles Stretch Outdoors
The showhouse renovated the local Miami Woman's Club, an early 20th century



building close to ruin, and transformed the site into the world-renowned host of some of today's most captivating interior and exterior designs. Filled from top to bottom with elaborate home decor, Casa Decor also stretched outdoors and overlooked Miami's beautiful Biscayne Bay with a gorgeous view of downtown Miami Beach.

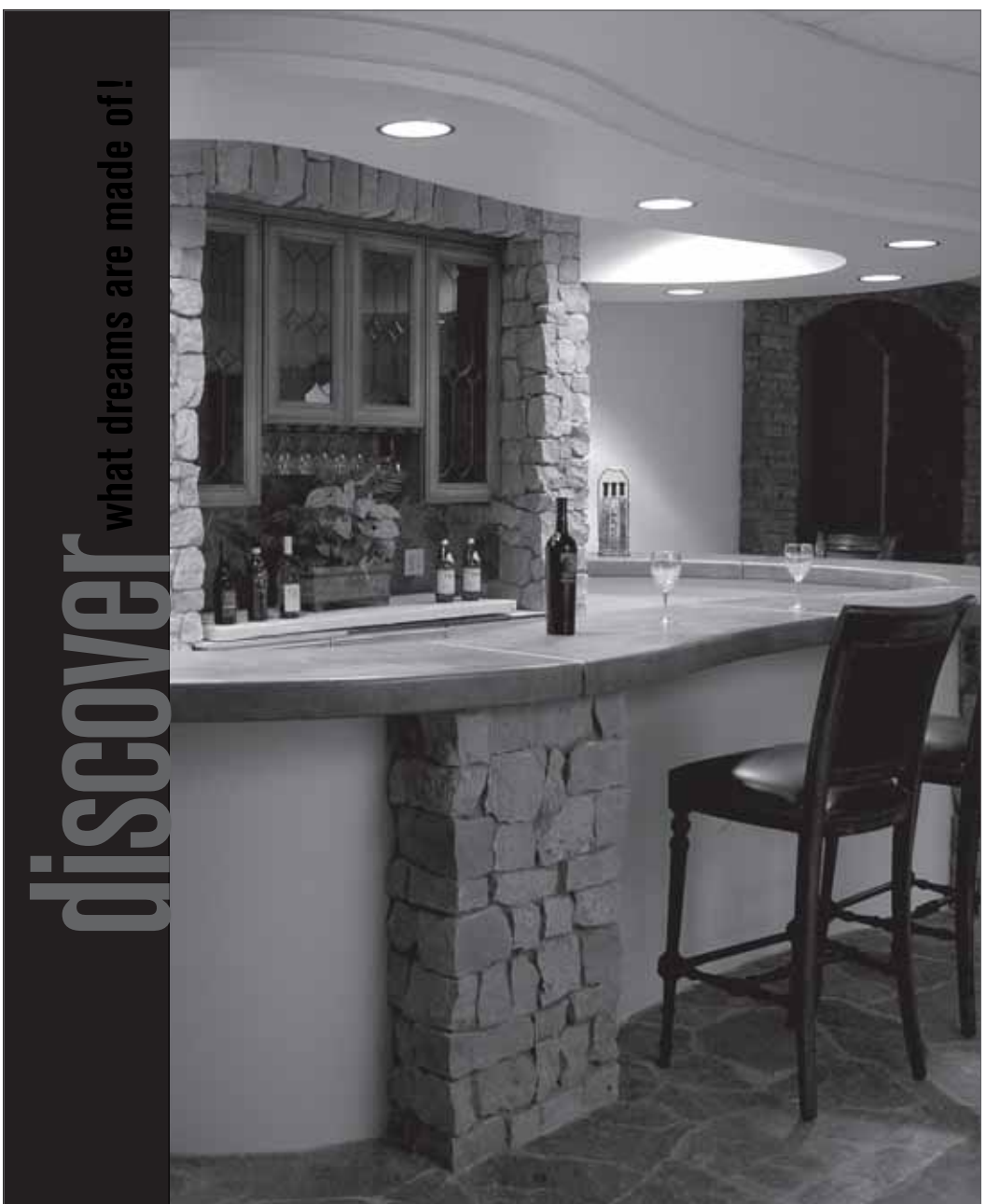
Adding creativity to innovation, designers of Casa Decor Miami chose to incorporate ceramic tiles into their art. Tile of Spain donated thousands of tiles from seven of its branded manufacturers specifically selected by designers. Those manufacturers asked to be involved in this project were Azulejera Alcorense, Halcon Ceramicas, Onix, Porcelanosa, Roca, Rocersa, and Tau Ceramicas. In these projects, whether designers wished to play up light and texture, experiment with alternate surfaces such as fabrics and hides or bring the visual elements of natural aesthetics into their

home, Spain's ceramic tiles were used to create design options as limitless as the imagination.

Casa Decor's "Courtyard Café," designed by Stanley Matz, for example, created a pristine patio filled with white orchids and ferns and the sounds of water flowing softly in the background. It was the exterior tile floor, however, that stole the show.

A Touch Of Glamour
Another room nestled into Casa Decor's second floor living space was the "Fendi Casa," properly titled "A Touch of Glam" by designer Osirys Mendez. Mendez used a metallic stone-inspired ceramic tile that was bordered by wood-inspired ceramic. These wood-inspired tiles were incorporated not only for their beauty and ability to be easily cleaned, but also for their resistance to water damage.

Anyone looking at these rooms can see that the tiles from Spain are very far from plain. To learn more, visit www.spaintiles.info. ■



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