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INSIDE EXQUISITE NEW JERSEY ESTATES:
MONTCLAIR AT EAGLE ROCK, SADDLE RIVER, BERNARDSVILLE,
LLEWELYN PARK IN WEST ORANGE

ALSO: MARKET MAKERS, DESIGN SENSE, PAY IT FORWARD,
GUEST LIST, CHEF'S KITCHEN, MORRIS MUSEUM





Twenty-thousand square feet. Twenty-six rooms. And a fireplace in the poolside cabana.

How can a home so grand — whose footprint is best appreciated from the air — still manage to feel so livable?

Inspired by the grand chateaux of France, this luxurious Saddle River estate may boast Venetian plaster ceilings and a terra-cotta wine cellar reminiscent of the catacombs, but this is no Francophile fortress stuck in the 10th century.

This is a warm and comfortable French manor house, tucked away on five private acres, designed for easy American living.

Steeped in Old World traditions and artifacts — from its 18th century limestone fireplaces to its frescoed walls — the estate also delivers a dash of Yankee informality and ingenuity.

You can view “An American in Paris” in the award-winning movie theater, which seats 15 in Hollywood splendor, and features state-of-the-art upholstered acoustical panels.

You can hit a backhand on the DecoTurf II tennis court, and shoot hoops on the all-American basketball court, as well as park your vintage Mustang in the seven-car garage with solid mahogany doors.

Still, make no mistake, this is very much a European estate, especially when you consider the master bedroom suite of five spacious rooms, which takes up an entire wing of the house.

“The owners wanted a home that looked like it was in the French countryside,” says Joe Commorata, co-owner of Commorata & Berardi, the custom design and building company that constructed the estate with three levels of living space.

The home with the honey-hued sandstone exterior rambles like

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Joie de Vivre

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something out of a storybook. The French-gray slate rooflines are steep and varied, while sturdy chimneys rise above the peaks.

It may look like a generations-old French manor, but the home was completed in 2006 and created by a consortium of artisans, designers and master craftspeople — many from Europe.

Masons pillowed every block of the hand-hewn and chiseled sandstone. Artisans painted delicate flowers on ceilings, along with the whimsical faux Parisian storefronts on the home's lower level.

It exudes a warm, country French feeling, says interior designer Wendy Eigen, who worked on the estate for a year and a half.

Inside, you can move along a magical, 100-plus-foot-long gallery, which ushers you from one magnificent, light-filled space to another.

In the gourmet kitchen and adjoining family room, hand-hewn beams arch and curl from a wormy chestnut ceiling that soars 20 feet above the limestone floor. And then there's the piece de resistance: the magnificent terra-cotta wine cellar. In mellow hues ranging from pale yellow and pink to peach and ochre, the antique Parefeuille terracotta adds a soft opalescence to the space, which is accessed through heavy French gates. In this Gothic-inspired catacomb, you almost expect to see a procession of beaming, brown-robed monks gliding by.

"The home is timeless," says Commorata. No wonder a little placard on the mantle of the 17th century Parisian fireplace reads: *And they lived happily ever after.* ■

—By Eileen Curtis





For more information on this featured home go to: www.aspirenj.com

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