

# Natural materials, earthy colors bring Italian touch to America

**DEAR DESIGNER:** I've heard so much about Tuscan style. Will you describe what that style is? — Going Italian.

**DEAR ITALIAN:** Tuscan style is quite popular, which makes it easy to accomplish. Tuscany is a region in Italy known for its Old World charm. Although the busy city of Florence is in Tuscany, people usually refer to the vast open fields, farmhouses and vineyards synonymous with the region.

Here in America we're trying to capture that charm, calling it Tuscan style. However, if you should



**Cindy Payne**  
DEAR DESIGNER

visit Tuscany, many of the homes and hotels look

much different than our interpretation.

To capture that Italian feeling we are using variations of Venetian plaster on our walls. Artisans and faux finishers who specialize in this effect can give walls an Old World look. The textures are rugged and earthy. It's common to replicate chipped plaster, showing old brick walls that were once covered by the plaster. The bathroom in the accompanying photograph was painted by Chris Seckler, a local artist. You have to touch the wall to know it is only paint.

The colors of Tuscany range from earth tones to the bright colors of fresh-picked vegetables. Golden olive oil, dusty purple and green grapes are only a few of the colors that make up the Old World charm of the Tuscan region. Brightly painted ceramic tiles and canisters can be a perfect complement for a kitchen.

Windows are often treated as simply as possible to preserve the view of the



PHOTO COURTESY CHRIS SECKLER  
A faux Venetian plaster finish makes it appear as if once-covered bricks are being exposed by chipping plaster.



Simple draperies in warm, earthy colors are typical of Tuscan style.



PHOTOS COURTESY CINDY PAYNE

Raising the wall cabinets above the cooktop and enlarging the crown molding provides some extra interest to the kitchen, while replacing white appliances for those in black and adding various accessories gives the room a more Tuscan appearance.

beautiful towns and rolling hills. Windows are accented with shades or framed with simply styled draperies.

Floors are done in stone, terra-cotta tile or tumbled marble. When you think of Tuscan style, think natural. Use wood and stone when you can. Rough textures, wrought-iron accessories, warm colors, Italian pottery and earthenware plates all work together to create the American version of Tuscan style.

**DEAR DESIGNER:** My kitchen needs some character. I love the granite and the cabinets must stay. How can I spruce up my kitchen with a touch of Tuscan style? — On a Budget.

**DEAR ON A BUDGET:** Fortunately, your kitchen has workable features. The dark granite and warm-colored cabinets will help incorporate the Tuscan look you are after. You can add some interest to your wall cabinets by setting the cabinet above your cooktop 3 inches higher, adding a larger crown molding and putting some accessories on top.

Your appliances are stark and white. These can be replaced with black or stainless steel for a rich look. The appliances will be your largest expense.

Finding the right table can



Dark granite countertops and warm-colored cabinets lent themselves to a Tuscan makeover.

be tricky. If you select oak, like your cabinets, your room could look more American country than Tuscan. By adding a table of similar color but with less wood grain, it appears more Tuscan.

Keep your colors earthy and deep. A simple valance or Chelsea Roman shade adds a relaxing curve and warmth to an otherwise stark room.

Add decorative pendant lights to accent the island. These can be put on a dimmer switch to produce a lovely evening glow.

Don't be afraid to

experiment with accessories. The right touch usually comes by trial and error. With the addition of fresh vegetables sitting on the counter, your room can be very Tuscan like. Most importantly, have fun with it!

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