

home | lifestyle | investment

# Places

The background of the cover is a close-up photograph of a highly decorative door. The door is covered in intricate, golden-colored carvings. A prominent feature is a large, ornate handle with a circular knob, set against a background of dense, leafy and floral patterns. The lighting is warm, highlighting the metallic sheen of the carvings.

Winter Issue 2008

Homes are meant to be our great escapes. Jo Caruana discovered a haven of comfort and tranquillity amid the bright festive atmosphere of this fantastic home.

# A Perfect Setting FOR CHRISTMAS



Ref P000150116  
€1,750,000



It is the little things which transform a house into a home, and from the moment we begin our tour of this sprawling property we're hooked on its eclectic details. Christmas is all around us – from the sparkling baubles to the twinkling candles – and a delicious smell wafts from the expansive kitchen making us feel right at home.

This house is the stuff dreams are

made of, it's the place you imagined as a child when you were drawing your future property in a copybook. One room leads to another, each more welcoming than the last. Open fires crackle in old-fashioned fireplaces, big comfortable couches conjure images of laid back Sunday afternoons and the dark-wood furniture is a pleasant throwback to the days when everything

was a little more grandiose.

We begin our tour with a delicious welcome drink – a glass of champagne. We feel like explorers as we trek through the house – led by Dhalia CEO Alan Camilleri. The courtyard leads into the dining room which in turn, leads out to the beautiful gardens where the pool is lit up for the occasion. ▶



**From Left:** Lawrence Grech Ambassador To Estonia, Jo Caruana Journalist, Kajal Narwani Senior Property Consultant Dhalia Real Estate Service, Darren Frendo Property Consultant Luxury Living by Dhalia, Nathan Farrugia CEO Razzett tal-Haberija, Alan Camilleri Chairman & CEO Dhalia Real Estate Service, Helga Ellul CEO Playmobil Malta and Andy Gatesy Chairman & CEO Toly Products Ltd

Back inside (frightened off by the chill in the air) the guests huddle by the fire before being invited into the dining room for dinner – it’s mutually decided that the guests will switch places between courses to give everyone a better chance to chat. The smell is almost too much to bear and everyone is looking forward to the delicious-sounding menu, prepared by junior sous-chef Amon Baldacchino from the Le Méridien Hotel, St Julian’s:

As the first course is served – a scrumptious Lemon Chicken Timbale of Granary Apple, Walnut and a Petit Salad – conversation turns to Christmas and everyone’s plans for the season. Helga Ellul, CEO of Playmobil Malta, is looking forward to her Christmas traditions and is not planning to go away this year. Her at-home Christmas Eve parties have become legendary and she has grown fond-of having her friends and family over.

Andy Gatesy, Chairman and CEO of Toly products Ltd, is looking forward to heading back home to the UK for his holidays – he misses the cold, the mist and the cosiness. At the other end of the spectrum, Alan may well be heading to Brazil. “I love chasing the sun,” he smiles, “and it will be summer over there. I’ve never been to South America before so it’s an experience I am definitely looking forward to.”

On the other hand, Razzett



talk turns to travel. Darren Frendo, one of Dhalla's property consultants, shares his stories of Thailand where he enjoyed immersing himself in the local culture and has wonderful memories of days spent fishing with the natives. Andy has also spent time in Thailand. "One really funny thing happened when I was in Bangkok," he explains. "I was staying at this lovely hotel and a man approached me saying that he knew we were from Malta, that he recognised us. I was taken aback at first but he explained that he had been a waiter at one of my favourite restaurants and remembered us! It's funny what a small world we live in."

The mood is mellow by the time the main course arrives – Lamb Wellington set on an Artichoke, Sundried Tomato and Local Peppered Goats' Cheese Compote with Cauliflower Puree and Port Wine Jus. Everyone digs in and conversation turns to the current theatre season. Some of the guests relive the latest shows they've seen – including Blasted, Minn Wara iz-Zipp, Blackbird and More Fourplay. Kajal Narwani, one of Dhalla's Property Consultants, says: "It's great to see how many different plays are being staged. Local producers really seem to be pushing the boundaries." Sticking with current culture, ▶



tal-Hbiberija CEO, Nathan Farrugia, has set himself a challenge for the holiday season – he will be taking part in the Ironman challenge in the UK to raise money for Razzett. "It's a triathlon including swimming, cycling and running; the best finish time ever was nine hours, I'm hoping to finish it in twelve so I'm currently training nine times a week."

Everyone switches places and as the Forest Mushroom Soup with Parmesan Croutons is set down,





Lawrence Grech, Ambassador to Estonia and ex-editor of The Sunday Times, raises the topic of television and the fact that several cult TV shows are back on our screens – shows like *Dynasty* and *Dallas*. He says: "I used to love watching all those British dramas when they first came out, shows like the *Forsyth Saga* and *Upstairs, Downstairs*. I was also a huge fan of *Brideshead Revisited*, so much so that I actually went to visit the location where it was filmed when I was on a trip round Scotland."

As dessert is served – a delectable White Chocolate and Pistachio Mousse with a Forest Fruit Shot and Vanilla Sauce – Lawrence regales the table with some general knowledge stories from the Victorian era. "Bedsteads and bed canopies," he explains, "were originally invented to keep people safe during the night. At the time you never knew what was going to descend from the ceiling – insects or snakes – so the canopy served as protection from falling objects."

With thoughts of falling snakes and insects firmly imprinted in their minds, the guests decided it is time to stretch their legs and retire to the grand sitting room for further conversation. Huddled around the fire the atmosphere is one of festive fun – helped, of course, by the delightful surroundings of this very special house. ▶

## My Favourite Spot



### Helga Ellul

CEO

Playmobil Malta

Helga Ellul felt especially at home in the grand sitting room: "It's the perfect room for entertaining in and I can really imagine having all my friends in here. It's wonderful and cosy."



### Andy Gatesy

Chairman & CEO

Toly Products Limited

Andy Gatesy loved the kitchen and was bowled over by it when he first walked into the house: "It's really spacious and I can imagine some great meals coming out of it!"



### Nathan Farrugia

CEO

Razzett tal-Hbiberija

Nathan Farrugia chose the garden and pool deck: "I'm an outdoors person and space is such a luxury these days so I'm automatically drawn to it. I could instantly picture setting up a fantastic BBQ and imagine my two daughters running around having a great time."



### Lawrence Grech

Ambassador to Estonia

Lawrence Grech was also drawn to the main sitting room: "This space captures the feeling of the whole house – rustic grandeur. I could spend hours in here because it's so cosy and comfortable."

The house was prepared and decorated by **Mario Cassar** of **Incorporated Design Ltd**. Mario provides interior design in different styles, yet always a sophisticated, distinctive and timeless design. Clients benefit from Mario's years of experience in the industry and his longstanding relationships with craftsmen and suppliers. Mario can be contacted on **7946 8905** or e-mail **designstudio@incorporatedmalta.com**. Mario used decorations and furnishings from **Gronfia Christmas Shop**, Mosta – the best place for all your decorations this season.