

The Architectural Styling Series

A Bit of Tuscan Flavor

By Rob Foster

Tuscan style architecture is loved by many. It's a style where careful attention given to authenticity creates a more appealing home. A true Italian style gives the feeling of inviting the outdoors in, making it one of my favorites.

One of the most noticeable "trademarks" of the Tuscan style home is the low roof pitch covered with barrel tiles. Quite often you will see a one-story sprawling ranch, however it can be designed to include 1 ½ and even 2 stories. This style is not a look that is dominate in the Charlotte area but is starting to "peek around the corner".

South of Ballantyne Country Club and just across the NC/SC state line is a new exclusive neighborhood showcasing three distinct architectural styles. The Regions of Bretagne, a European inspired community offering French Country, English Manor and Tuscan Villa architecture, will capture the elegance and sense of mystery evoked by a land so far away. Here is where you'll find a bit of Tuscan flavor.

Let's examine the philosophies of the floor plan layout and exterior façade. Adhering to "rhyme and reason" thinking, each room has a purpose and you'll find very little wasted space. Tuscan's non-conventional layout does not allow the living and dining rooms to flank each side of the foyer. Quite often a living room isn't found inside the home at all rather an outdoor living space is used instead. Detached guest villas and outdoor living spaces are placed on the front, rear or even in the center of the home.

The use of brick and/or stone in the interior of the home gives an authentic look and feel. But these veneers aren't just for the floors. They can and should be used on the walls, surrounds and even on the ceilings. What is more authentic than a brick groin vault ceiling treatment? It is a stunning detail.

The use of stone in arches leading from room to room, wood beams applied to the ceilings, and rounded corners throughout the home are necessities in creating the authentic Tuscan style. You won't find ornate trim or casing around doors and windows but a simpler "less is more" look. Interior colors and textures are natural and the use of earth tones is a must.

The master's wing of the home is intended to be a sanctuary. With lots of privacy and secluded from the rest of the home, the master wing often has an outdoor retreat space as well. The floor layout and planning is solely based on the owner's lifestyle and should accommodate his personal needs.



The Tuscan's exterior features and details are beautiful and harmonious with nature. The dominate feature of the exterior is the low pitch tile roof. The eaves where the roof meets the exterior walls often have exposed rafters. The exterior facades can be stucco, stone or brick; or a combination of each material since they go very well together. It is important that natural earth tones be used. If stucco is used it can be done with a textured feel. If stone is used it often has a bit of brick mixed in.

The headers over the casement windows and even doors would either be wood timbers or thin vertical brick. The use of 6" or 8" thick stone is preferred but is sometimes substituted with a thinner stone. For cost efficiency, the window and door shapes are sometimes squared-up. Round accent vents are used for ornamentation. There is no exception for the entryway and front doors. This is another focal point of the exterior. True arches are used in this area.

The entry porch is sometimes the tallest feature, especially on a ranch plan. It emulates a Bell Tower. On two-story plans, the entry is mostly one-story but may be wider. If shutters are used they are wood slatted. The chimneys are somewhat ornamental. Quite often the barrel tiles that are used on the roof are stacked up as a screen for the chimney.

The exterior features are striking on the Tuscan style home. This look really stands out in a very elegant way. Since Tuscan compliments other European style homes, I see the Tuscan Villa making a strong presence in the future. The use of detached buildings and outdoor living spaces make you feel one with the land. I would only imagine you will start seeing more Tuscan style homes pop up in the Charlotte area. Suits me fine.