For adapting expats, new dimensions in living

By Shelley Emling

LONDON

hen Jean Franczyk moved from Chicago to London with her British husband last spring, the couple left storage unit because they knew space make adjustments. would be scarce in their new semifurnished flat.

"We didn't bring much beyond pictures and clothing," she said.

The couple knew already that lack of storage space would present them with a challenge. What they did not reckon with was how the overall lack of living space would transform their everyday lives. For example, it has turned laundry day into an obstacle course.
"We have a washer but no dryer, so

clothes horses are part of our lives now in ways they weren't in Chicago," she said. "They're easy to use except when it comes to drying the sheets. It takes all day for the sheets to dry so there's a delicate bit of navigating that occurs on the day the bedding gets laundered."

Keeping it simple International Herald Tribune

R elocation experts offer the following tips for making a small living space seem larger:

- Sell or store very large pieces. American-style king-sized beds and oversized appliances may not even fit through the doors and hallways of your new home.
- Keep everything light as dark colors can make one feel fenced in. ■ Mirrors create the illusion of having more space.
- Invest in closet organizing systems, which can make scarce storage space seem larger.
- Make better use of kitchen cabinets by installing hooks and rails for utensils on the backs of cabinet
- Install wall-mounted racks in hallways for mail and other items. ■ Keep floors bare in very small rooms to make them seem larger. Shelley Emling

Stories like these are commonplace among expatriates relocating to London, Paris and other old-world cities, where space is at a premium.

But expatriates moving from small houses into the expansive compounds found in Eastern Europe, Latin America almost all their belongings behind in a and developing countries also have to

> "Expatriates often have to learn to live with a different amount of space than they were accustomed to," said Robert Bailey, director of The Buying Solution, a private-client service of the real estate agents Knight Frank in London. "It is just part of the experience of being an expatriate."

And, as with most anything related to that experience, what you find is often relative to what you expect.

"People from New York and Hong Kong are often surprised that there's more circulation space in homes in London than they expect," Bailey said. "Those from Eastern Europe or other parts of America, though, may find it ifficult to adapt here.'

Annette Buk-Swienty is a Danish mother of two who recently returned to rural Denmark after living on Long Island, New York, for several years.

"Danes in general are really into their walk-in closets, and new houses will usually have such amenities," she said. "American homes tend to be larger overall than Danish homes and so, too, are their closets and things like refri-

"When we moved, we went from having a few closets to having no closets," she said. "But what we lost in terms of closet space by moving back to Denmark, we have gained in space outdoors, and so we are left with a feeling of having moved from small to large.

Jean Oddy, who runs a business in London that specializes in finding accommodation for expatriates, said that the settling-in process for any expat can take up to a year.

"For many the furniture they had bring a few favored pieces with them, small." together with photos and pictures, and leave the rest in storage," she said.

"Eventually what happens is that size generally takes second place to quality, especially nice kitchens and bathrooms, and quantity," Oddy said. "For example, it is important that each kid



back at home is too big, and so they has his or her own space even if it's to read my paper and eat," she said.

Mariam Sultani, who was born in Afghanistan and has since lived in many countries around the world, said space meant something different to her than just having more room to store her

"I need a nice-sized kitchen in which like a prison."

'Then, with my bedroom, I like a balcony so I can sit out on sunny days or on a bit of ingenuity — and money. Sunday mornings. I like a nice living room for relaxing at night to catch up with the news.

I need these different spaces," she said, "because otherwise it would feel

When Courtney Walsh, a radio reporter, first moved to Rome as a recent so that they could see how large spaces college graduate some years ago, space was not an issue. But she began to feel claustrophobic when she and her architect husband decided to start a family.

"I had been raised in a spacious home in northwest Washington and felt completely disheartened when I looked out of the window of our apartment and saw only a forest of antennas," she said.

Walsh said her husband was able to create more space by transforming his bachelor pad with a bit of architectural wizardry. "He put up a wall in the entrance to make a room for the babysitter; transformed a bathroom into a baby room/office space; built a laundry room and a small storage area on the terrace; and lowered the ceilings of the bathrooms to create two small storage areas," she said.

But the smartest move they made? 'We bought a small abandoned farmhouse in Tuscany a decade ago on the cheap," Walsh said. "The house is small but the view of vineyards and rolling hills dotted with cypresses and olive trees is breathtaking and restful for the

"If I couldn't afford the house of my dreams in Rome, we'd create it else-

In London, because of the lack of space to build extensions, standard loft conversions — where attic rooms are turned into spare rooms - have typically been the most popular form of home improvement, accounting for almost 40 percent of all projects undertaken, according to a study from the Datamonitor research firm in London.

Ed Mead, a director at Douglas & Gordon, a real estate agency in London, said an old trick is to buy or rent a property with an extra bedroom and use the extra room as a dressing or storage room.

While most expat adjustments involve squeezing into smaller space, living larger can also present challenges.

Cecilia Neal, an interior decorator at Meltons in London, said that larger homes required different decorating, with large-scale furniture and artwork and "splashy rugs." Many people, she added, are not used to the style.

"When people need to adjust living space up when moving to an expat-style the perfect amount of space can require a bit of ingenuity — and money. compound, even more handholding is needed," she said, adding that it often helped to escort clients to art galleries, could be set up and large artwork displayed. "They have to make sure they like the effect," she said.

International Herald Tribune

GLOBESHOPPER

A vinegar more precious than wine

By Maisie S. Wilhelm

MODENA, Italy ¬ very foodie worth his only vinegar worth serving to dinner guests is the traditional aceto balsamico, or balsamic vinegar, from Modena. The last Sunday in September is the perfect time to visit this central Italian town to stock up on "black gold."

"Acetaie Aperte" is an annual festival during which Modena's vinegar producers — most of them family operations that age the product in household attics — offer tastings and tours to the cuisine-curious. Local restaurants offer vinegar menus featuring the ways Modena's most famous edible export can be savored: brushed onto grilled asparagus, drizzled on fresh squash tortelloni, sprinkled on crumbly shavings of parmigiano, or on wild strawberries.

Take a tour of an acetaia, or vinegar loft, and buy the real thing at a fraction

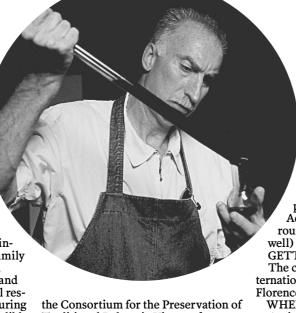
of the cost elsewhere. With a retail price of around \$200 for 100 milliliters, or 3.4 ounces, this is not your ordinary vinegar. Thick as maple syrup, and rusty black, its sharp aroma fills the air, and its intense flavor stuns even the most serious gastronomes.

It may seem pricey for a bottle small enough to fit in the palm of your hand, but don't forget that someone like Giorgio Barbieri has had it

sitting in his attic for up to 25 years, not turning any profit. Barbieri, a former

Italian national volleyball player, learned vinegar-making from his grandmother. Towering and personable, Barbieri explains how traditional balsamic vinegar from Modena (pronounced MO-deh-nah) came to be so prized: "Only 9,500 liters are produced for sale each year, by 55 producers, who must all produce in the area," he said. Modena's suffocating summers and freezing winters quicken and slow the fermentation.

To be designated "traditional," balsamic vinegar from Modena must be aged 12 years; to merit the gold label, 25 years. It must meet the standards set by



Traditional Balsamic Vinegar from Modena, which regulates the process according to European Union law. As of April 2000, the coveted DOP label, which stands for Denomination of Protected Origin, is used to distinguish the authentic delicacy from imitations.

Barbieri's methods are as old as his tools: oversized glass droppers, called "thieves" in the trade, and decanters sit amidst a series of wooden barrels, diminishing in size. Lining the perimeter of his attic, some of the discolored barrels are over 100 years old, and leak tiny beads of must, or pressed grape juice, at the seams. The vinegar smell is not overpowering, but a hint of sugar awakens your nose.

Trebbiano grape must is the only ingredient; no coloring agents, no caramel. The consortium's strict regulations leave the vinegar-maker little room for creativity. Barbieri determines which barrel chestnut, mulberry, oak — to use for the aging. Juniper in-

fuses a prickly flavor, while a cherry-aged vinegar is more refined. Before bottling, a pan-

el of five judges, who study for 10 years and whose decision is incontestable, determines whether the vinegar is good or needs more aging. "That has never happened to me," Barbieri said, smiling.
The real thing is iden-

At top, Giorgio

Barbieri using a

balsamic vinegar.

Above, the bottle

Giorgio Giugiaro.

(with its box) by

glass thief to

examine his

tified by its mandatory DOP label and by its only legal container: a squarefooted bottle designed by Giorgio Giugiaro, whose other projects include cars for Máserati and Lamborghini. International Herald Tribune

For more information:

VINEGAR TOURS: See www.acetaiaditalia.it to reserve tours at various acetaie or for meals at restaurants. Most acetaie provide tours year round. Acetaia di Giorgio is open yearround. Information (in English as well) at www.acetaiadigiorgio.it. GETTING THERE:

The closest airport is Marconi International in Bologna, but Milan and Florence aren't far by train. WHERE TO STAY:

Agriturismo, stays at farmhouse inns with home cooking, is gaining in popularity. At Villa Gaidello, 10 kilometers, or 6 miles, outside Modena, the restaurant boasts handmade pasta and walnut liqueur. (Via Gaidello, 18, Castelfranco Émilia. +39 059/926806.)

Hotel Real Fini is the only five-star hotel in town and has a new restaurant. (www.hotelrealfini.it, +39 800/306999.) WHERE TO EAT:

Menus featuring aceto balsamico are available at Osteria di Rubbiara (Località Rubbiara — Via Risaia, 2, Nonantola, +39 059/549019) and at Europa 92, an elegant restaurant owned by the tenor Luciano Pavarotti (Stradello Nava 8, +39 059/460067).

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■ German supernova

Writers like Günter Grass called the years after the Holocaust Nullpunkt, or "point zero," and pondered, existentially, "How could Germans write?" In the end, the novels of Grass, W.G. Sebald and Bernhard Schlink richly mined hatred, evil, guilt — and redemption.

For young German writers, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990 is the starting point. There are many shooting stars, but one soars, and his name is Ingo Schulze.

Schulze's first novel, "Simple Stories," is essential reading for the expat moving to Germany. This is your evocative introduction to the everyday tumult of a unified Germany: the gutwrenching upheaval, the giddy reinventions, the sad disruptions, wrong turns and complete mystification of people who didn't know what was coming. Suddenly, Germany became a work-in-progress and it still is today.

"Simple Stories" opens with a good communist headmaster who has a chance meeting with the teacher he fired for bad politics and who was forced into rehabilitation. In another chapter we find a young art historian cum salesman — an iconic image for Schulze, who grew up in the former East Germany. In the end, all the disparate characters are connected, and their stories involve dark compromises.

In a very eccentric way, though, Schulze is not without humor, or hope, despite his obsession with Raymond Carver. Schulze can sustain brutality only so long before he sneaks in poetry and light — despite himself.

- Nora FitzGerald (IHT)

Dutch treat

Did the used car you purchased after arriving in Amsterdam get stolen by the former owner's heroin-addict ex-wife? Have the bemused Dutch po-

REQUIRED READING

lice shrugged and said it will never be Spain while awaiting a prison sentence for another caper?

Boucke. While it won't help retrieve your car, the book — subtitled "An observation of the Netherlands: Its culture and its inhabitants" - is a source of amusing, sometimes hilarious, consolation.

Whether with a description of the rituals surrounding a numbingly boring birthday party ("you will have ample shopping list") or an explanation of comments.

rude and critical remarks ("the Dutch found? Is the ex-wife vacationing in think these are the hallmark of honesty and virtue"), the book wittily reassures frustrated expats that these are not iso-Not to worry. Read "The UnDutchables," by Colin White and Laurie personally," the book advises. "You will lated events. "Do not take the onslaught soon discover that the Dutch reprimand is not for foreigners only.'

First published in 1989, the book has gone through four English-language editions and is available in Dutch, proving the Dutch can laugh at themselves. The authors also sponsor a Web site, www.theundutchables.com, where exopportunity to compile your next day's pats and natives trade complaints and — Sharon Reier (IHT)

