

A Bay Ridge House With an Italian Villa Feel (Wine Grotto Included)

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This 1910 tile-roofed house sits on an 80-by-100-foot hilltop lot, one of the largest in Crescent Hill, a strictly residential section of Bay Ridge named for its high elevation and the prestigious Crescent Athletic Club that anchored the area in the late 19th century. While its exterior of light-gray stucco walls and green window awnings appears fairly tame, the interior is grand and wide open, with giant windows overlooking a lush backyard and pool.

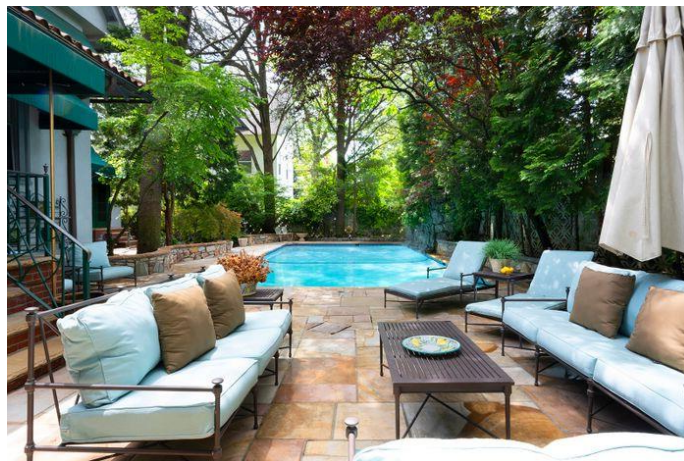
Like many of the large homes in the neighborhood, this Arts & Crafts house (a style that favored natural materials and handcrafted features) was once owned by a shipping magnate. The current owner, who's lived here for 28 years and actually grew up in the neighborhood, had originally been looking for a Manhattan loft. But she kept getting outbid, so she looked closer to home and snapped up this 4,650-square-foot house, happy that there would be so much space for the children. The only problem: It was in shambles. "The pool was half filled with dirt and there were little trees growing out of it," she says. So began a huge renovation project, overseen by her husband, a developer, who had 15 men, including stonemasons from Italy, working there for six months.



The result is a bit like an Italian villa in Brooklyn. One of the most striking features they added are the barrel-vaulted ceilings in the family room (which doubled in size after they combined it with a porch). The same ceilings can be found in the basement, where a spacious wine grotto — inspired by a wine cellar the couple saw in Italy — was dug up by hand and lined with stone and brick.

They also sought to restore many of the house’s original period details, including all of the wooden beams and paneling, terrazzo floors, the chandelier in the kitchen, and three functioning fireplaces. Designer DD Allen (who has done homes for Gwyneth Paltrow and Matt Damon) styled the interior to match the architecture, so naturally there’s a ton of wallpaper designed by William Morris (the father of the Arts & Crafts movement).

Of course, the pool, which comes with a large stone waterfall and an outdoor kitchen nearby, was restored as well. “In the spring and fall, we have all the windows open in the family room and there’s a beautiful breeze,” says the owner. “If you’re sitting there reading, you can always hear the waterfall, it’s a very Zen feeling.”



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