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Upstairs or down, there are plenty of interesting spaces to explore at this Mediterranean-style villa.

# HOME

For the holidays

# Everything is Illuminated

An Israeli-American family celebrates Hanukkah in a home that reflects their heritage

WRITTEN BY GLADYS MONTGOMERY  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADAM MASTOON



**“W**HEN THE ANCIENT GREEKS ruled Jerusalem, they destroyed all of the oil jars in the temple, so there was no oil for the menorah during Hanukkah. But, in the basement of the temple, a little boy found a small jar of oil, enough for only one day.”

“Was the jar like the ones in our hallway?” a child interrupts.

“Those are like the ones that were destroyed. The little jar was much smaller. Using the oil it contained, the Jews lit the menorah. The next morning, they discovered that the oil in the little jar had replenished itself. This happened every day during the eight days of Hanukkah.”

Dalia Tamari, who founded Dalia Kitchen Design, Inc., in Boston in 1987 and designs kitchens all over the world, sits on the kilim-pillowed banquette in her West Stockbridge, Massachusetts, kitchen, cuddling granddaughter Danielle, 5, in her lap. The Israeli immigrant relates the story of the Hanukkah miracle. Among the family’s prized possessions are old *chanukkiyot*, with nine lights fired by wicks that soak in thumbnail-sized receptacles containing olive oil; each grandchild, except baby Maya, selects a *chanukkiyah* to light, alongside the candelabra-style menorah that Americans usually associate with the holiday. “In Israel, Hanukkah is not a primarily religious holiday,” says Tamari. “It is more about the children. Yet, there are no presents, and there’s still school.” Special foods, including jelly-doughnut-like *sufganiot*, are part of the festivities, as are the spinning of the top-like dreidel, gold-foil-wrapped chocolates and nuts, and songs, such as “Kadkatan,” or “Small Jar,” which Tamari’s daughters and grandchildren sing softly as they light the Hanukkah menorah.



**To Grandmother’s House We Go:** Granddaughter Danielle, one of six grandchildren, plays with matriarch Dalia Tamari and their little dog, too.



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After searching for a historic Berkshire farmhouse, Tamari and her husband, Gadi, an international businessman, decided to build a Mediterranean-style villa, which references their heritage and contains ample

space for friends and family: three adult children, two sons-in-law, and six grandchildren ranging in age from eight months to eight years, visit nearly every weekend, and express themselves as fluently in Hebrew as they do in English.

"We built this to be a family retreat. We make sure the children know it's their house, not our house. When the children say they want to come to the Berkshires, they mean they want to come to the house," Tamari explains, her face creasing into a smile.

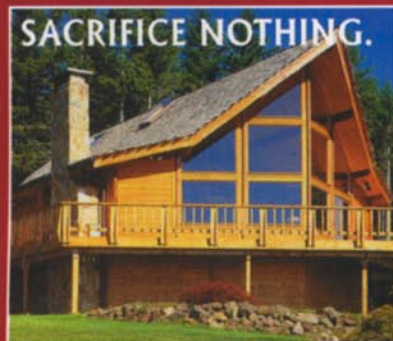
She sketched the house during a family ski vacation, while Gadi and their family schussed the slopes, and refined her ideas based upon their feedback each day. By trip's end, she had the basic plan: a classical, symmetrical, 6,000-square-foot rectangle, with

floor-to-ceiling windows rimmed with balconies. Built into a wooded hillside, the house features living space on three levels, with a master suite, kitchen, large entry hall, living room and dining room on the first floor; five

bedrooms and baths for sons and daughters and grandchildren on the second; and a TV/billiard room, children's playroom, gym, massage room, and laundry in the walk-out lower level. A single, rounded, one-story tower at one corner contains the kitchen's eating area.

This opens to a pool, guesthouse, terrace, and gardens of perennials, vegetables, and herbs, while courtyards and gardens bracket the main and lower entries, lending a sense of stateliness and elegance as one approaches the house.

A ninth-generation Israeli, Tamari's ancestors fled Toledo, Spain, during the Spanish Inquisition in 1475 C.E., and settled in Morocco, before relocating to the Holy Land. She earned an interior design degree in Israel, worked in business management,



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**Form Meets Function:** The kitchen Dalia Tamari designed for the family's West Stockbridge, Mass., home features a sleek cooktop (top), enough room for many cooks, and a soapstone sink and counter (opposite).

then followed Gadi's career from Tel Aviv to Tehran, Singapore, and Boston, doing occasional design projects for friends. When her children were old enough, she commuted from Boston to New York City for six months to study kitchen design, and then worked for a New York company before launching her own business. "I found out from a friend that the U.S. government would not consider me to be working if I was not paid a salary," she recalls. "So, I plowed all of the money back into the company. After a year, I hired one person. After five years, I had five employees and got my green card." In addition to running Dalia Kitchen Design with the help of her daughter Mickey, Tamari teaches kitchen design at the college level.

"I've done thousands of kitchens in my life," she says, her hands clasped on the round table in the kitchen's dining nook, her face bathed in sunlight that shines through the floor-to-ceiling windows. "This was the hardest one to do. It's so easy to be objective, designing for others, following what they tell you about what they want and like. It was hard to select what I want for myself. I love a lot of things."

Mickey enters the kitchen and stands at the island, washing lettuce and making sandwiches for her sons. The smell of toasted bread scents the room as Tamari continues. "We all love to cook, and I designed it so we could all cook at the same time. I also did it with the knowledge that the kids would be playing around. I didn't want to be concerned about damage. The island has a distressed finish and a wooden top, so if it gets more battered, it's OK."

Though she has designed many kosher kitchens, this is not one of them. "A kitchen is designed with four major centers," she explains. "Cooking, cleanup, preparation, and storage." An elongated



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**Family Room:** A place to read, play chess, gather to talk, or watch a movie.

U-shape, this kitchen's core is its island, which measures 109-by-64-inches and contains a small stainless-steel sink for washing fruit and vegetables. Made in England as a single piece of furniture, the island's top is durable, water-resistant teak. Above hangs a massive pot rack. Opposite one of its long sides is the cooking center: a gas stovetop consisting of five burners, including a wok burner, and a grill, with a restaurant-sized venting hood above and storage below for pot-and-pan lids. Opposite one end, an Irish limestone counter is fitted with a sink large enough to contain oven racks; two dishwashers ("One is full all the time," Tamari explains); and lower cabinets with slide-out shelves that put the children's unbreakable tableware within their reach. At one end of the island, near the



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sink, are trash and recycle bins; at the other, concealed by cabinet doors, are a refrigerator, a vertical drawer containing dry ingredients, and two wall ovens. Topped with bold crown molding that ends below the ceiling and a few inches short of the walls that flank


them, these cabinets look like freestanding furniture.

"I wanted to minimize the amount of walking around the island," Tamari explains. "I wanted it to be convenient. If you come into this house from the garage with grocery


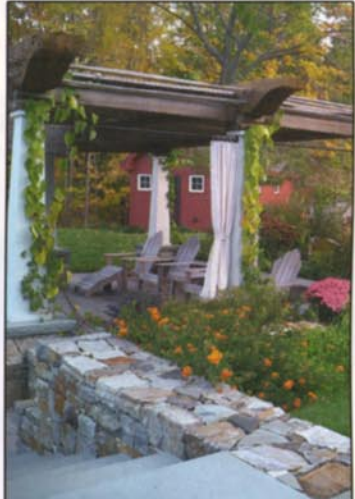

Throughout the house, neutral colors and natural fibers evoke a Mediterranean ambiance: stucco and slate, wrought iron, Jerusalem stone and limestone, large windows swathed in sheer curtains, sisal rugs, tribal carpets the family collected in the Middle East...



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HOME DESIGN



**It's a Circus:** (Above) The grandchildren romp in the aptly decorated bedroom. A more sedate bedroom suitable for adults (below) is bathed in warm colors.

bags, you first pass through the pantry and then to the island." The pantry, which also contains a freezer, refrigerator, and additional refrigerator drawers, is, "our home supermarket," a boon when the house is full of people.

Along the kitchen's south side are the round alcove containing the eating area and marble-topped coffee station with cappuccino

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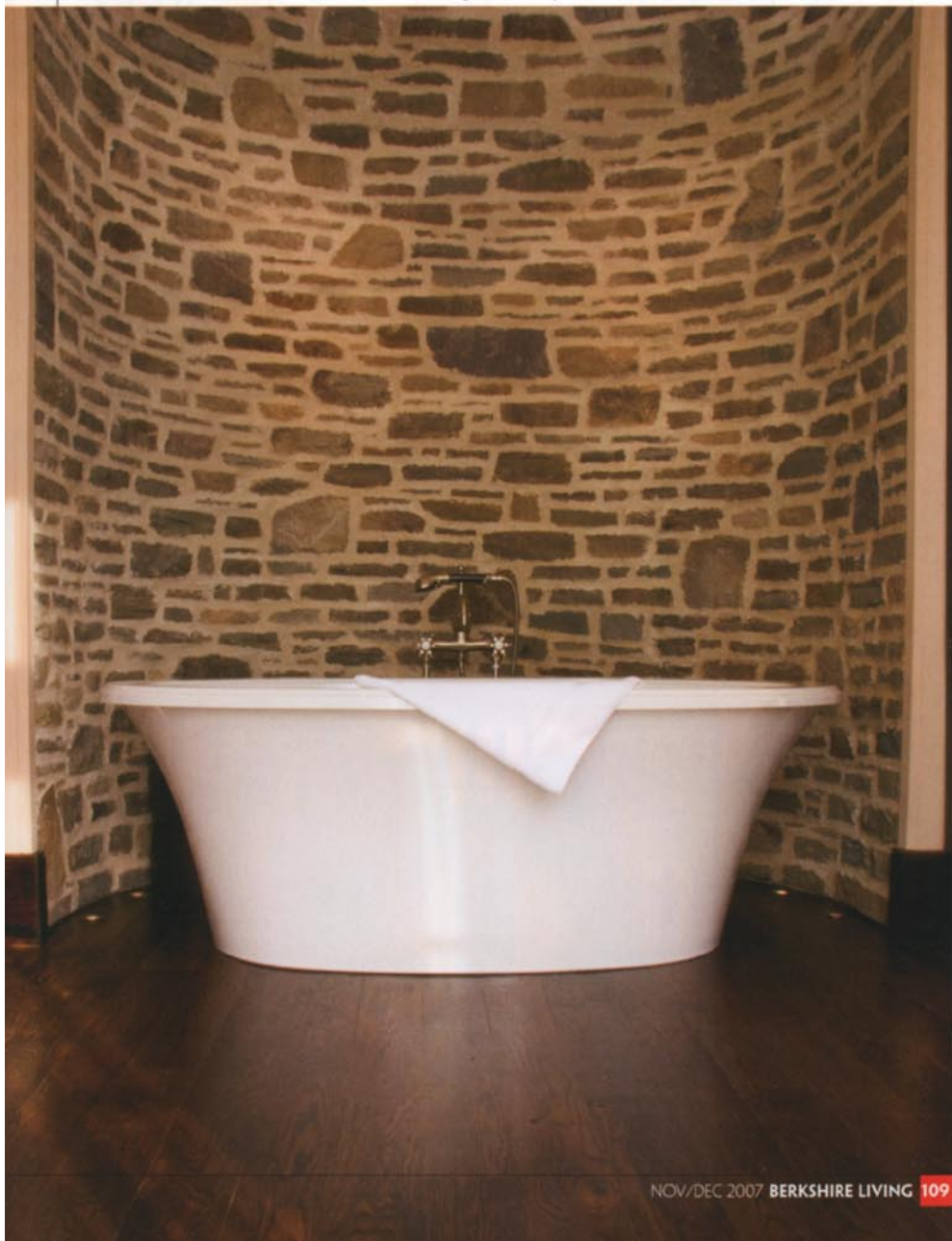


machine; there's a fireplace with reproduction European stonework, and a raised hearth that is visible when cooking; and a second, rectangular alcove contains a comfortable banquette, television, a table large enough to hold a notebook computer, and built-in hutch housing cookbooks. A Boston architect was employed briefly to help with the design, but, "I was picky, and at a certain point I had to do it myself to get what I wanted," Tamari recalls. "The builder, Lou Boxer, did work of incredible quality. It was so nice to be here during construction. The work crew would be singing," she recalls before pausing. "I was not an easy client," she confesses. "I wouldn't compromise on anything. When the stone tiles came for all the bathrooms, the variations of the lines and marbling were

so big that the installer said it was impossible to put them in. It was wintertime. I put the pallets of tile in my daughter Yael's room, laid them out, and coded each one so the tile guy would know where to put them." The powder room's vaulted ceiling required that the stone tiles, each about an eighth of an inch thick and slightly wider than a stick of chewing gum, be laid individually, so they would hug the curved surface. "Lou's team was just incredible," she says.

Throughout the house, neutral colors and natural fibers evoke a Mediterranean ambiance: stucco and slate, wrought iron, Jerusalem stone and limestone, large windows swathed in sheer curtains, sisal rugs, tribal carpets the family collected in the Middle East, painted pine cabinetry in the

**Thrown a Curve:** The stone wall around the soaking tub envelops the bather.



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## HOME DESIGN



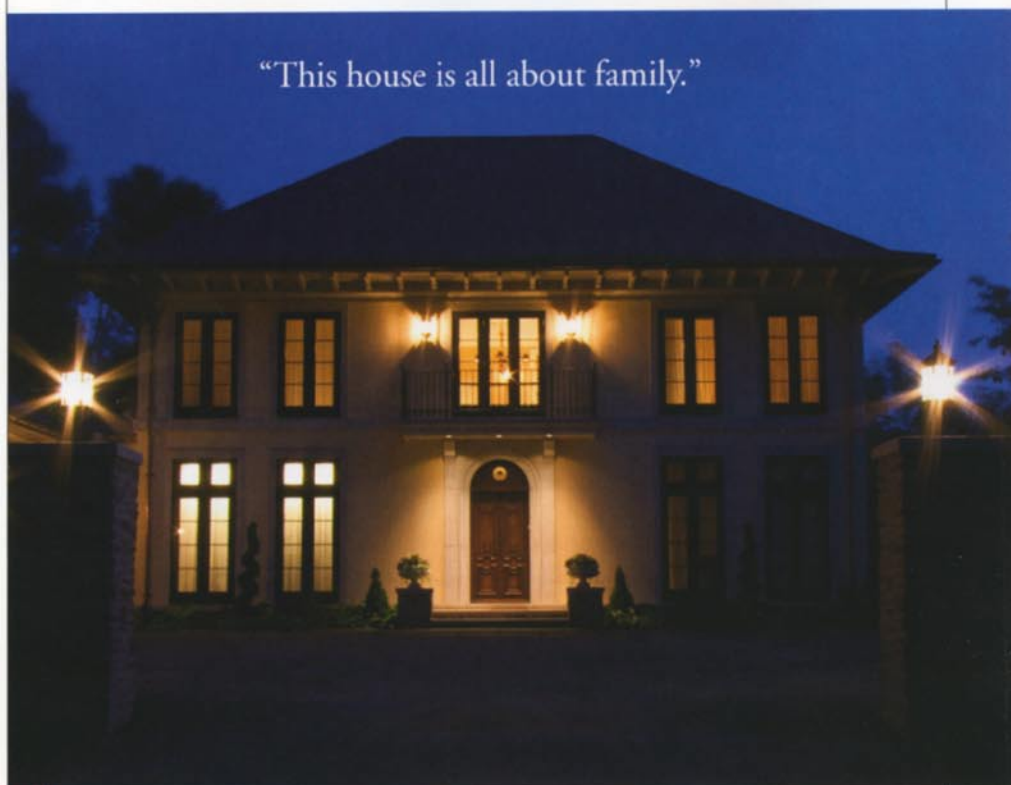
**Light and Lively:** Three generations light holiday candles.

kitchen, antique beams salvaged from Boston Harbor in the living room and dining room, a bamboo ceiling in the dining room, and distressed knotty oak flooring, "the next grade up from what they throw away," lend practicality and eye appeal. Architectural details, such as the boldly carved limestone mantel in the living room and the curved stone wall behind the tub in the master bath lend a distinctly Continental sensibility. Tamari sourced furnishings internationally from Israeli, European, South American, and Canadian companies she works with, and designed some pieces expressly for the house. For the convenience of Berkshire clients, the

house showcases furnishings sold in Dalia Kitchen Design's Boston showroom and distributed on a business-to-business basis by a second family company that Yael manages.

Though the grand entry hall, living room, and dining room possess a somewhat formal presence when unoccupied, they come to life when the family arrives, accommodating adults and children with grace. The children's room contains three bunk beds and three trundles and sleeps nine or more; the circus-themed décor here and in the lower level playroom appeals to young ones, while the absence of decorative clutter makes both a perfect place for impromptu pillow fights

"This house is all about family."





and other play. "Each child has his own bed and toys, but it is a community. Everyone is sharing, too," Tamari notes.

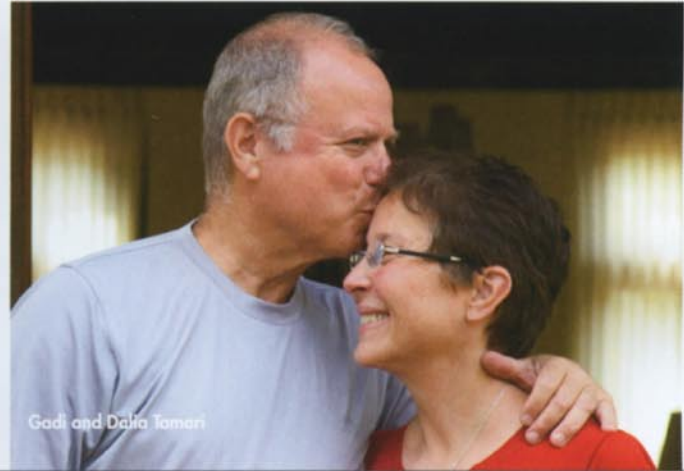
In the dining room, as the Tamari family sits down to their Hanukkah dinner, evoking a heritage and tradition that extends millennia into the past, this sense of community and of sharing is what they celebrate. "This house is all about family," Tamari says. **BI**

### THEGOODS

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*Gladys Montgomery is the editor of Berkshire Living Home+Garden.*



Gadi and Dalia Tamari

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