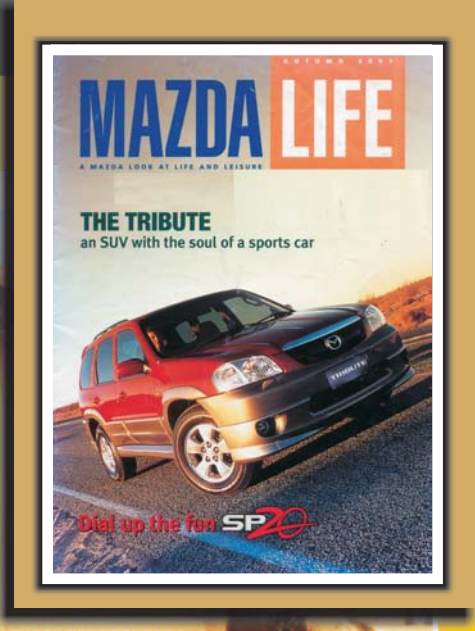
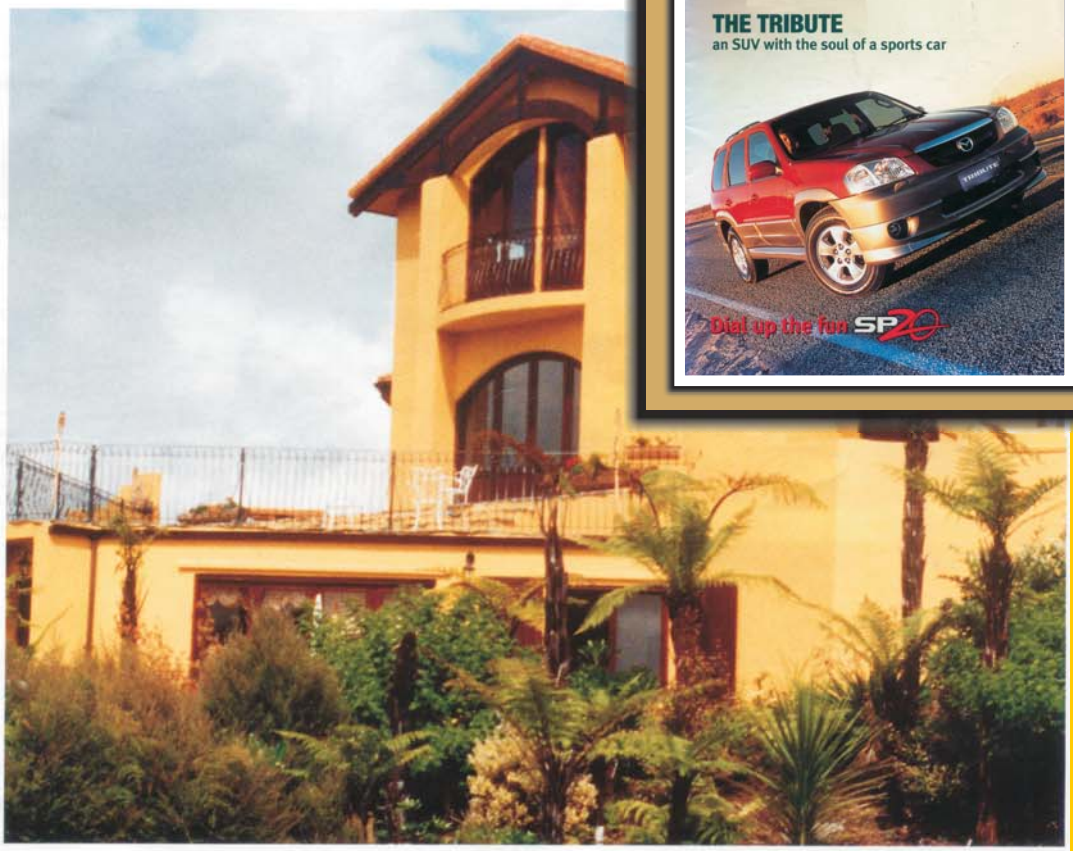


MAMMA!



...this hospitality is good!

Mercury Bay, Italian style.

by John McCaulay

Finding a touch of authentic Italian hospitality is the prize for staying at Villa Toscana, a relatively new addition to the hills above the Mercury Bay town of Whitianga.

Like its owners Giorgio and Margherita Allemano and their family, Villa Toscana is the real thing. Designed in Turin and built using 13 tonnes of terracotta tiles, along with tonnes of concrete and stone, the villa is an imposing symbol of Whitianga's rapid development as a town of atmosphere and style.

But more important than the style and substance of the villa is the love of life and the character of the hosts.

Giorgio and Margherita believe they have found paradise in the Coromandel and that's something they delight in sharing with locals and tourists alike.

As guests we were lucky enough to share a party of welcome for Giorgio's mother who had arrived fresh from Italy three days earlier, an arrival that started on the wrong foot after a MAF inspection that encountered tomato and vegetable seeds brought in as part of Giorgio's quest to find a variety that will emulate the tastes of home.

At the airport reunion he found his mother in the company of a MAF official and a policeman, and was greeted not with Italian kisses but warnings of possible jail and heavy fines.

Fortunately Giorgio, a marine biologist by training, was well aware of the rules and