



After 22 years as a chemist for Amoco, Antonio Riesco retired and began to construct his dream. Inspired by the cafes of his homeland Spain, Riesco began designing and constructing La Tasca, a 3,000-square-foot Spanish cafe in downtown Arlington Heights, Ill.

He chose a 1928 brick Tudor building with three adjacent retail spaces offering large floor-to-ceiling windows, then combined the spaces in a \$500,000 interior construction project. Tile highlights the interior, from the quarry tile floor to the custom ceramic tile and decorative insets used on the walls.

The centerpiece to La Tasca is a 32-foot ceramic tile mural of Retiro Park in Madrid. More than 1,000 hand-painted 6-inch by 6-inch tiles blanket the wall with colorful images of Spain's lush foliage. In the front bar area, another 700 hand-painted tiles decorate the room in a pattern motif. A third tile mural, planned for installation later, has 250 hand-painted tiles. The tile floor is a brown slate quarry, highlighted with decorative accents.

Riesco, who retired four years ago, had moved from Spain to the United States in 1967,

# Ceramic Murals Highlight Interior of Spanish Cafe



**It took less than one-half day to install the cement board tile substrate.**

when he was 27 years old. He fondly remembers his native land's cafes: "This restaurant is my dream. To create the atmosphere and food from the Spain I know and love, I had to open my own restaurant. I called it LaTasca because it is a generic Spanish name for neighborhood cafe."

Given the large expanses of tile used throughout the restaurant, Riesco and his construction team carefully considered the entire tile application process. A key element in that process was the selection of the tile substrate. After reviewing several alternatives, Riesco chose DUROCK Multi-Purpose Interior/Exterior Cement Board as the

substrate for all the tile walls. "We went with top-of-the-line materials, so it was essential that we chose the best substrate available to back that investment," Riesco said.



A 1928 brick Tudor building was combined with three adjacent retail spaces offering large floor-to-ceiling windows for a \$500,000 interior construction project. Tile highlights the interior, from the quarry tile floor to the custom ceramic tile and decorative insets used on the walls.

In addition to high performance, the DUROCK panels offered cost benefits as well. "The DUROCK installed very easily," said Alfredo Salazar of Salazar Drywall and Taping. "It took less than half a day to install the walls."

To accommodate the 2,000 ceramic tiles

**The centerpiece of La Tasca's dining room is a 32-foot ceramic tile mural of Retiro Park in Madrid.**

used on La Tasca's walls, Salazar opted for a larger-size substrate panel than the conventional 3-feet by 5-feet. Using 4-feet by 8-feet by 1/2-foot-thick

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DUROCK panels facilitated installation by reducing the number of fasteners required and minimizing joint treatments. DUROCK Wood Screws were

used to fasten the board to the studs and DUROCK Interior tape, a glass fiber tape, was used to reinforce the interior cement board joints.

More 4-feet by 8-feet panels were used as a substrate for tile used in the kitchen and in hallway wainscoting. DUROCK is smooth on one side for adhesive applications, textured on the other side for thin-set mortar applications.

The spectacular tile murals were produced by Floro Flosi of Flora Flosi Ceramics in Chicago, who started his company in 1981 when he left Italy Tile artisan Flosi chose Huntington Pacific Ceramic Tile, which has a softer, richer look than conventional tile.

The tile comes in 6-feet by 6-feet raw clay, which is then fired to a "bisque," a pliable, absorbent stage. The mural is sketched lightly into the bisque with a fine brush. Color is applied, followed by the glaze applied with large brushes. The bisque is then fired for nine hours at 1,600 degrees Fahrenheit.

Flosi and his work are featured in **Better Homes and Gardens'** fall 1996 special issue, *Remodeling Ideas*. To win the La Tasca commission, he competed against firms from the United States, Portugal and Mexico. To win the bid, he conducted extensive research at the local library on Portuguese and Spanish designs. 