

JUNE 1997

Summertime

Victoria

*The Smiles
Of Summer*

THE MAGIC OF BLUE & WHITE

BLUE ROSES AND YOU

THE CHARM OF TICKING

SUN-KISSED WICKER

*Love Is in the Details
A Bride's Treasury*

*Fresh as Wildflowers,
A Swedish Family Home*

*Sweet Baking—
Mother and
Daughter Chefs*

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DESIGNER ANN MILLÄNG'S
Song of Sweden

When she married her Swedish sweetheart and settled in a seaside village not far from Stockholm, Californian Ann Milläng found more than a wonderful family life—she found inspiration in the timeless lines and superb craftsmanship of her adopted country's antique furnishings. Now "Swedish Blonde," her line of reproduction pieces, keeps company at home with Julia and Jonathan, her own little Swedish blonds.

PHOTOGRAPHS WILLIAM P. STEELE
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR TRICIA FOLEY





"Swedes believe that furnishings should last for generations."

So much in our home came from grandparents," says Ann, "or was painted, sewn, or designed by us, that it seems almost everything has a family story."

Her own story is surely a romantic one. As a Fulbright scholar studying landscape design, she met her husband, Torbjörn, when she was traveling in Sweden; their wedding was held at his family's ancestral farm on Midsummer Eve—"complete with a maypole, flower wreaths, and all."

A few years later, another joyous event was celebrated right here, in the living room of their home in seaside Dalarö, when Jonathan was christened. Guests sipped tea from his great-grandmother's Swedish china, opposite, as the long-awaited spring sunshine poured into the room, casting the windows' pattern on the old wood floors. "They've been well preserved," notes Ann, "because in Sweden everyone takes their shoes off in the house."

Like many Americans now, Ann became enamored of the simple elegance of Gustavian Swedish furniture made in the 18th century. And she knew firsthand that "no one can reproduce it more superbly than the Swedes." Thus was born her home-based furniture company, an international success whose "president's office" is a cottage right on the property. "My goal," she says, "is to create pieces just as enduring as the originals."

A sunny corner of the living room, opposite, "serves as our summer dining area," says Ann, who keeps glassware in the tall "Erik" cabinet made by her Swedish Blonde company—"though it makes a great entertainment or computer center, too." Opposite below: In June the children gather wild strawberries from the fields and roadsides, a seasonal treat deserving of Grandma's best flow-blue Swedish porcelain.

A sprightly little table, right, from her husband's family turned out to be the perfect companion to an 1860's sofa Ann found at auction (the style is called Carl Johan, after the period's king), which she covered—"untraditionally"—in a bright cotton damask.



Pale-painted furniture and bright walls have a long tradition in Sweden—"because they cheer us up in winter," says Ann. In the Millängs' dining room, entirely furnished by her Swedish Blonde reproductions, curved-back ivory "Rose" chairs with hand-carved details mingle with "Gustav" chairs at an oval table. And there's hardly a room in one's house the tall, glass-fronted "Ybor" cabinet wouldn't be welcome in: "People use it for books, curios, bed linens, china," says Ann. "It's solid alder."

The paint's soft patina requires up to seven coats of subtly different hues, each sanded down in turn. "I did it myself," sighs Ann, "on our blue china cabinet [previous page]."

Opposite: Delicately etched with the Swedish crown, the Victorian decanter from Torbjörn's family may have been born in the old glass-making town of Vadstena.





Nestled under the eaves, little Julia's sleeping alcove has a grown-up "Rose" bed with carved flowers and finials. Though the sky can be glimpsed only through a tiny window, it's evoked in blue Souleiado pillows and a spread bandpainted with angels.

For Ann, it seems only a blink ago that Julia slept in the beirloom bassinet, opposite, which still wears the same luxurious cotton bonnet and skirting in which Grandmother dressed it for Julia's daddy long ago.



For additional information, see page 118.

