

# Healthy,

## Good Soaks

**SOAKING AND STEEPING TUBS** Whether commercially available or custom-built, these tubs are for those who view the home spa primarily as a place for tranquillity. (Jetted tubs are "just too agitating," says Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz.) Wide variety available, from the ones sold by Kallista, Kohler Co.'s high-end division, to the vertical Japanese deep-plunge soaking tubs. ("They're generally too restrictive for the American market," cautions Polly Johnson, "because they're too small and too hard to get into and out of.") A 150-gallon-capacity tub is preferable for one person, says Robert D. Henry, and 250 gallons for two. Copper, stainless steel, and tile are the most common materials used. (Below, the Kallista Archeo copper



tub; \$51,980.) "Or we can make them out of wood, as they do in Japan," he adds. With the addition of an in-line cooling unit, almost any soaking or steeping tub can be transformed into a cold plunge.

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# Healthy, Wealthy & Wise

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## All Wet

The most avant-garde spa feature you can put in your home is a wet room, which combines steam bath, body scrubs, and massage in one place. The only ones we've seen so far are commercial, most recently at the new Bernardus Lodge in Carmel Valley, California, where director of spa and activity Bruce Cavan has incorporated one into the hotel's freestanding spa. The completely tiled, 10 by 12-foot room combines a steam bath with a treatment table for body scrubs and a Vichy shower. Then a specially designed massage top is placed on the wet table.

To duplicate this setup in a residential setting, says Cavan, "would cost about \$50,000 to \$100,000. It would be quite an undertak-

Make music and aromatherapy part of the mix, and design the room to take advantage of views and natural light. "Facing south-east would be my druthers," says Galyean. New York City interior designer Benjamin

ing, but it could be done. The issue will be finding the right trained attendant." The room should be at least 10 by 12 feet, he advises, and it must be tiled top to bottom: "Just make sure everything is really waterproof." The tile may require a special rubberized lining underneath, and the ceiling should be sloped to allow water drops to flow away from the center of the room. "A drain under the wet table is a must, and the floor must slope toward it," he says.

Some form of radiant heat can be provided to warm the room, post-steam. "Tile cools quickly," he says. The room should have a passive inhalation system built into the wall so aromatherapy oils diffuse into the air, lights should be on a rheostat so they can be dimmed, and music should be available.

Noriega-Ortiz agrees that light and view are crucial. "A home spa that doesn't incorporate nature is like a basement," he warns.

The design needn't be showstopping—in fact, it probably shouldn't be, says Galy-

ean. "The room should aim for a calm, restful aesthetic. Within those parameters, it can be clever, but avoid making it cute or trendy." Dramatic, though, can be okay. Drysdale cast a potent spell for one client by creating a 20 by 20-foot spa room with a custom-mosaic jetted soaking tub and a fountain, both separated by a glass wall from a 20 by 30-foot exercise room.

Drysdale says that her "ideal home spa would have a wood-burning fireplace for the warmth and the smell." Other Drysdale touches: "artwork, a chaise longue, topiary trees, candles everywhere, and room for a massage table to be brought in."

On Noriega-Ortiz's list of must-haves are a soaking bathtub large enough for two people, towel and robe warmers, space to accommodate "a daybed and a table you can dine at." But he warns against cramming too much into the room. "Choose what you're really going to use," he says. "Don't clutter. A sense of calmness comes from openness." He also cautions against

strong colors or vivid patterns. "The whole idea of a home spa is to come back from this agitated life and relax," he says. "You're not going to do that if the walls are bright."

Like many spa-conscious designers, Henry favors "feel-good materials" such as natural stone like slate or limestone, glass tile, warm metals like stainless steel, and soft woods like teak. Noriega-Ortiz says if you put in a slate or marble floor, heat it from beneath. "There's nothing better than to step on a marble floor and feel it warm."

Since home spas are still news to most architects, interior designers, and building contractors, the best place to start inquiring is at a distributor for a bathroom-equipment manufacturer with a demonstrated interest in the subject—particularly Kohler and Jacuzzi. They should be able to suggest designers and plumbing contractors who can handle the specialized requirements a home spa entails. Educate yourself first, however. Experience as many resort and day spas as possible to determine the aesthetic you prefer, and test-drive as much equipment as you can. "An informed consumer is going to have sampled lots of equipment and will know what works for him," explains

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