



The rich ambience of the interior wows from the front door



# Classical DREAM

Mohamed Raffi and Lalijah made their new home a dream residence fitted with classical furniture, reports **Low Yit Leng**

IT WAS A BIRTHDAY present the lady of the house will never forget. The new three-storey house in a quiet residential area looks nondescript from the outside with its small garden and space for two cars, but throw open the doors and a dazzling interior is revealed.

Classical Italian furniture from Meroni, glittering chandeliers, curtains made of rich fabrics and an impressive personal collection of crystalware all add to the vibrant ambience. For the close friends of the owners — Mohamed Raffi and his wife Lalijah who founded Global Food Management — this décor was typical of them.

“When we lived in an apartment, friends called our home a little castle because we decorated the interior with classical Italian furniture despite the tight space,” says Mohamed Raffi, otherwise known as Singapore’s Satay King and a veteran of the local food industry. “Now that we’ve moved into a house, we’re truly able to decorate the place as we like.”

PHOTOS: PETER CHUA (CAESAR COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHY)



LEFT: **An antique sword — one of the many souvenirs in the house**  
OPPOSITE PAGE: **A cosy lounge area made charming by stunning ceiling details**

THE COUPLE TOOK THEIR TIME TO INSPECT THE PROPERTY AND LIKED WHAT THEY SAW. “IT LOOKS SMALL FROM THE OUTSIDE, BUT ACTUALLY HAS A LOT OF DEPTH”

Mohamed Raffi’s house hunt started over two years ago. The owners, who have a grown-up son, were looking for a place when they noticed a residential development near their workplace in Sembawang. “Our office is just a stone’s throw from here,” he says. “In fact, we could see the construction of the property right from where we were sitting in the office — my wife used to jest it was her house that was being built!”

The couple took their time to inspect the property and liked what they saw. “It looks small from the outside, but actually has a lot of depth,” says Mohamed Raffi. “We like the large dining area, kitchen space and backyard. Most of the other properties we viewed were a bit too small for us.” They moved into their new place nearly a year ago.

It is evident the beautifully-decorated interior reflects a house-proud couple. On the walls hang a number of paintings collected over the years, with one eye-catching piece in the dining area purchased from a local art gallery featuring *The Last Supper*. The doorways are arched and even the ceilings are not spared of detail — pretty floral motifs in pastel colours offer a sense of opulence.





The task of fitting all the pieces together fell largely to Lalijah, who has a keen eye for detail. “My wife really is the creative director — she takes pride in looking for particular pieces and also tries to match the colours of the different fabrics with the furniture,” says Mohamed Raffi. “After we first painted the house, we had to change the colour of the wall in the dining area because she felt the colour scheme was not well matched to the furniture.”

The ground floor has been sectioned off to create a number of different sitting areas and corners for small groups. The formal dining room highlighted by its grand chandeliers is one of the most impressive spots in the house, also featuring a three-metre long dining table with matching chairs specially bought from Meroni. Lalijah ordered this dining set after seeing it in a catalogue. The floral

motifs on the set had been discontinued, but a special request was made and the couple now owns a one-of-a-kind dining set in Singapore. The hand-painted motifs on the chairs are also matched to the pastel colours and embellishments on the cornices in the ceiling.

“When it was all done, even the contractors and previous owners were amazed at the well-coordinated scheme,” says the lady of the house, who is also an excellent cook.

There are five huge rooms in the house and Lalijah took much effort to collate ideas from different magazines and books for her new home. She has a penchant for collecting beautiful pieces of crystalware, which now take pride of place in a number of display cabinets as well as on side tables placed in different corners of the house.

In the bedroom, Lalijah has her own relaxation corner complete with comfortable lounge chair where she enjoys reading or watching television. Her walk-in wardrobe is every woman’s

ABOVE, LEFT: **Two views of the living room**

**The garden area is the owner's favourite space where he enjoys intimate gatherings**

**7Stunning classical furniture from Italy add to the elegant décor**



dream — her custom-made evening wear of silk, satin and lacy tunic tops with long skirts all neatly arranged in the wardrobe attract much attention. Even her bathroom is decorated with beautiful crystalware and her favourite perfumes.

“We’ve taken our time to do up all the different rooms in the house — it’s still a work in progress particularly for the last room, which we initially planned as a music studio for our son,” Lelijah says. “He did not need it, however, so now we’re turning it into a guest room.” Lelijah recently bought a large bed for the room and is giving it a new coat of paint. She also has plans to add furnishings such as curtains and cushions to complete the look.

Mohamed Raffi on his part has kept an eye out for beautiful chandeliers, installing an impressive piece on the second floor where the library and family recreation area are located. “The classical



ABOVE: **Some of the decorative pieces the owners have collected**  
TOP: **The dining area features a three-metre long dining table and chairs with beautiful floral motifs**





**ABOVE: The master bedroom is royally furnished with rich fabrics and colours**  
**BELOW: Colourful crystalware makes the bathroom a pretty sight**

look appeals to us because not only does it afford a grand ambience, classical designs also do not go out of fashion,” he says. “The Italians are wonderful designers and much of their furniture also just has that ‘right’ look. We’re still using some of the older pieces we had because they go well with the new furniture.”

For the couple, the most challenging part of setting up their new home was looking for the right furnishings to suit the ambience. “The house was built for the original owner, but when we took over, we worked on some areas such as the archways and the cornices to create that Italian feel,” says Mohamed Raffi.



<captions>

**1The garden area is the owner's favourite space where he enjoys intimate gatherings**

**2The rich ambience of the living area wows from the front door**

**3A closer view of one corner in the living room**

**4The dining area features stunning furniture including a 3-metre long dining table with chairs with beautiful floral motifs**

**5Some of the artifacts that the owners collect**

**6An antique sword is one of the many souvenirs that he has collected from his travels**

**7Stunning classical furniture from Italy add to the elegant décor**

**8One of the many stunning paintings that take centre stage in the dining area**

**9A cosy lounge area made charming by the stunning ceiling details**

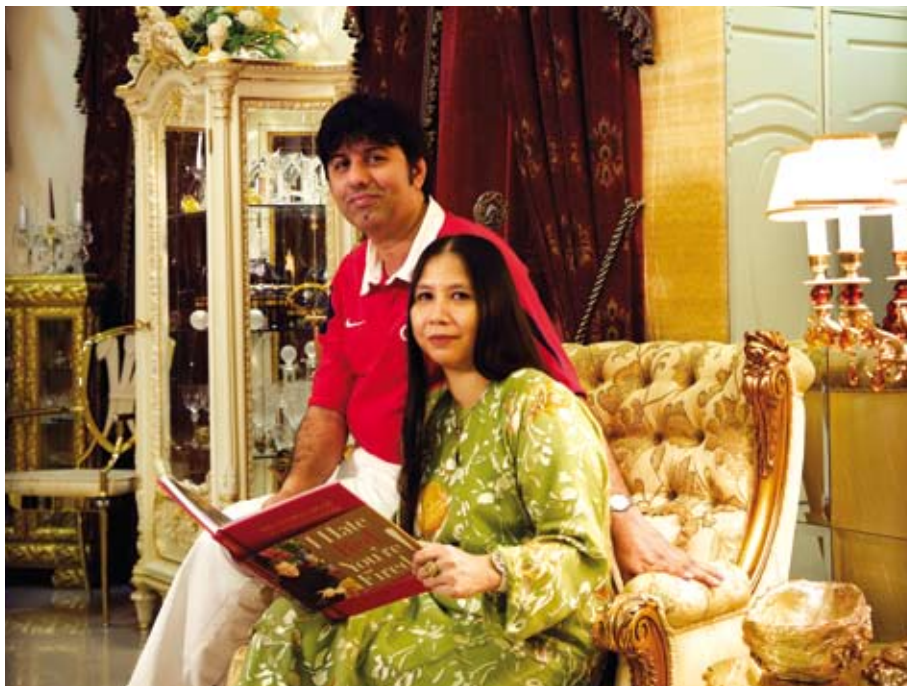
**10A room that is ideal for the music aficionado**

**11The master bedroom is royally furnished with rich fabrics and colours**

**12Lalijah's favourite corner in the house**

**13Colourful crystal ware makes this bathroom a pretty sight**

**14Mohamed Raffi and his wife Lalijah are king and queen of this residence**



Today, Mohamed Raffi's favourite part of the house is the garden. "This is one part of the property that still offers a rural feel as we're surrounded by greenery. You can also sometimes hear the birds singing in the early morning and evening. We get a good breeze here and I love sitting next to the fish pond watching the fish and listening to the flowing water. We look forward to a beautiful sunrise every day," he smiles. 📖

**ABOVE: No risk of trashing the furniture here**  
**LEFT: Mohamed Raffi and Lalijah — the king and queen of this residence**