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PHOTOGRAPHED BY BARRY WONG



A collection of formal Argentinean mate cups graces a table in the living room. The sterling dagger is the kind used by gauchos at outdoor barbecues.

HONORING the Old with the New

A major Laurelhurst remodel celebrates lives past and present

TAKE A CRAMPED 1928 English Tudor house with an overgrown yard in a good Seattle neighborhood. Add owners who appreciate its style and comfort, but who find its spaces don't allow them to properly accommodate their mutual passion for cooking or to adequately display the artifacts they love to gather on their frequent travels. Now give them two young daughters who want bedrooms of their own and spaces to play,

and the dilemma is clear:

Should the owners move? Should they have the house torn down and rebuilt? Or remodel? Fortunately for the neighbors, Graciela and Rick Rutkowski decided to remodel after four years of living in their house and learning what they needed it to be. With the help of architect Richard Fisher, and after nearly a year in a condominium, they moved back into a gracious stucco house that is almost entirely new but looks as if it has always been there.

Fisher, who grew up in the same Laurelhurst neighborhood, understood his clients' desire to preserve the best of what they had while adding space and modern conveniences that fit their lifestyle. "We wanted more square footage and to keep our old house," explains Graciela, who acknowledges that it probably would have been cheaper to do a teardown. (All that remains of the old house are the entryway, a staircase to the second floor and four kitchen windows.) To fully appreciate the trans- ➤



A restored 18th-century red settee from Italy adds color and charm to the formal living room at the home of Graciela and Rick Rutkowski.



The dining-room table and chairs are reproductions of the Chippendale style. Graciela did the flower arrangements on the reproduction 18th-century mahogany sideboard. The Italian-silk drapes are her favorite.

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The nursery for the Rutkowskis' younger daughter features a day bed with a canopy made of French petit toile with a striped-cotton lining.

formation, imagine a 2,400-square-foot house with no view, a very cramped second story and a thicket of a yard bordered by blackberries, overgrown rhododendrons and a mature cedar with the top chopped off.

The new reality is nearly double the original square footage. On the new second story, the spacious master suite has a panoramic lake and mountain view. The cedar is gone, as are the brambles and rhododendrons. The owners are not gardeners. So landscape designer Martha Keck included attractive low-maintenance shrubbery and a lawn where the girls can play. Above a new garage is an inviting small patio featuring a pair of lovely decorative urns rescued from a salvage yard in France. The wrought-iron railing surrounding the small, tiled balcony off the master suite is another find from the same salvage yard. The Rutkowskis spotted potential beneath rust and grime, just as they recognized the potential in their old home.

It's immediately apparent upon entering the house that this family loves antiques, rich colors and a traditional look achieved through fearless com-

binations of furnishings from different periods. The entryway mirror, for example, is from a flea market in Paris. The red settee in the formal living room is 18th-century Italian; the white one in the master bedroom is 18th-century French. A lovely painted antique side piece in the living room is typical of one you might find in Provence. The dining-room table and chairs are reproductions of the Chippendale style.

"We are pretty influenced by our travels and love picking up pieces," says Graciela, who did the interior design herself after failing to be inspired by the ideas of the professional she first hired. All the furniture and furnishings are either custom-made or antique. Graciela, who has since taken on friends and friends of friends as clients, uses words such as "traditional," "eclectic" and "European" to describe the style of her home. "There are pieces from the '40s along with 18th-century pieces," she says.

The home very much reflects the Rutkowskis' heritage and their life experience. Graciela's father was Czechoslovakian, her mother, Italian. ➤

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