



Country FRESH

*An English-inspired farmhouse that feels at home
in the Franschhoek winelands combines the best of
traditional charm and modern comfort, while creating
the space for people to gather easily*

text JULIA FREEMANTLE photographs VIGNETTE & RYAN ABBOT

Built for a family to grow into over time,
this Franschhoek home seamlessly combines
practicality and style



Designer Tammy Holmes describes the project as, 'luxe English country farmhouse with a local touch'

The existing architecture's high ceilings, elegant arched doors and exposed trusses gave Tammy a strong base upon which to create an updated take on English country





A cleverly chosen base colour - white with a warm undertone, used in varying shades of dilution to add depth in tone - gives the entire home its sense of welcome; refined timber accents throughout allude to the home's roots and ground the spaces

farmhouse and luxe may, at first thought, sound like incongruous concepts. But when you drill down into what luxury means in a home, beyond the superficial — room to breathe, a sense of ease, comfort and calm — the two begin to feel more compatible. In this serene and understated home in Franschhoek, Ivy Décor & Design approached the space with harmony as a guiding principle: harmony between old and new, English and South African, residential and rental.

The owners, young professionals who recently relocated to Franschhoek from London — she South African, he British — returned to be closer to family. With a growing family of their own, the home needed to adapt over time. At the same time, with plans to eventually return to

London, it also needed to function as a future rental property, so flexibility was considered from the outset.

Inheriting good bones and original architectural features made for an inspiring starting point. Stone-clad window arches, a thatched roof, original wooden doors and sash windows, and high ceilings laid the foundation for a home with a strong sense of place, while offering the perfect environment to realise the owners' vision of an English farmhouse.

There was a moment Tammy Holmes, founder of Ivy Décor & Design, considered replacing the thatched roof, but ultimately chose to retain it, making only subtle adjustments. The thatch and reeded ceilings remain on the patio and in the bedrooms, while in the living room, bar, dining room and kitchen, tongue-and-groove ceiling boards were introduced to

lighten and lift the spaces.

Walls throughout were kept light, painted in Farrow & Ball French White. The deciding factor was its warm undertone — a simple distinction, but crucial to the overall atmosphere. The result is quietly inviting. A pink-toned grey and soft khaki complement the white, adding depth without disruption. “The house needed to envelop you,” says Tammy. Consistency plays a key role: bordered curtains in the living areas and sisal carpeting in the bedrooms create a sense of continuity. “Interestingly, my clients claimed to be scared of colour but were brave in their choice of fabrics. So this is where we introduced a more playful approach, layering textiles in greens, corals and softer tones, with moments of contrast,” she adds.

Tammy describes the house as “a bit of a rabbit warren”, making this consistent



In the kitchen, traditional tongue- and-groove panelling and classic cabinetry are elevated by luxe finishes such as marble and metallics





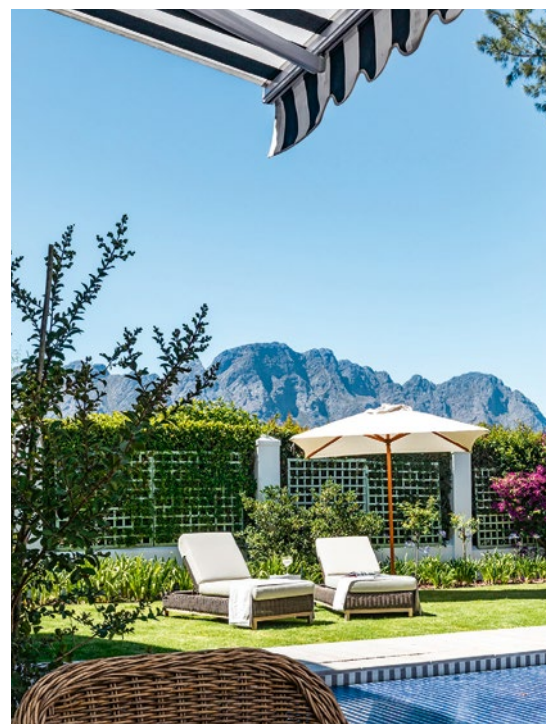
Although the owners claimed to be scared of colour, they made playful choices when it came to fabrics



In the bedrooms, the original ceilings were retained, complemented by a soothing palette of natural, muted tones



All social spaces have been designed with versatility, as well as togetherness and connection in mind



‘The textures, TONES AND COLOURS were carefully considered so that they SETTLE INTO THE SPACE, as though they’ve ALWAYS BELONGED’

TAMMY HOLMES

palette all the more important in creating cohesion between the various spaces. Areas designed for both gathering and retreat feel distinct in function yet connected in mood. For social spaces, the aim was to foster intimacy. “Whoever’s in the kitchen should be able to chat to those in the family room or lounge,” she explains, emphasising flow over separation.

This sense of connection extends outdoors. The deck is visible from the kitchen, while the bar sits close by, reinforcing a natural ease between spaces.

Designed with entertaining in mind, the home offers multiple areas for gathering: a cabana overlooking the pool houses a pizza oven and Big Green Egg, while a long communal table allows for more formal alfresco dining. On the quieter side of the house, a reed-ceilinged patio looks onto a bank of hydrangeas, with ceiling fans creating a gentle breeze above a more intimate outdoor lounge.

Alongside ease, Tammy sought to instil a sense of permanence — a feeling that the house had been there for years. “The

textures, tones and colours were carefully considered so that they settle into the space, as though they’ve always belonged,” she says. Timber plays a key role here, from panelling to a curated selection of vintage pieces that lend depth and character. “The pieces in this project tell a story and feel as though they’ve been collected over time — especially the French antiques sourced locally.”

These pieces form a natural counterpoint to a more contemporary interpretation of English country style. Traditional elements — mirrors, chandeliers and stone mantels — are simplified and pared back, while outdoor pieces from HAY introduce a lighter, more modern note. The result is a balanced approach: roll-arm sofas, upholstered headboards and wall sconces remain, but feel fresher and more restrained. “It isn’t all florals and paisley — it’s a more modern take on English country,” Tammy concludes. ■

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