

L I T T L E M O M E N T S

Coco Marie's Marie Morgan has turned a Mediterranean seventies house into a peaceful sanctuary reminiscent of a cottage in the French countryside, with just a dash of whimsy.

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The Adobe fireplace takes centre stage in the 'snug'.



Walk along the main street in Hahndorf and it's hard to miss Marie Morgan's store, or more specifically, the irresistible scent that wafts from its door. The tranquillity-inducing aromas of Coco Marie's handmade beauty products lure passers-by, along with loyal customers who travel from near and far to pick up products and, often, to see Marie.

"I've made friends out of a lot of my regular customers," Marie says over coffee in her Hills home. "They really embrace what I'm doing and are part of the evolution of the products."

Marie grew up in England, but it's the Hills she thinks of as home. She fell in love with the landscape while visiting from Melbourne. (She originally came to Australia at 18, living in the eastern states, but relocated to the Hills after that trip.)

After living in Verdun and Hahndorf, in 2004 Marie moved to her current home – a 1970s, two-storey, four-bedroom house just a short drive from her Hahndorf store. She shares it with her partner, Leigh, and previously her three children: Ella 27, Taylor 25, and Tom 21.

Though built in the 1970s, once inside you could easily mistake it for a much older, character-filled cottage that would be at home in the English or French countryside. Creamy white-washed walls contrast with deep grey feature walls and exposed brick, French doors lead to pretty outdoor spaces, and a range of vintage furniture mixes with upholstered French Provincial chairs, original art picked up on her travels and romantic ornaments. "It's not grandiose but it's home," Marie says. "People say it's cosy, you get a sense of warmth. I love it in here in winter when the fire is going and lambshanks are cooking on the stove."

The fire she's referring to is the large Adobe fireplace that takes centre stage in the living area, which she calls "the snug". It's painted a deep grey, with a white ornamental deerhead mounted above it, and surrounded by a chaise lounge and

French Provincial chairs, while nearby a white spiral staircase leads to the bedrooms.

"In front of the fireplace, in winter, that's my special place. It's perfect to sit there with a book, a glass of wine, the lamps on. It's so atmospheric and brings all the warmth."

It's a long way from the "ugly Mediterranean" décor she found when she first saw the house. "The old kitchen was a Mediterranean blue, the spiral staircase was orange and there were feature walls painted orange, too, but I fell in love with the Adobe fireplace. The first thing I did, with the help of a friend, was give the walls a French wash and get rid of the ugly colours."

It was just the first of many changes, thanks in no small part to Leigh's building skills. "We redid the kitchen, turned the boiler room downstairs into a bathroom, transformed the living room, put in the French doors and completely redecorated," Marie said. "Leigh is amazing, he's so talented. The transformation only really happened after he moved in."

Leigh created the exposed wall in the kitchen with old bricks that were cut in half – it looks as though it has been there for decades. White cupboards and tiled splashbacks, another deep grey feature wall, open shelves holding vintage plates and copper cookware and a deep, porcelain sink



Leigh and Marie enjoy views to Mount Lofty summit from their herb garden.

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Vintage chairs provide a relaxed spot by the kitchen.

... you can't help but feel you've slipped into the French countryside.

"It's not as French as it used to be," Marie says of her style. "I didn't want it to look too contrived, so I've introduced more things, vintage pieces I've found, I like to mix it up."

Beside the kitchen table – kept small and replaced by a trestle for dinner parties – are two sixties chairs she found at the Littlehampton dump, while the entrance contains a pale green Indian bureau she found in a Hills antique store. She also has a love of old meatsafes and confesses her shed is full of pieces waiting their turn to be displayed.

The snug leads to the TV room – or, as Marie calls it, the "ugly room" – which has comfy couches, a pot belly heater and large television. Out the back, a small herb and veggie garden and chookyard overlooks sweeping views that stretch to Mount Lofty summit, while to the side of the house is a shaded area perfect for relaxing in hotter weather. "I like creating 'little moments', which are different spaces to relax in and enjoy. I have so many spots throughout the house, it stops me from getting bored."

Out the front, the pair are busy creating a 'wow' moment – they've put in a swimming pool, barbecue area and bar and are converting a space to a 'summer room' (though a pot belly heater will make it winter friendly) and planning to add a traditional wood oven. She has many other projects, too – one being a



Above: Copper pots, dark walls and a farmhouse sink give the kitchen a French-provincial feel. **Below:** Marie's "ugly room" is perfect for watching TV on winter nights.

