



THE GOOD LIFE



A picturesque historic farm in a fruit-growing centre of Belgium has been carefully restored and turned into a gastronomic inn served by its own produce

PHOTOGRAPHY TRUI HEINHUIS/COCO FEATURES WORDS MIRJAM ENZERINK



LAY OF THE LAND

This characterful farmhouse, once owned by the neighbouring medieval castle, dates from 1648. Reviving the farm, carefully rejuvenating and rescuing the house, and laying out the garden on no-dig organic principles has been the passionate project of one family - Erik, Lucie, Nanne and Tessa - who all brought their own different skills to the project, whether it be culinary, horticulture, building or animal husbandry



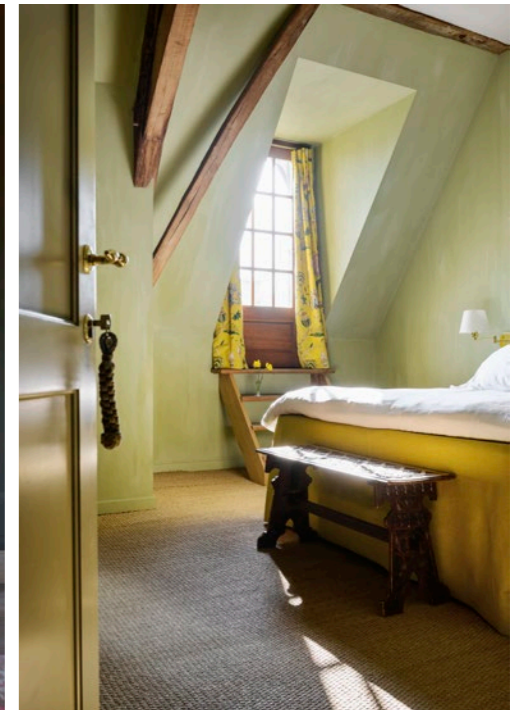
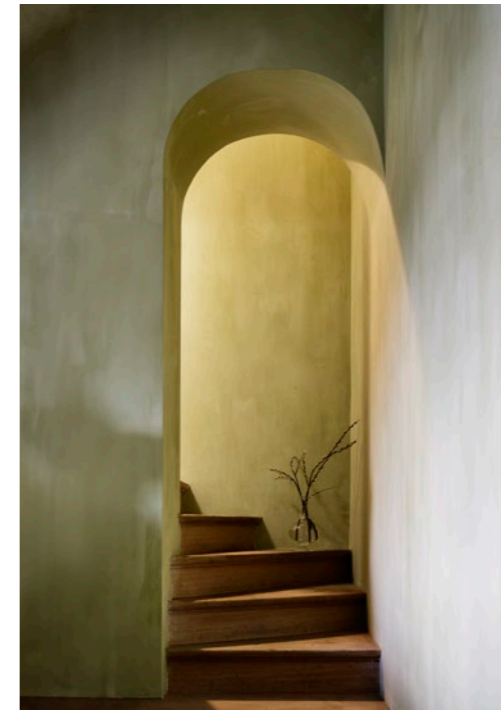
DOMESTIC SCIENCE

The interiors have been washed in vibrant colours, especially terracotta, and a mixture of rustic antiques and country furniture (opposite). Contemporary lighting, botanical prints and ceramics with historical printed floral fabrics and rich, plain linens add to the homespun feel. The emphasis for guests is on comfort and excellent homemade cuisine, with the constant scent of baking



EARTHY DELIGHTS

The dining room (once a stable) has been painted in Tessa's favourite terracotta (an intense mineral limewash paint by Keim) and was inspired by Venetian diamond patterns. "To make it easier, we laser-aligned the template for the diamond shape on the wall, traced it and then painted it in," she says. Antique French floor tiles and bricks and the large sandstone fireplace help create the atmosphere of a medieval taproom



RICH REWARDS

Lucie and Nanne spend a lot of their time outdoors. The property has lots of livestock including some heritage Walloon varieties, Kunekune pigs, crested ducks, chickens and now rabbits, along with orchards filled with carefully trained and pruned fruit trees. Tessa - who used to be a florist, grows vegetables for the kitchen and annuals and perennials for cutting for the house, such as perfumed roses, vibrant nasturtiums, marigolds and Mexican sunflowers



COMFORT & JOY

The house now has six colour-themed guestrooms in different shades, giving each one a distinct identity, and with fabrics in toning hues and big comfortable beds. The walls were all painted by hand with a block brush and colours by L'Authentique for a textured, chalky finish. Each room has a view of the orchard, which is especially pretty in spring when fruit blossom can be seen framed by the romantic dormers. *For details on staying at Kasteelhoeve De Kerckhem in Nieuwerkerken, Belgium, see dekerckhem.com*

