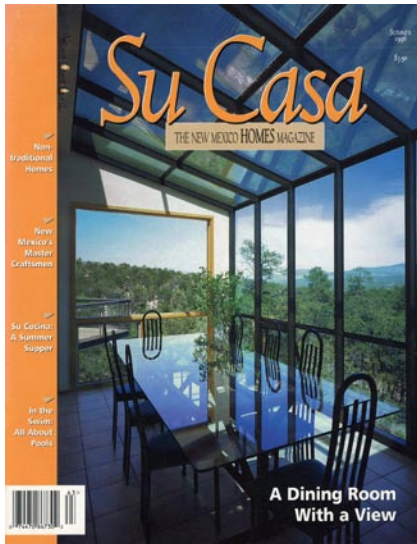


What Can You Do With an Old Farmhouse? Plenty, as Kay Beason demonstrates.



Kay Beason builds homes for people. She wants them to be rooted and comfortable in their own homes. Every house must have something special, something that's personal to the owners. Her homes have character. Charm. "I always ask—but what does it make you 'feel'?" I try to listen, and give them back what they want. A gift of themselves," Kay says.

This house in the North Valley was an old farmhouse. Kay has remodeled it—she has kept the feel of the old and brought it up-to-date. "I just fell in love with this house. Someone had set fire to the floor—there was graffiti inside and out. It has prairie style roof lines, not really a New Mexico-looking house. I began to imagine what it was like. I can't tear stuff like that down."

The house has old hardwood floors and Kay replaced them with new oak ones and put in hardwood (aspen and spruce) ceilings as well. They reframed the whole house. The attic is large and will help provide R-50 insulation.

She has used four-cross windows (divided into four panes), which are more traditional for old farmhouses. The roof is pitched and galvanized tin. The trim is a dark spruce green, against sand stucco.

The house is welcoming, human-sized. It has gracious rooms, but they are not "huge"—it feels like a home. Perhaps like your grandmother's house—with all the modern conveniences. Kay mused "What is the heart of the house? Yes, when people come to your house they always wind up in the kitchen." The cabinets look and feel like furniture and she has left them the natural hickory color. They stand on legs and the doors of the cabinets are the flush with the framing. Some are open like a hutch, with plate racks. One has pocket door that can hide a small TV.

"The house has been modernized. I've put some new life into it, but I hope I haven't changed the 'feel.' Ten-foot ceilings are not real high. It's warm and cozy. With French doors, north from the great room, and enough windows to see out and have light.

"I wanted some walls for art—it's so cold to see just walls of glass. I want some warmth in a house." Every room, even the great room, has room to put things on the walls or place things in niches or on half walls.

The one-acre property has three structures on it. The main house, that will end up about 2,600 square feet, a garage and apartment of about 500 square feet, and a small one-room building. The cost of the whole project will run about \$410,000 (the renovations about \$320,000.) All three buildings will have pitched tin roofs and they will be connected with walkways and courtyards. There will be several private and shared outdoor spaces—from the morning room and the den/office of the main house. Lots of ways to move

through the space and lots of privacy, too.

Kay comes from a family of builders and furniture makers. Her grandfather built rock houses and was a carpenter. Her parents had a furniture store, worked on furniture, remodeled their home. Born and reared in Carlsbad, Kay graduated from UNM and taught for a year at Ft. Wingate. She knew immediately teaching was not her forté. She has worked in construction and related industries ever since—as an insurance adjuster, at a mortgage company, a bank, and as a consultant. Eventually, she went on her own, starting with remodeling her rental properties in 1985. She already had her brokers license and soon got her general contractor’s license as well. In 1994, her firm, Reliance Construction & Remodeling, won the People’s Choice Award in the Parade of Homes. “Since then,” says Kay, “we have all we can do.”

Kay is not looking to be a big builder. “What I’m really trying get is a reputation as a quality builder. I tell my guys when they have a choice—imagine this is your own house—now do it better. Let’s do it right. Even in the middle of a project, I can’t stop thinking about how to do something better.”

Kay is not interested in whether the house is large or small. “It needs something special. I just want to do something special for that owner. I really end up caring about the people I work with. Whether it’s because of that, or because we care about their house... Something special happens when you care.”

Kay pours herself into her projects. She wants to build more on spec, but is content with the choices she’s made. “I have never been so motivated by money, I don’t build houses to make money. I love houses.”

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