**BETTER HOMES & GARDENS**
**BEAUTIFUL KITCHENS & BATHS**

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Section: Main
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A built-in soaking tub replaced a freestanding model that was positioned perpendicular to the window wall. Glass tiles in muted gold and bronze tones line the interiors of new storage cubbies, adding warmth and a hint of sparkle.



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# Baja Beauty

Seeking to capture the relaxed ambience of their favorite Los Cabos spa, a Chicago couple give their master bath an earthy, modern update.

BY AMBER DAWN BARZ | PHOTOS WERNER STRAUBE | FIELD EDITOR MEGAN CHAFFIN



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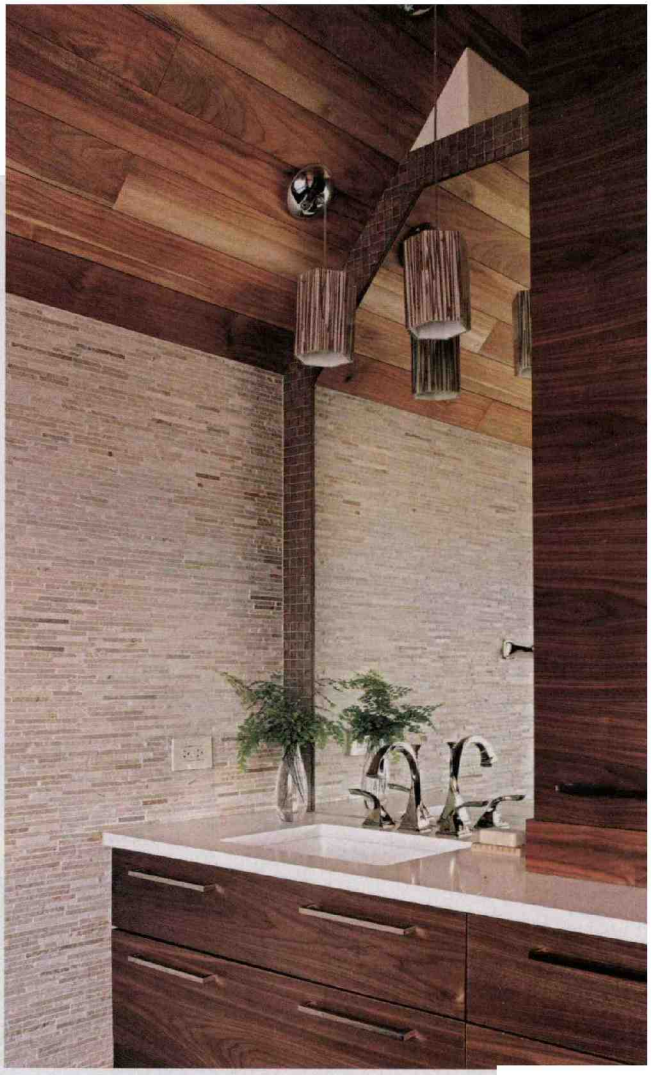

On the tip of Mexico's Baja peninsula, gentle ocean breezes rustle the fronds of slender palms, serenading the visitors sunning on the sparkling white sand beaches. A lush tropical garden creates a canopy of shade for a destination spa filled with palm-thatched bungalows, open-air gardens, and pampering amenities. For aesthetician Amy Koenig and her husband, Matt, the spa is the ultimate romantic vacation getaway.

When the couple remodeled the master bath in their 16-year-old suburban Chicago home, the Baja spa's enticing alfresco ambience served as their inspiration. "We have three children under the age of 6, so our vacations have evolved into more family-oriented destinations, but we really miss our spa trips," Amy says. "Our master bath desperately needed an update. It was so cold in the winter that I showered in the hall bath. We solved both issues by transforming the space into a warm, inviting retreat."

With the help of certified master kitchen and bath designer Brigitte Fabi, the renovated bath's amenities read like a brochure for a five-star spa: a soothing ambience; heated floors that radiate warmth throughout the room; a luxurious soaking tub; and a multihead steam shower that relaxes tight muscles.

"The original bath was spacious enough for all the amenities the Koenigs desired, so we did not have to expand the footprint," Fabi says. "By moving both vanities to an interior wall and changing the orientation of the bathtub, we made the space feel more balanced and Zen-like."

Teak ceiling planks instill visual warmth, and thin stone tiles in colors reminiscent of white sand beaches add dimension to the walls. Bamboo-look pendants on energy-efficient dimmers change the mood from invigorating to soothing in an instant. Wide slate tile decking surrounds the soaking tub in natural earth tones, providing plenty of space for fluffy towels, bath salts, and massage oils. But the true star of the bath is the steam shower. State-of-the art digital controls let Amy and Matt individualize their showering experience with customized steam- and water-temperature settings and body spray selections. "You can go into the shower feeling tense and stressed and step out feeling completely relaxed," Amy says.

"Thanks to Brigitte, our bath is now an inviting, tranquil space that we can visit every day," Amy says, "and no reservations are required."

RESOURCES BEGIN ON PAGE 122.

**Opposite:** Dual walnut-clad vanities float above the natural slate floor and provide a wealth of storage for Amy and Matt Koenig. An attractive inset pebble floor runner leading from the master bedroom, past the steam shower, and to the bathtub provides excellent traction for wet feet. **Above:** Creamy white honed limestone tops the vanities and reflects overhead and ambient light, which is ideal for applying makeup. Glass-tile-framed mirrors follow the angles of the cathedral ceiling.



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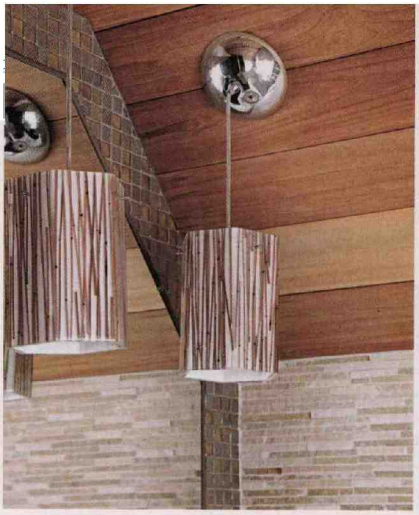
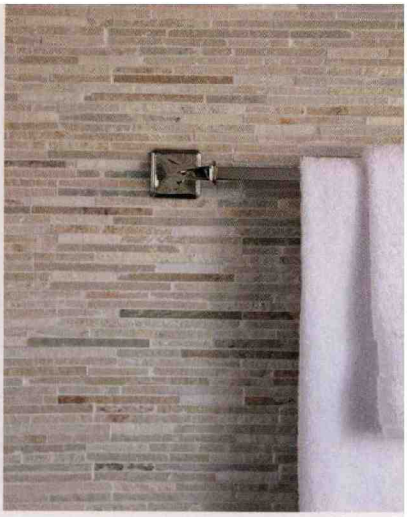
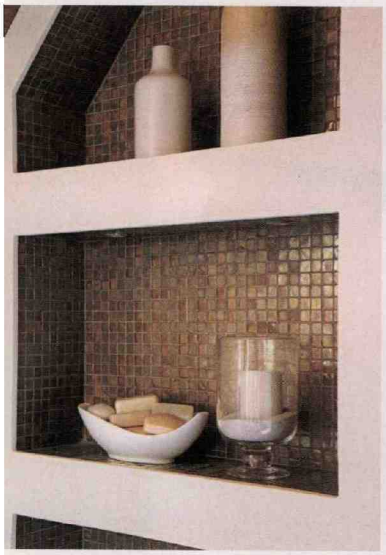
"Natural stone walls, a slate floor, and teak ceiling planks underscore the beauty of the great outdoors."

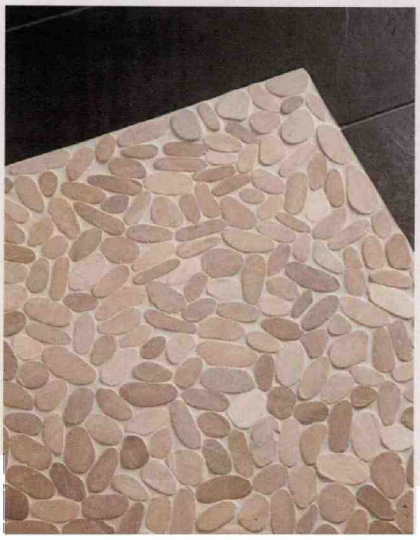
**Brigitte Fabi**
bath designer







**Opposite:** Woodsy porcelain and glass tiles give the enclosed steam shower a private saunalike aura. **Top left:** Teak decking covers the cathedral ceiling, and stacked stone covers the walls, creating visual warmth and providing additional insulation for the bath, which is above the home's garage. Resin pendants with a bamboo look complement the bath's modern yet natural style. **Top right:** Polished-nickel accessories lend a little extra shine and match the tub and vanity faucets. **Above:** Simple accessories complement the soothing spa ambience and allow the bold surface selections to take center stage. **Above right:** Angles and curves lend an artful touch to the polished-nickel tub filler. **Right:** Flat limestone and travertine pebbles create an inset floor runner that reminds the owners of their favorite Baja spa's paths to sand and sea.



DESIGNER INSIGHTS

## Bring the Outdoors In

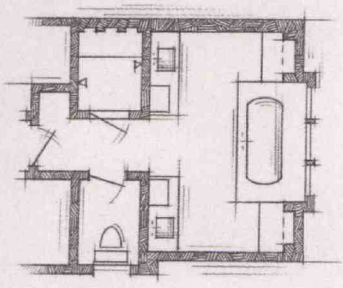
**Certified master kitchen and bath designer Brigitte Fabi shares her strategies for creating a warm, earthy feel in a bath.**

- **Go natural.** Nothing creates a better connection to nature than materials that come directly from the earth. "In this bath, natural stone walls, a slate floor, and teak ceiling planks underscore the beauty of the great outdoors and create a warm and inviting surrounding," Fabi says.

- **Let texture speak.** Step outside, and you'll see that changes in texture abound—from soft grasses to sandy beaches to rough tree barks. Create similar tactile interest inside by choosing combinations of polished and honed, soft and hard surfaces and fabrics.

- **Light it right.** Natural light brightens interiors as well as moods. Maximize it by minimizing window treatments and increasing window sizes when possible.

- **Let your garden grow.** Potted plants are affordable and beautiful. Bring one or two into a bath to add natural color and create an instant connection to nature.





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**BAJA BEAUTY**

**PAGES 110–115**

**Bath designer:** Brigitte Fabi, CMKBD, Drury Design, 512 N. Main St., Glen Ellyn, IL 60137; 888/444-1055; *drurydesigns.com.* **Cabinetry** Focus ON:U line in walnut veneer—Ovation Cabinetry; 800/426-4648; *ovationcabinetry.com.* **Cabinet pulls** M1286—Top Knobs USA, Inc.; 800/499-9095; *topknobsusa.com.* **Vanity top** Blizzard—CaesarStone US; 818/779-0999; *caesarstoneus.com.* **Sink** K2330—Kohler Co.; 800/456-4537; *us.kohler.com.* **Tub** Meridian—BainUltra; 800/463-2187; *bainultra.com.* **Tile: walls** Shannon mini strip, **bath surround and floor field** Tukuman brown slate, **floor inset and shower floor** Lake Stone Cremas, **shower walls and ceiling** Factory Moka—Porcelanosa; *porcelanosa.com.* **Sink and shower fixtures** Virage, **towel bars** 692430—Brizo; 877/345-2749; *brizo.com.* **Tile in niches** Muse in Sun Kiss—Oceanside Glasstile; 877/648-8222; *glasstile.com.* **Teak planking on ceiling—** Pro Teak, Wimberley, Texas; 512/847-6024; *proteak.com.* **Pendant at tub and matching pendants at sinks** Modern Organics—Elk Lighting Inc.; 800/613-3261; *elklighting.com.* **Vases in niches and on tub surround—**West Elm; 866/428-6468; *westelm.com* (product line varies).



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