



Country homes nowadays may incorporate glass expanses, different elevations, big, modern kitchens and central fireplaces, as

**Claire Krol** discovers

# New angles in rural look

A new genre of modern country interior design has emerged, taking inspiration from the traditional and the contemporary.

Homes are being designed to include natural materials such as wood and stone alongside ultra-modern glass and steel finishes.

WA builders and interior designers have responded to the call for modern and distinctly Australian homes as the trend for European country styles declines.

"Everything we build now has a more modern edge to it," Rural Building Company general manager Ian Holloway said.

"There is not much in the way of a market for French Provincial or old-fashioned English country designs any more."

Interior designers usually work with open-plan homes and need to use their creative flair when it comes to creating a modern country look.

Webb & Brown-Neaves sales and marketing manager Simon Cain points out interior design starts from the outside and works its way in.

"The tone of a home is set from the outside," he said. "Australian country-style homes are most often open plan so the interior of the home will ultimately depend on what the outside looks like."

According to Mr Cain, setting the tone for a new country interior is simple. "Creating a country look in a

new home means the use of lots of natural materials, earthy colours and rustic features," he said.

An interior designer by trade, Jodie Cooper, of Jodie Cooper Design, works with the Rural Building Company on some of its most popular new homes.

She believes the best place to start in a new home is by looking at the client's furniture.

"I generally start with the clients existing furniture items," she said. "If they have a lot of timber pieces that they want to incorporate into the home, then that will help determine the end result."

Interior designers and new home builders are shying away from raffia bows, dried flower arrangements and handpainted hobby work in favour of modern finishes sourced from local suppliers for a finish in a class of its own.

Ms Cooper said a new genre in design has definitely emerged, edging away from the "farmhouse" designs of the past.

"People want a large modern kitchen with all the appliances and a plasma screen, so I think we have become more open-minded about mixing old and new to create a individual country look," she said.

Modern country-style homes combined the old and the new and had traditional elements such as bush poles, exposed beams, Colorbond

cladding, fireplaces and big rooms.

They also incorporated more glass, different elevations, big kitchens and central fireplaces.

Adding the finishing touches to a country interior is the final step and often the most rewarding.

Homes in need of warmth and personality usually benefit from a clever use of colour, fabrics, window treatments and floor rugs as well as cosy overstuffed sofas and timber furniture, Ms Cooper said.

In kitchens and living areas, she recommends natural products, often produced locally.

"There are a lot of stone choices today," she said.

"Reconstituted stone is not as busy as granite, so this can add a cleaner, lighter look in the kitchen. Cabinets can be painted or limed to avoid having too many heavy, dark items in the house.

"For wet areas, natural-looking stone tiles will help add to the country feel."

According to Mr Cain, tying the whole home together can be as easy as adding floorboards or a feature stone tile throughout.

"A truly modern country home would feature lots of hardwood, maybe some rammed earth and stone, all materials that protect from the harsh climate and keep the home cool while remaining earthy and rustic at the same time," he said.



Square-edged benchtops and lots of timber give a contemporary country look.

