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MAJOR-LEAGUE ENTERTAINMENT

A Monmouth County cabana has plenty of room for the owners' passions: sports and wine



DURING THE MID-1990S, SHORTLY AFTER MOVING IN TO their just-constructed Millstone Township home, Michael and Georgette Gatto began thinking about building a cabana. They wanted it to complement their main house, which has Neoclassic details. As an avid sports fan, Michael Gatto wanted one of the cabana's rooms dedicated to a favorite pastime: watching sports. He also envisioned using the space

SOFT LIGHTING and a custom arbor with a grapevine motif enhance the pathway between the cabana and primary house. The stucco façade, balustrade, columns, and keystones echo the architecture of the main house. **SOURCES:** builder, American Building Enterprises LLC in Colts Neck; arbor, Newman's Ironworks Inc. in Brielle; walkway, Four Seasons Nursery in Englishtown.

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BUILDER: PHILIP RIZZUTI
INTERIOR DESIGNERS:
SALLY BACARELLA AND GINA HUGHES



THE DINING/LIVING AREA on the main level (above) has a refined but relaxed feel with tropical-inspired furnishings and accessories. The room, filled with natural light, overlooks the 14-acre property's lush landscape and pool. **SOURCES:** interior design, Bacarella Martin Interiors in Ocean; dining table, Drexel Heritage in High Point, North Carolina; dining chairs, Hickory White in Hickory, North Carolina; palm-motif easy chairs, Taylor King Furniture in Taylorsville, North Carolina; coffee table and sofa, Sherrill Furniture Company in Hickory.

■ The kitchen's cherry cabinetry (opposite) has a burgundy stain that complements the furnishings in the adjacent living area. **SOURCES:** Wood-Mode cabinetry, Kitchens by Torrone in Manalapan; Viking range, Thermador hood, and Sub-Zero refrigerator, See-More Appliances in Metuchen; leather stools, Sherrill Furniture Company in Hickory, North Carolina.



as a gallery to display his lifelong collection of sports memorabilia, including about "12 dozen jerseys squirreled away in the closet." The cabana would also serve up space for another of his passions: winemaking.

After five years, the plans grew, Michael Gatto said, ultimately calling for a 5,000-square-foot self-sufficient cabana. The two-story structure, plus basement, would have a wine cellar and tasting room on the lowest level, a full-service kitchen and combination dining/living room on the first floor, and a sports den and bar to run the entire length of the second floor. The cabana would also contain three bathrooms, one on each level, and a garage for as many as seven vehicles. "I knew I would eventually need the space for my kids' cars," he explained.

Deciding on a contractor was easy. Gatto hired friend and business partner Philip Rizzuti of Colts Neck-based American Building Enterprises LLC. Rizzuti, who also built the main house, began



CHERRY MILLWORK contributes to the gentleman's-club atmosphere in the sports den (above). Homeowner Michael Gatto says the room has subtle details such as the air-conditioning slats cut into the bead-board ceiling. Builder Philip Rizzuti made every inch count by carving out finished storage space behind small cherry doors in the dormer alcoves. **SOURCES:** interior design, Bacarella Martin Interiors in Ocean; millwork, Metroplex in Milltown; game tables and chairs, McDonalds Billiard and Gameroom Showplace in Ocean; lighting, AMP Electric in Marlboro; chandelier, Capitol Lighting in Eatontown.

■ A trompe l'oeil sky (inset) envelops the volume ceiling in the cabana's game room. "The faux iron railing around the ceiling border is done with 14-karat gold powder mixed with oils," says artist Kelvin McClendon, whose Mount Holly firm is Murals by Kelvin McClendon.

■ Guests feel pampered in the master bath (opposite, top) beside the sports den. Amenities include a whirlpool tub, steam shower, and flat-screen TV (not shown). **SOURCES:** cabinetry, Kitchens by Torrone in Manalapan; design and accessories, Bacarella Martin Interiors in Ocean; granite, Ideal Tile in Freehold.

■ The sports den (opposite, bottom) became a gallery for Michael Gatto's memorabilia. **SOURCES:** most sports memorabilia, Fameabilia in Red Bank; framing, Chetkin Custom Framing in Red Bank and Deck The Walls in Freehold; iron railing, Newman's Ironworks Inc. in Brielle.



Photo by Kelvin McClendon

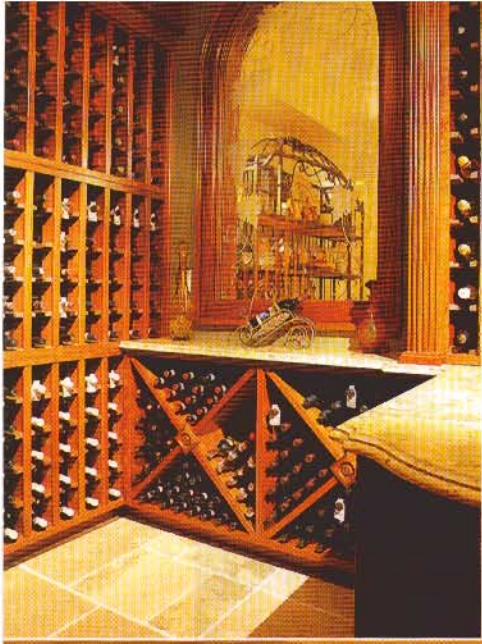


the cabana in 2000. "Phil has great vision," Gatto said. The couple also hired designers Sally Bacarella and Gina Hughes of Bacarella Martin Interiors in Ocean to assist in the design. Work was completed in 2002.

"We decided on a sophisticated gentleman's club theme" for the sports den, Bacarella said; the look is defined by cherry millwork on the built-ins, bar, and volume ceiling. For the bead-board ceiling application, "each piece of wood was individually cut and no two angles are alike," Gatto said. At the center of the ceiling, artist Kelvin McClendon painted an evening sky to give the feeling of being in an amphitheater or ballpark. Around the ceiling's border, McClendon painted a faux-iron railing that mimics the custom iron railings throughout the cabana.

Cherry built-ins with fluted columns provide storage for barware; others contain display space for Gatto's collections. Lights inside the cabinetry graze over mementos such as game balls autographed by gridiron stars Joe Namath and Phil Simms, hockey lithographs signed by members of the original six National Hockey League teams, and photos of Michael Gatto and his son, who is a Rangers fan, standing next to the 1994





EARTH-TONE TILE and natural stone impart warmth in the Tuscan-influenced wine room (opposite). A grapevine forms the base of the tasting table; its glass top is etched with a grape and leaf design. The name of a winery co-owned by the Gattos is etched into the glass door that leads to the wine storage room. It reads *Fatto En Casa*, or "made in the home." **SOURCES:** tile and stonework, Ideal Tile in Freehold; chairs, Astoria Imports in Brooklyn; credenza, Drexel Heritage in High Point, North Carolina.

■ The wine cellar (inset, opposite) holds as many as 2,500 bottles; most are from Michael Gatto's winery.

■ Custom iron railings (right) line all the stairways in the cabana. The mural's faux balustrade mimics those found on the exterior of the main house. **SOURCES:** mural, Murals by Kelvin McClendon in Mount Holly; railing, Newman's Ironworks Inc. in Brielle.

■ The mural in the wine cellar (below) has personal meaning for the Gattos. It represents an Italian village and vineyard where Michael Gatto's grandfather was born. **SOURCES:** light fixture, Capitol Lighting in Eatontown; mural, Murals by Kelvin McClendon in Mount Holly.



Stanley Cup. Pullout shelves also contain a treasure trove of collections that include old programs, tickets, and brochures from World Series games. "You can look at this stuff for hours," Gatto said. "There are a lot of great memories here."

While Gatto wanted the room to reflect the comfortable, classic ambiance of an "old-fashioned" gentleman's club, he also desired up-to-the-minute amenities. For example, the room is equipped with high-tech surround sound and Lutron lighting systems controlled by one keypad that's also linked to the main house. Viewers can watch multiple games simultaneously thanks to a built-in entertainment unit that houses five televisions; another 42-inch plasma TV is in the bar. Even a blackout won't ruin party plans, thanks to a large backup generator in the garage.

The colors associated with some of the Gattos' favorite New York sports teams — the Giants, Yankees, and Rangers — dictated the palette. With shades of blue,

including navy as their starting point, Georgette Gatto and designer Sally Bacarella mixed in complementary tones of burgundy and camel for a classic look.

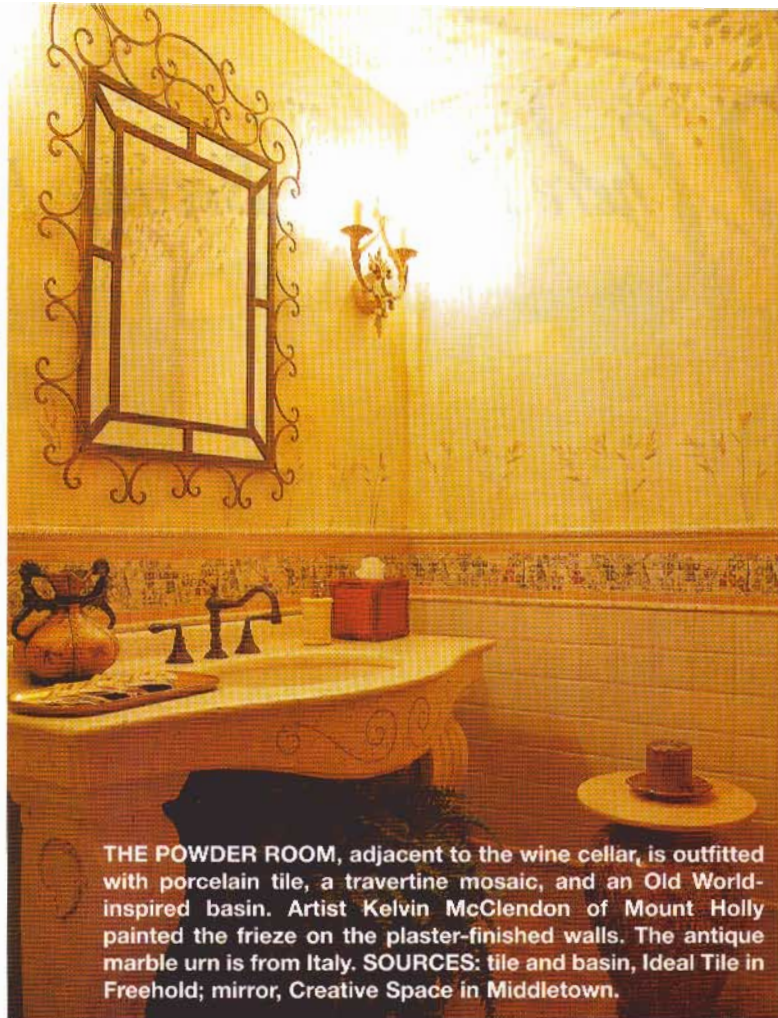
Michael Gatto credits his wife and the designers for pulling off the desired club look. "Everything in here reflects my wife's taste," he says, from the fringed draperies to the geometric carpet. Bacarella, referring to the multi-toned carpet, explained that "in a large space, pattern and texture are always your friend. [Pattern] helps to disguise stains and hides wear and tear better than a solid."

The cabana's dedicated sports room, equipped with a custom billiard table and other gaming tables, is "the playroom we never had" as kids, Michael Gatto says.

Even so, Georgette Gatto was careful to limit the sports paraphernalia to the second floor, choosing other themes for the main and lower levels. For instance, the first floor's kitchen and dining/living room have the relaxed elegance that might be found in a British West Indies resort: plantation-style and palm-motif chairs, gauze-like drapes, and a mix of woven textures and natural materials. This room, with its French doors and tall windows, provides light and views of the lush outdoor landscaping and swimming pool.

Just steps down, the wine cellar and tasting room transport the homeowners into another time and place: a Tuscan villa and courtyard. The room is decidedly Old World with floor-to-ceiling stonework, mosaics, columns, and arches. The Italian village where Michael Gatto's grandfather was born served as inspiration for the trompe l'oeil vineyard scene. So, like the sports den, the space feels like an inner sanctum and has special meaning for the family. ■

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THE POWDER ROOM, adjacent to the wine cellar, is outfitted with porcelain tile, a travertine mosaic, and an Old World-inspired basin. Artist Kelvin McClendon of Mount Holly painted the frieze on the plaster-finished walls. The antique marble urn is from Italy. **SOURCES:** tile and basin, Ideal Tile in Freehold; mirror, Creative Space in Middletown.

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