

ICONIC LIFE



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\ DESIGN \

Great Design vs Grape Juice

by NORA BURBA TRULSSON
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Photo by Stephanie Wiley

California interior designer Courtney Thomas
crafts a stylish, family-friendly home.

Interior designer Courtney Thomas imbued a new family home near Pasadena, California with a gracious sense of elegance, framing traditional/transitional furnishings with cool white walls and deeply hued wood flooring. While the interior is picture-perfect, it's also laced with a myriad of strategies to fight off grape juice, dog hair and muddy soccer cleats, thanks to Thomas' own insights as a working mother of four young children.

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Thomas, who launched her eponymous residential design firm in La Cañada, California in 2013, managed to balance both high design and practical solutions for the 9,000-square-foot home for a couple (she's an attorney, he's in finance) and their three school-aged children. "The clients wanted a home that landed somewhere between a Newport Beach coastal style and a traditional colonial design," explains Thomas, who worked with builder Robert Barsamian and a design by C.A. Stoddard A.I.A. & Associates, on the project. "The owners love to entertain and have a big family, so that factored into the design."

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Photo by Jill Weller

The two-story house, which also has a basement, sits on a leafy acre site, with an exterior marked by gabled roof forms, mullioned windows, board-and-batten siding and brick detailing.



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Inside, a dramatic, two-story entry—anchored by a curving staircase—opens on to what Thomas calls “the grand room,” which includes the formal living and dining rooms, as well as a bar. “This is where they host parties for friends and family,” the designer explains. “The grand room has bi-fold doors that open to the back yard, so it’s great for parties.”

The kitchen, breakfast room and family room are to one side of the grand room. A library, small office, guest suite and mud room are also on the main level. The master suite and three children’s bedrooms are located on the second floor, while the basement includes a workout area and a game room.



Photo by Jill Weller

“We knew that we wanted to capture that coastal-design ambiance with a lot of white when it came to the interiors,” says Thomas, “but we also knew that such a huge expanse of white had to be interrupted with detailing.” Thomas specified white chair rails, wainscoting and base moulding to add interest to the walls—and to give the interior a more formal, traditional look. She also detailed ceilings throughout the house to visually bring down the scale, adding a coffered ceiling to the kitchen and framing the formal living room with exposed, dark beams.

The spacious kitchen’s traditional white cabinets are a custom design, as is the arched hood over the range, where Thomas installed a backsplash of laser-cut, glass and marble Ann Sacks tiles as a focal point. Upstairs, Thomas specified more custom cabinetry for spaces such as the master bath and the daughter’s room, where a cushioned window seat is flanked by bookcases.

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Photo by Jill Weller

When it came to furnishings, Thomas suggested simple lines with traditional details, working in a palette of cream, espresso, grey and deep blue. In the formal living room, two spindle chairs are balanced by a pair of Century club chairs, which, along with a rolled-arm sofa, create a conversation grouping in front of the limestone fireplace. The bar includes several swiveling leather club chairs, custom designed to be extra deep to accommodate the husband's tall, basketball-loving friends.



Photo by Jill Weller

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In the formal dining room, upholstered Bernhardt dining chairs and a table that can seat up to 12 make up an invitation to long, lingering dinners. The family room's U-shaped sectional was also a custom design by Thomas, meant to be large enough to accommodate the entire family for TV watching. The interior was finished off with colorful art, collected by the couple during their travels while the house was being built.



Photo by Jill Weller

As stylish and elegant as the house seems, Thomas made sure it works for family living, collaborating with the wife to add solutions to keep life running smoothly. The mud room features cubbies for each family member, fitted with hooks, drawers and shelves to keep shoes, sports gear, backpacks and more contained in one organized area. The mudroom's sink is deep enough to literally rinse off mud, and, if that doesn't work, Thomas points out, the adjacent porch is equipped with a hose.

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"The hose was installed there on purpose," she laughs, "just in case the dog or anyone else needs to be rinsed off." The kitchen has two islands—one for cooking and one for homework, both topped with easy-care quartzite counters—as well as two dishwashers to handle party clean-ups. Thomas specified that all the upholstered pieces be treated with fabric protector and had a glass top made for the Bernhardt wood breakfast table. A second-floor laundry saves steps. Even the home's dark, engineered-wood flooring can withstand the pitter-patter of many active feet.

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Photo by Stephanie Wiley

"The interior isn't bulletproof," says Thomas. "It isn't protected from running with scissors, but it might slow down the grape juice from seeping into the beige sofa."

The family has settled into their new home, relishing its design, their time spent together and the gatherings they have already started to host. The parents can also relax, knowing there's a strategically placed hose in back, just in case.