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Castle design is king in N. Texas

Turrets, stone and stained wood rule in new homes

10:11 AM CST on Monday, November 19, 2007

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The look is at least 1,000 years old, but castles are sprouting anew in North Texas.

New custom-built homes are sporting two-story turrets, elaborate Old World stonework and interiors that rely on an abundance of stained wood to create a medieval feel. But the homes aren't supposed to feel old. Builders say they're creating a castlelike style alongside new conveniences such as media rooms, personal wine cellars and extensive security systems.



Klein Homes
The Kingsberg design from Klein Homes plays on the castle theme with turrets and exterior stonework. But the interiors of castlelike houses are decidedly modern, with features such as media rooms.

"The turret and castle look is really popular," said Ed Harrison, of Ovilla-based Harrison Homes Custom Builders. "It's the demand that drives the architecture."

Mr. Harrison, who specializes in homes from \$400,000 to \$1.5 million, said some of his customers come to him already wanting a castle design. Others don't think of it until their second design meeting, when they ask, "Oh, by the way, can you do me one of those castle entryways?" he said.

For Klein Homes in Midlothian, that look is creating a lot of demand. Since designing the castle-inspired Kingsburg plan 18 months ago, Kevin Klein said he has built six variations on it. The basic 3,200-square-foot version includes two turrets, both situated in bedrooms where the circular opening can be easily transformed into a window seat.

Although a turret looks impractical, builders say the spaces inside them can be useful.

Mr. Harrison uses turrets to create tall, arched entryways, often leaving the entire ceiling open in a two-story home. But if buyers choose a shorter version, the top of the turret can become a small second-floor room that makes a perfect playroom for children, Mr. Harrison said.

Several months ago, Mr. Klein turned the interior of a turret into an elaborate octagonal shower, with a large bench

seat and opaque windows in the stone walls. The feature is “something I bet we will do again,” he said.

Using stained wood inside a home adds to the period flavor; Mr. Harrison said owners of such homes are going with darker shades, including “Old World golds and maroons.”

Other options include taller doors. Mr. Klein said he tries to use 8-foot-tall stained wood doors to make a home feel grand.

Bigger production builders are also adopting the castle theme. In the 2,500-acre Castle Hills development in Lewisville, street names include King Arthur Boulevard, Magic Mantle Drive and Sir Alexander Lane.

Builder David Weekley advertises its homes in the project as “themed from the days of knights and warriors, sorcerers and dragons,” with homes that feature elaborate exterior stonework.

When Mr. Klein builds a home with turrets that connect to bedrooms, he said, kids are always trying to claim the rooms. He built a home with two turrets for a family with a young daughter who decorated her turreted bedroom in a princess theme.

Although the look dates back centuries, Mr. Harrison said the resurgence of castle-style homes in North Texas has been popular for five to 10 years. “It’s very trendy,” he said. “But I don’t know if it will last.”