

# UPON REFLECTION

*Emphasizing abundant light and expansive outdoor views, architect and designer Stephanie Halfen brings a modern approach to a remodeled Davie ranch home.*

BY NILA DO SIMON PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBIN HILL



**HOMeward BOUND** Stephanie Halfen was challenged to remodel a 1980s Mediterranean home, as well as expand it another 2,500 square feet.



When architect and interior designer Stephanie Halfen was asked to create a modern, mountain-inspired home in the overtly Western town of Davie, she didn't quite know how to react. After all, "modern" and "mountains" aren't two words that are generally descriptive of the rural district in central Broward County. But after seeing a mountainside home Halfen designed and built in her native Venezuela, the homeowners wanted to recreate its look for their Davie home. While living in Caracas, Halfen worked on a home in the mountains of El Ávila National Park, a ranch-style residence complete with a sloping roof that reflected the mountain's own angles. The home was inspiring for this Davie couple. So for their Broward residence, the couple reached out to Halfen, who coincidentally had moved to South Florida with her family in 2009.

When the founder of SDH Studio Architecture | Design initially sat down with the couple and heard about their intended design concept, Halfen's reaction was quite natural. "The mountains of Venezuela are very different from Davie," she laughs.

The unique home design became a challenge Halfen was more than up to. With backgrounds in both interior design, which she received at Parsons The New School for Design in New York City, and architecture, graduating summa cum laude from Universidad Simón Bolívar, Halfen was prepared to take on her Davie adventure.

The nearly two-year project was a combination of remodeling and expanding. And to a certain extent, the home is actually two residences under one roof. Keeping their growing family in mind, the Davie



**LIGHTS OUT** The sustainably conscious owners wanted to enjoy the peaceful Davie outdoors within the comforts of their ranch-style home. Halfen made sure to incorporate ample natural lighting, using window walls throughout various rooms. In order to keep the home approachable and inviting, Halfen also used light wood floors throughout.



**KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL** The kitchen is part of the home's expanded wing. As she puts it, "The idea was to do a simple construction that has a comfortable feel."



couple wanted to create a separate space for visiting children and grandchildren, all the while having a cozy space when alone.

"During the week, it's only the two of them, and during weekends, all the kids and grandkids come over," Halfen explains. "The house is designed so that it can be lived in like it was in two different stages. The couple spends 90 percent of their time in one area of the home, so it was necessary to create a house that can be very comfortable for the couple when the family comes over and when the couple is alone."

The job called for Halfen to add 2,500 square feet of space, as well as remodel the current 2,000 square feet. Keeping in mind what the couple loved about the El Ávila National Park home, Halfen made sure to keep her signature sleek, clean lines ("Curves in my design would have to be there for a reason," Halfen admits) and emphasize a sophisticated but comfortable feel.

A mother of three herself, Halfen was conscientious when adding each element to the home. For example, a cabana bath lies just steps away from the pool, a perfect spot for a group of children to lather and rinse off after swimming.

At the foundation of the design, Halfen made sure to incorporate the serene, rustic and peaceful nature of Davie with the home. Large, near floor-to-ceiling windows allow for natural light to pour into the home. No matter where the couple and their family sit, a peek in any direction easily reveals the expansive outdoor space filled with century-old trees.

"It's a modern and contemporary home without being cold," Halfen says.

Halfen admits that having knowledge in both architecture and interior design gave legs to this home that may never have grown.

"It's interesting to do a house when design and architecture are thought of together," she says. "When you design the architecture, you're already thinking about the interior design. They work together and were conceived together from the beginning."