



“TOUGH AS NAILS” BUILDER PREFERS CLASSIC TO TRENDY

Cindy Stumpo offers tips for luxury home construction

By: Tricia Drevets

As a custom homebuilder and developer for 27 years who was featured in the HGTV reality show, “Tough as Nails,” Cindy Stumpo is passionate about building homes right.

It is through her commitment to quality and timeless designs – not to trends – that has built her a devoted following in Eastern Massachusetts who seek her work to remodel their existing homes or to build their new homes.

“I hate trendy,” says Stumpo. “I don’t dress trendy and I don’t build trendy. Trendy clothes go out of style next season, but the classic styles will stay in your closet forever...Houses are like people.”

We recently talked with Stumpo about one of her latest homes, a 7,400-square-foot mansion in prestigious Brookline, Mass. that recently sold for upwards of \$7 million. She calls the home’s design transitional as it blends the traditional

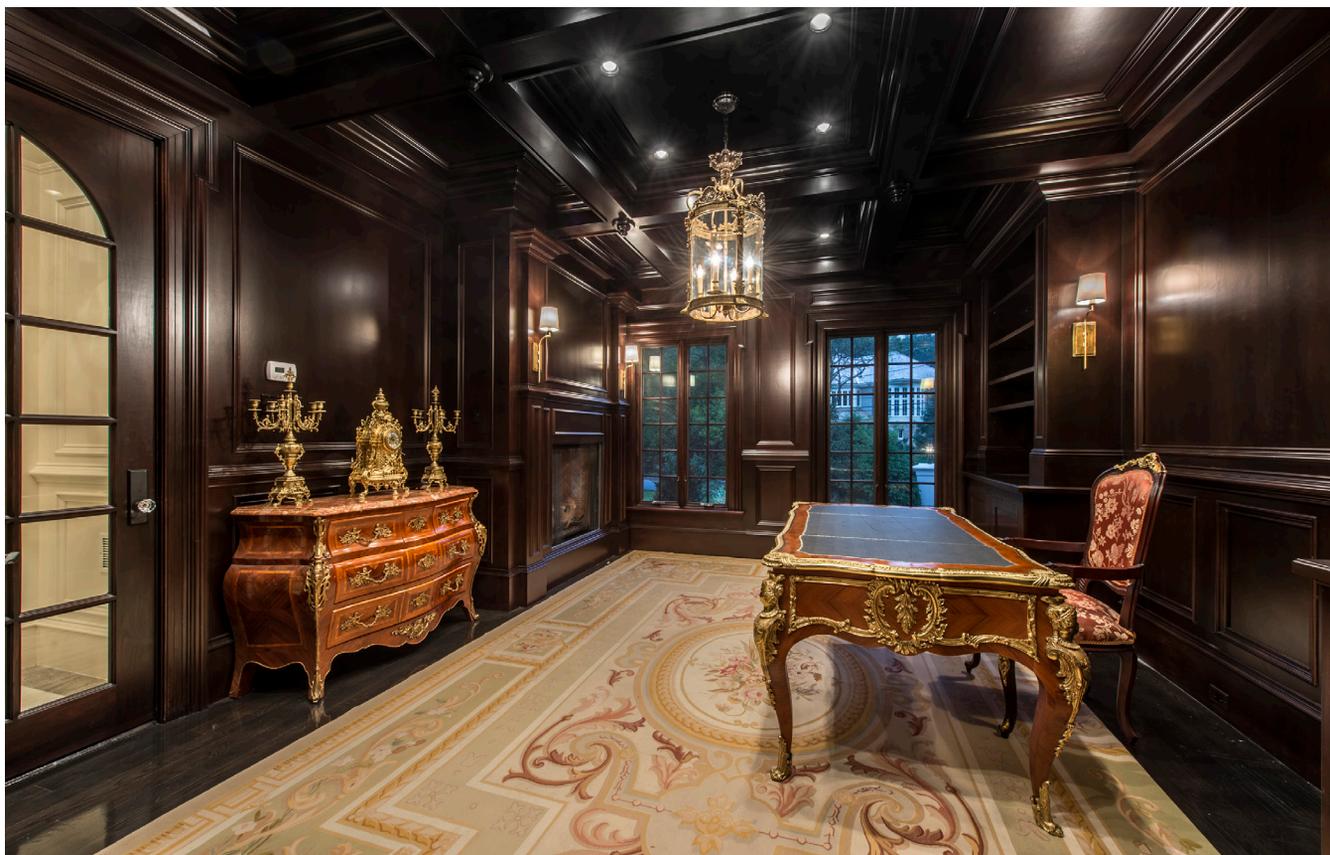
with the modern. Since, as Stumpo points out, it is the heartbeat of any home, we started with the kitchen.

The inviting chef’s kitchen is dominated by a custom-designed island that has as its base the feet from one of the hope chests Stumpo’s grandmother left her.

“I look at every one of my homes as one of my children,” Stump explains. “My grandmother will live on in that home.”







While the island gives the kitchen the traditional feel of furniture, the appliances are sleek and modern, and they work as an integrated system to make them flush with the cabinets. “Everything fits in like on massive piece,” Stumpo says.

The kitchen has 10-foot ceilings, and unlike other builders who leave space between the tops of the cabinets and the ceilings, Stumpo created custom small cabinets to fit on top of the main cabinets. The kitchen also features hidden cameras, speakers and smart technology.

Stumpo says her design of the home started with its distinctive carport, and that she branched from there. “The carport brought the whole thing to life, she says, “and then I had to move from the carport to the foyer and from the foyer to the kitchen and from the kitchen to the living room.”

The builder drew every curve and curlicue of the custom wrought iron railing in the

foyer’s impressive stairway, which also features gray marble and ebony treads. The massive custom front door is made of mahogany.

The entire home features Navajo White paint as its base color. She explains that although white is very in right now, she prefers the softer look of Navajo White rather than the “hospital feel” of certain whites.

The bright kitchen features the straight Navajo White color, while the foyer is 75 percent Navajo, she explains.

The white tone is warmer still with added grays in the home’s master bedroom, which Stumpo describes as “a place where you can relax when you have had a stressful day.”

To make things convenient, Stumpo included a hidden refrigerator and bar section in the master suite, “so at 2 a.m.

you don’t need to go downstairs for a glass of water.”

The elegant master bathroom combines elegant form with function. Stumpo says she was successful recently in talking a client out of spending \$12,000 just for bathroom fixtures. “You don’t want someone going into a bathroom and saying those are beautiful fixtures,” she says. “You want them to say “That’s beautiful bathroom.”

The Brookline home’s master bathroom features beige marble, which Stumpo says is “soft on the eyes” and crystal knobs, which “add to the elegance.”

The dining room features a 50-50 Navajo White blend with Nantucket blue and a dramatic dining table that is perfect for holiday gatherings. “Dining rooms are not about five-piece sets today,” Stumpo explains. “They are about many different pieces working together.”



The home's library with its mahogany wood and ebony floors is "as traditional as it gets," Stumpo admits. "A house can have lots of personalities," she says. "Every room can have a different look. That library certainly has its own personality."

She laughs before she continues, "I'm what you call an opinionated builder. Some builders say, 'I'll build whatever you want.' I like to educate my clients, and I've found that the ones who do not follow my lead regret it later."

According to Stumpo, a house should be about warmth and affection and should reflect your personality. "When you go with quality construction, you cannot go wrong," she adds. "You can always change your furniture, but you don't want to change your home."

Here are some additional tips Stumpo offers for people considering building a new home or remodeling an existing home"

1. Make sure your house has character. Keep things traditional, clean, classic and elegant to maintain value.
2. A home does not dictate what is practical; the cost of the land does.
3. The trend toward huge square-footage is waning. Many homeowners today desire smaller, better-quality homes that focus on detail and practicality rather than space. As a result, they are focusing on their kitchens and family rooms rather than on their living rooms and media rooms.
4. Wired is in. Homeowners today desire smart technology, electronic hook-ups around the house for their gadgets and sophisticated security systems, including outdoor surveillance systems.
5. Luxury master bathrooms with whirlpool tubs and steam showers remain popular as retreats after a long day.
6. Large closets, fancy closet insets and

dressing rooms also are popular.

Two interesting trends Stumpo notes are first-floor guest suites and elevators. Both involve planning for the future.

First-floor guest bedroom suites are for aging parents who come to visit. In addition, Stumpo says she is asked frequently to create space for an elevator shaft in a new home. She does this by stacking closets on top of each other from one floor to the next. If an elevator becomes necessary later, she explains that the floors of the closets can be removed and the elevator installed.

"I laugh at all these (house) flippers today," Stumpo concludes. "Anybody can pick out faucets and fixtures, but that is not what makes a house. You need to know building. You need to know how to put on a roof.

"I focus on quality throughout the entire process." ✈