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BLOOMING BEAUTIES

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A visit to the vegetable garden of potter Frances Palmer, with tips on creating raised-bed plantings of your own.



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WELCOMING INN

Generations of one family have put their passion for hospitality and design into Los Poblanos Inn & Organic Farm, in Los Ranchos de Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Classical architecture combines with southwestern style at Los Poblanos Inn & Organic Farm.

GRAND ENTRANCE

Opposite: Towering cottonwood and elm trees, planted in the 1930s, make a dramatic first impression of Los Poblanos Historic Inn & Organic Farm, which received the Trustees Emeritus Award for Excellence from the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 2013. *This page:* This men's cloakroom is outside the ballroom at the inn's La Quinta Cultural Center.



AMERICAN TREASURE

VISIT NEW MEXICO'S LOS POBLANOS INN TO EXPERIENCE
HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE, SAVOR HOMEGROWN
SPECIALTIES, AND ENJOY THE FRUITS OF ONE FAMILY'S PASSION—
ALL UNDER THE SOUTHWESTERN SUN.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **Matthew Williams**
BY **Gael Towey**

A full-page photograph of a paved path lined with large, mature trees. The path is dappled with sunlight and shadows. In the distance, a person in a red shirt is walking a white dog, and a child is riding a bicycle towards them.

WELCOMING INN



Enter through an allée of giant cottonwood and elm trees, their branches arching majestically overhead. Pass by a lavender field, blue-green rows lining the red earth. Take a moment when you reach the low-slung, unassuming adobe porch—thank goodness there’s a sign—to look out toward the pond crowded with lotuses, their pink, swan-like heads rising up to touch the unobstructed view of the ancient, craggy Sandia mountain range in the heart of the Rio Grande Valley.

Here at the 20-room Los Poblanos Historic Inn & Organic Farm, in Los Ranchos de Albuquerque, New Mexico, the Rembe family has created a special place that celebrates the setting and honors the past, all while looking to the future. As a guest at Los Poblanos, you have the rare opportunity to experience rooms of uncommon craftsmanship and significance. And yet this is no stuffy museum. As you have a cocktail in the courtyard or sit by the fire in your room, as you visit gardens where the food is grown that you will eat during delicious meals on the sunny porch, you relax and explore and feel deeply connected to America’s Southwest.

The Rembe family has worked hard to establish this warm, welcoming experience, and in the process they have built a unique and successful business model, created jobs, and furthered a cause they believe in.

Penny and Armin Rembe, who have been married for 52 years, raised four children in the classic courtyard adobe house where guests now check in. Owning an inn was not always part of the plan. In the late 1990s, the building next door, known as La Quinta—built originally as a cultural center in 1934—was under threat of being

remodeled and the land of being developed. Penny and Armin, a now-retired oncologist, and their children decided together to buy the property, restoring the building and turning their house into a bed-and-breakfast in the process. (The idea did not seem far-fetched to the ever-optimistic Penny; she had been the proprietor of a gift-and-stationery store and a catering business in town for five years, and is proud to say she introduced pâté to Albuquerque.)

The Rembes’ decision would preserve important pieces of history—and return the property to a version closer to what it was once. Decades earlier, the land had been a dairy farm owned by Ruth Hanna McCormick Simms and congressman Albert Simms. Ruth—herself a congresswoman as well as a suffragist and newspaperwoman—had a firm belief in engagement with the local community. She hired New Mexico’s leading architect, John Gaw Meem, to enlarge their L-shaped farmhouse and to build the cultural center, La Quinta.

Meem was a leader in the Santa Fe style, which combines classical and Spanish Colonial architecture. Indeed, at La Quinta, beaux-arts details combine seamlessly with traditional regional shapes and color palettes. Meem brought together craftsmen from all over New Mexico to create pieces—tin chandeliers, hand-painted murals, intricate iron hardware. Thanks to the efforts of the Rembe family, those details and so many others remain, remarkably, in place today.

This idea of preservation extends beyond the doors of the buildings. Penny and Armin brought sustainability to the farm by planting lavender, which relies on less water than many crops and doesn’t deplete the soil. Armin found a handmade steam distiller to make lavender oil. When they started the bed-and-breakfast, Penny used the oil to make her now-famous lavender salve on the kitchen stove as an amenity for her guests, who were also served warm lavender shortbread cookies upon check-in.

In 2005, Matt Rembe took over the business from his parents, who had been working seven days a week in their retirement. The first thing he did was develop a pragmatic business plan, with the goal of making Los Poblanos more profitable while advancing the family’s preservation goals. They built their staff into a creative force that elegantly manages a busy events business, and added guest rooms and a superb restaurant. And realizing that the lavender products Penny was making in her kitchen represented an opportunity, Matt started the Farm Shop in a sunlit, whitewashed farm building. Today, he and his team balance what are essentially six distinct but interdependent businesses—lodging, retail, wholesale production, farming, restaurant, and events. This dynamic model results in a property that may be deeply rooted in history but feels very much alive.

AROUND THE INN

Center: A family portrait in front of La Quinta: Armin and Penny Rembe, their son Matt—now the property’s executive director—his wife, Teresa, and their sons. **Clockwise from top left:** An ornate gate leads to the Spanish-style garden created by celebrated landscape designer Rose Greely in the 1930s. Penny Rembe arranges flowers. The property’s original silos; the farm once provided Albuquerque with much of its milk. The chefs take a much-deserved break; award-winning executive chef Jonathan Perno, *far right*, cooks inventive food featuring ingredients from the organic garden. The side entrance to La Quinta. Head of landscaping and maintenance Jesus Dominguez in front of a 1936 frescoed mural of Saint Isidore, patron saint of farmers. The Spanish-style courtyard has a colorful tile fountain. Armin Rembe and his daughter-in-law Teresa tend the beehives.





ROOM FOR CREATIVITY

Clockwise from top left: The designers of the elegant new guest rooms took their cue from restored farm buildings on the property. La Quinta is filled with exquisite original details from the 1930s; architect John Gaw Meem used local craftspeople to bring many of his plans to life, including tin chandeliers and sconces throughout the building. Woodcut printer Gustave Baumann carved woodwork, like this pine door, with floral and Native American motifs that have an art-deco flourish. Colorful Spanish tiles frame the sink in the women's changing room. *Opposite:* An original adobe kiva fireplace—one of many at Los Poblanos—warms the dining room.





**MORE
TO EXPLORE**
Some favorite
spots to visit around
Los Poblanos.

**Casa San Ysidro
in Corrales**

This intimate museum in an adobe house has an extensive collection of Spanish Colonial furniture and handwoven rugs. albuquerquemuseum.com.

Nob Hill neighborhood
Cafés, bars, and shops abound in this area near the old Route 66. rt66central.com.

Albuquerque BioPark
The zoo, botanical garden, beach, and aquarium revealing the underwater life of the Rio Grande will delight kids and adults. bioparksociety.org.

Zimmerman Library
John Gaw Meem designed this masterpiece at the University of New Mexico. elibrary.unm.edu.

Sky City Cultural Center
A great day trip 60 miles from Albuquerque, this is the visitors' hub for the historic Acoma Pueblo. acomaskycity.org.



A BUDDING BUSINESS

When Matt Rembe told his parents that he wanted to open the Farm Shop and develop a line of products, they thought he was crazy—but now it's an important part of the business and the surrounding community, with regular events to bring people together. *Clockwise from top left:* Head farmer Kyle Johnson is in charge of distilling the lavender essential oil that goes into 20-plus products. Farm Shop manager Stephen Humphry opens up in the morning. This rose soap is one of five types inspired by the New Mexican landscape. Furniture and dried lavender, also for sale, are set up alongside the shop (for more information and to visit the online store, go to lospoblanos.com). *Opposite:* The rustic shop sells Los Poblancos products and treats from the kitchen, as well as other local finds.