

# COUNTRY LIVING



D I G E S T

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## 1. MAINTENANCE ON YOUR LOG HOME

Like every other house exposed to the elements, Log Homes are neither maintenance free, nor are they absolute killers to take care of. I don't think it would be an exaggeration to state that the first couple of years demand significantly more work than your standard-issue house - unless, of course, you can afford to pay someone to do the work for you! Log preparation and the base



coat of stain are critical to the long-term success of your wall protection. But once the initial work is done, the maintenance becomes routine, and I would venture to guess log homes are a little easier to care for than other wood houses. After all, you don't have to strip the stain off between coats.

**LOG PREPARATION:** Most construction sites become a sea of mud in a short period of time. The soil has been disturbed and there's no grass to hold the dirt together (or absorb the rain). You'll discover that the first few log courses are absolutely pristine, but the higher the walls become, the more the logs get dropped, smudged, or even used as stepping stones to dryer places (like the port-a-potty). Once the house is up, the logs will have to be washed before applying a stain... both inside and out.

Doing the interior cleaning in the right order didn't occur to us - especially since the logs were erected in the winter. In our case, the timing was all wrong; you really want to wash the interior walls before the finished floor is laid, and before the basement insulation is installed under the floor decking. We didn't make it, and we had to follow our wall-washing with a shop-vac to get rid of all the water... what a mess!

It was recommended that we use a mixture of one part bleach and four parts trisodium phosphate. We scrubbed it on with a brush and rinsed it off. Some people recommend a power washer for the outside walls, but you must use great care, and apply with a fan-tip to avoid damaging the logs. The experts recommend corn cob-blasting, but this is an expense most of us can't afford. If you do use a power-washer, it's a good idea to follow up with a shop-vac and vacuum out the water that will pool inside the checks, so that the logs don't get saturated from water sitting in the cracks. Even so, it will take one or more days to dry completely, depending on the weather.

Once the logs are dry, it is recommended that you apply a borate treatment before applying the stain. This borate is not only an insecticide, it also protects against rot. Usually this comes as a powder, and is mixed with water and sprayed on with an

ordinary garden sprayer. Make sure it doesn't rain between applying the borate and the stain, or the borate will probably wash out.

**STAINING:** All stains are not created equal. There is a big performance difference between the best and the worst, so make sure you don't try to save money by cutting corners on the stain - you'll pay for it later. A deck sealer just won't work for logs; you should use a product specially designed for log homes, and you won't find it at your local hardware store. For a good brand, budget around \$250 per 5-gal pail. Our 2400 sq. foot house took about 5 pails initially. Most stains need to be applied in two or three coats, so make sure your painter knows this when going for a quote. You will want to stain the exterior as soon as possible after the house is erected; it's amazing how quickly the logs will turn gray under normal exposure.

Afterwards, a "maintenance coat" of stain needs to be applied every 2-5 years, depending on the exposure. You usually don't have to restain the whole house at one time. You'll see the color lighten up as the stain wears thin - for lack of a better word. If you're not sure whether a new coat is required, run a hose on the wall and see if the water beads up. If it does not, you're probably ready for another coat. And no, you don't have to strip off the old stain first, unless it has been neglected and shows sign of flaking and chipping. If your walls have gone 10 years without a second coat, you may have to corn-blast and start over. In this case, consult a specialist.

**RAILING SYSTEM:** The weak link of every log home is the railing system - especially on an exposed deck. The junctures between the rails and spindles need to be caulked thoroughly, and you'll see many more checks in the little railings giving the opportunity to let rain in. The railing system needs to be restained every year. Make sure you don't let any water drip on the railings; gutters are a must.

**CAULKING:** It is a personal preference whether or not you caulk the exterior of your log home, but common sense would tell us that it's good policy to lock out the elements. There are caulks specifically designed for log homes that remain supple and give with normal expansion & contraction. The first couple of years, it is advised to caulk any checks that appear on the upper curve of the log surface, where rain might collect. These caulks will take a stain, so they tend to blend in. After the house has reached equilibrium with its environment, the checking will cease.

**INSECTS:** You can read more about insects in my article LOG HOMES vs. INSECTS: What to look for. For the most part, there is visual evidence of any insect problem. Make it a policy to inspect your home in the spring and in the fall, and be sure to keep your walls free of foliage, dead leaves, etc. Bushes should be planted a minimum of 2 feet away from the walls. Don't stack firewood against the wall, or anything else that could provide a home for unwelcome critters, four-legged or six-legged ones.

BOTTOM LINE: Maintenance on your log home should be routine, and the best defense is keeping a careful eye on abnormalities. Discoloration of a corner probably means water is dripping on it. A little pile of sawdust probably means a boring insect. Holes in the log, regardless of how tiny, are a red flag. These are the kinds of things you'd look for with any house. And after you've had your inspection, relax on the deck and enjoy your home... you deserve it.

## 2. GO GREEN WITH OFF GRID LIVING

Off grid living is not for everyone, but for those that are up to the challenge, it can be one of the best lifestyle changes possible today. Off grid living has come to be a blanket term for many types and forms of living off the grid. It can be as basic as no longer fully using power from your electric provider's grid, or as complex as having no reliance on any public utilities. The latter would be "true"



off the grid living, which is completely autonomous and having no dependence on the local water supply, sewer, natural gas, electric power grid, or any other similar utilities. This does not mean that partial off grid living is not still just as important.

Another common misconception about living off the grid would be the type of people and lifestyles associated with it. One does not need to live out in the woods, or never wash their hair, just to not be dependent on public utilities. Nor does it mean you need to wear the same clothes everyday and go hunt for your food. Of course, some people do this, but for most of us, off the grid living will represent a much different picture.

To be "off" the grid, does not necessarily mean to not be connected to an electric provider's power grid. You could still be "on" the grid, but not utilize this power to its maximum, or simply not at all. If you will not be using the electric company's power, then you need to get the power from somewhere. This is where alternative energy and renewable energy sources come into the mix.

Some of the most common methods of living off the grid include taking advantage of solar energy and wind energy. This can be implemented in a number of ways, depending on your location, how much you are able to invest, the size of the home you are powering, and the level of power consumption. The best way to harness solar energy and wind energy is through solar panels and wind turbines, respectively. Using these devices, renewable energy can be used to drive electricity in your home. Of course depending on the scale of your renewable energy system, it can power anything from one appliance, such as a refrigerator or washing machine, to the entire home.

With rising energy prices and a continuing depletion of natural resources, many have tried to find ways to reduce the cost of off grid living. Some ways include reducing the cost of parts, building the energy generating systems yourself (including DIY solar panel and wind turbines projects), and re-using existing materials. No matter how much you are able to "remove yourself from the grid," it is important to research the different ways you can begin your off grid living. You will want to be sure that your investment will eventually pay itself off. This means that your investment in a home renewable energy system will save you more money than you spent on the initial cost. The easiest way to verify you will receive a return on your investment is to lower the initial costs as

low as possible. There are many resources out there, both for free and for purchase. Be sure to continue your research and you can make off grid living a reality for your home.



### 3. INTRODUCTION TO WOODWORKING

Since the dawn of civilization, humankind has carved objects from fallen trees; from the simplest and most utilitarian items to elaborate works of art. The earliest forms of the transportation were created from wooden elements such as the boat, the wheel, and the carriage were all conceived and created from wood. And throughout history, hundreds of other important items that we still use today were built from wood. Take today's jet planes, for example, the Wright Brothers successful wooden airplane made aviation history, along with other wooden prototypes and designs of the period, and set the stage for construction of our modern aircraft. Men, who sailed here in boats made of wood, as it was known, discovered the "New World". The voyage of Christopher Columbus made a successful landing in Massachusetts, over 500 years ago - the majestic Mayflower, constructed from wooden timbers, made the discovery possible. And who could forget about those famous Viking longboats? At least one of these mighty ships crossed the North Atlantic about a thousand years ago, and made a successful landing at L'anse Meadows, in Newfoundland, Canada. These longboats, called "Drakkars", featured impressive and innovative designs, and utilized a unique, oaken 'plank-lap' design. It's been estimated that the planks used to build some of these Viking longboats, came from oak trees over eighty-feet tall! It would be hard to argue that lumber was history's most important building material right up until the widespread use of steel and Portland cement, in the mid 19th Century.



But wood still holds an enormous market today, with the use of wood for framing lumber in homes, expensive cabinetry, exotic woodcarvings, and the bustling furniture industry. Of course, there's the use of wood in crafts, hobbies, and other projects, collectively referred to as woodworking. Fine Woodworking is a long-cherished tradition, enjoyed by young and old. As a hobby, woodcraft takes on many forms from carving artful figurines, to building patio furniture. It used to be that woodworking "secrets" and tricks of the fine woodworking trade were handed down through the generations, from master craftsmen to apprentices. To some degree, many of these secrets are still passed along, from master to beginner.

Fine woodworking is an activity that requires patience, precision, and attention to detail. That's n something you can acquire from reading alone. Though woodworking can be quite pleasurable, it's also serious business. For many, working with wood is more than just a pastime, it's a way of life. Serious craftsmen and women are deeply involved with furthering their knowledge about fine woodworking, by studying the methods and techniques of those who came before them. The serious woodworker tends to aspire to becoming a "master" craftsman, focusing on creating useful and valuable items, like furniture and cabinetry, while the hobbyist tends to spend a few



days, here and there, doing "craft"-type work at a leisurely pace like carving whimsical figurines or making a simple book case or spice rack. If you do live in an older house, you can learn a lot about woodworking simply through careful observation of the existing woodwork throughout your home.

Study the woodwork in places like the stairs, the kitchen, and even in the basement, and you'll likely get a glimpse into the past. Some of the fine woodworking methods practiced by early craftsmen and carpenters are still used today. If you have young children in your family, or grandchildren, and you would like to build them a swing-set for the backyard or how about building a nice, sturdy picnic table, for your summertime family cookouts and gatherings? Every household has books, some have lots of books but there never seems to be enough available shelf space. Why not build your own bookcases? A handsome, custom-made bookcase always looks better than a store-bought unit. There are a countless number of woodworking projects you can do around the house, and with your newly acquired knowledge, you'll gain the confidence needed to tackle those projects, and put your skills to the test.

Woodworking can be a most enjoyable and fulfilling activity. There's nothing like the satisfaction of seeing your finished project put to use. Like anything in life, improving one's skill comes through plenty of practice and woodworking is no different. Learn all you can about fine woodworking. Read journals, watch those who do it for a living, and take advice from the professionals. Be patient, and learn to become detail-oriented. Follow the old rule of "measure twice, cut once." Those four words of wisdom are timeless and true, and you will remember them every time you goof on a measurement. In time, you'll be building all those items that you never dreamed you could. Above all, be safe, and have fun. That's what it's all about.

## 4. HOMESTEADING TODAY

**H**ave you noticed our world is changing? President Obama promised change, but is it the kind of change you were expecting? If the world continues to decline economically what are we going to face?

If you pay attention to the news from around the world one cannot help but notice that there seems to be more and more uprising where the police show up in riot gear and totally surround the crowds and make thousands of arrests.

The truth is that the military and police are now working together to empower themselves to fight against their own people in order to maintain control of the people. How can they go against their own people? Right now Lithuanian and Polish police are assisting in the arrests; they have no problem arresting Americans or Canadians because they are not one of us!

That is causing some people to rethink living in the city and consider homesteading.

Just how do you homestead today in a modernistic world? How could I possibly earn enough money to live way out in the country? It may seem overwhelming but it is not if you carefully consider your steps and make a solid plan.

Due to the economic upheaval many people are losing their homes and lands to the banks. This may in fact provide you an opportunity to purchase some land at down right cheap prices.

If you have any money set aside I am personally recommending that you make such a purchase. Any plot of land five acres or more will be enough for you to provide the basic needs of food, water and shelter.

A plot of land that is within twenty miles of the closest town or city is perfect. That is the distance easily covered by a horse and buggy, bicycle, or electric vehicle in a reasonable amount of time; in the event of a fuel shortage or government controlled fuel distribution.

The idea of homesteading is not new but for many people it would truly be a culture shock because it seems like we are moving backwards and are perhaps a bit eccentric. If you find a few families sharing your view point, you can collectively pool your money together and share the land and its resources. Now you are not eccentric because you have a support team!

A horse requires five acres of hay for the winter, and can graze on the same grass field while it is green. They require very little care and are able to pull a plow, a hay mower, a hay wagon, and your personal buggy. It is a green form of transportation and can go about twelve miles in one hour in hill country. If you add a battery and lights to your buggy you have a one horsepower electric car! Pun intended.

If you use a bicycle, you can do about ten miles in an hour. And if you have an electric car you can also do that in about one hour or less. A pedal/electric bike would assist on hills, and require little to recharge it.

Now we move on to solar power and wind for your home. This is a sizable investment at first, but it is a long term solution for dependable power especially in a government control situation.

My best use of power is for a solar/wind powered fridge/freezer. If I avoid television and computers, which are not needs, I never have to run a generator, therefore I don't need to purchase fuel.

If you use a canner to prepare fruits and vegetables like our pioneers, you don't need a freezer! Now you can have your TV if you're really cannot live without it. You see, it is all about determining what is a need or a want, and planning your lifestyle accordingly.

## 5. DIY SOLAR PANELS FOR YOUR HOME

Are you interested in a DIY project that will save you some big cash and help improve our environment at the same time? Say 'hello' to DIY solar power & green energy solutions, simple step-by-step guides that can teach you how to build DIY solar panels for your own home.



Just a few years ago, on August 6th, 2003, a brand new photovoltaic (solar) cell was revealed. This new cell was extremely efficient and capable of converting 36% of the sun's rays into pure electricity. Prior to this new technology, solar cells could only convert about 10-15% of the sun's rays into electricity. With the new photovoltaic technology, solar power ideals have really taken off and become more available.

Only about 8% of the energy produced in the United States comes from renewable energy sources. About 6.5% of that energy comes from hydro-electric dams and the other 1.5% comes from wind turbines and solar power panels. An astonishing 51% of our energy is still produced by burning dirty coal, and for this reason our environment is deteriorating faster than ever before. If we want our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren to enjoy this beautiful planet, we need to make some changes.

Many people are aware of the state of our environment and more people are truly interested in renewable energy sources for their home than ever before. However, professional solar panel projects can cost a fortune. In fact a solar panel system can easily mount up to \$10,000 if you're aiming to pull the plug from your power company. The problem is obvious; most families can't afford to install such a system.

Enter the world of DIY solar power! DIY solar power can cost a fraction of what a professional system would cost you. On top of that, once it's built and installed, it will continue to generate electricity for a lifetime. The one problem many people have in regards to DIY solar power is, well, how the heck to build such an advanced piece of technology?

Over the past year, many companies have been offering guides to DIY solar power and other green energy projects. Most of these guides also include DIY wind turbines for those that live in the windy parts of the world. I've done a fair amount of research on these guides and read some reviews. Most of the parts can be found at your local hardware store. However, if you live out in the country, you may find it a bit more difficult to find the solar cells. If that's that case you can just buy them online after doing a simple search.



## 6. TWO TINY HOUSE INVADING INSECTS

No one wants an intruder in their home, even when the intruder is just a tiny insect or animal. Tiny insects and pests may seem harmless, but unwanted pests can cause health issues and expensive structural damage. Once they've infested your home they can become a real problem to eradicate. That's why it's so important to practice prevention and control when it comes to obnoxious pests.



Some pests are a bigger problem than others. One home invader that is making headlines these days is the bed bug. A recent rise of these bug infestations has been the cause of many problems for home and business owners all over the country. A common misconception with bed bugs is that they are the result of unsanitary conditions. But bed bugs are simply looking for something to feed on. And since their favorite food source is human blood, they will live anywhere there is an abundant source of food regardless of poverty or wealth. Bed bugs can cause health issues such as itchy skin rashes and allergic reactions. They also can spread easily from one place to another. If you suspect a bed bug infestation, call a pest control expert right away. Another common tiny pest that causes big problems is the termite. Termites feed on plant fiber, like the wood supports in your home. Because termites can cause serious and expensive structural damage, it's important to have them eradicated by a pest control expert. It's wise to hire an exterminator to take preventative measures against these tiny pests.

## 7. LIVING IN A TINY HOME

Sometimes when you look at moving into a new home or space you try to get one that has the right amount of space for you. Getting a three or four bedroom home for one person is a little much and can make a person feel uncomfortable. However, if you are a family of four and live in a two or three bedroom home, you may feel cramped and as though you can't invite people over to entertain. Well, what if you lived in a home that was only about 80 square feet or 120 square feet?



There are many people who are finding that these tiny homes allow them to be efficient and eco friendly while giving them enough space to make them feel nice and cozy. Some of these homes don't have internal plumbing and rely on rain water that is stored up over time as their main water supply. They may even recycle the used water that they have. For example, some of them will use the water from last night's shower to water their plants. So, not only would you be recycling water and being eco friendly to the environment, but you probably wouldn't have a water bill letting you keep some extra bucks in your pocket.

As far as electricity goes, some people rely on nature to take care of that for them as well. These tiny houses are designed to use very little electricity. Since they are so small, it wouldn't take much to heat or cool the space, and for some people, they find that just their body heat warms the place up and the cool of the night can keep it at a comfortable temperature. Of course you have some people who don't want to rely on solar, wind, or water to generate their electricity, so they pay their electric bill every month, granted it's probably a whopping \$10 to \$20 a month.

Some people with these tiny homes like the fact that they can be mobile at times, and because of their size, there is no disruption of land. For those who have their homes mobile, they like that they can move to just about anywhere, but they also enjoy the fact that no destruction comes to the land around them. The displacement of land varies greatly depending on how big a home is, where it is, and if it is part of a neighborhood or not. For the tiny homes that are permanent, many of the people who live in them find ways to give back to the environment, like recycling water, growing their own garden, or even growing a garden on top of their home.

When it comes to insuring these homes, it can be tricky. Some of the homes are so tiny that they do not meet the standards and regulations to be considered a home. That can make it very difficult to get your home insured. However, if you can get insurance, it will be well worth your while. In larger homes, if there is an accident like a fire or a storm destroys the house, there are hopes that not everything was destroyed. If you have a

tiny home and there is a fire or a storm, you better hope you have insurance; chances are not much would be left afterwards.

## 8. COUNTRY LIVING ROOM IDEAS FOR A FIREPLACE MANTLE

Country living room ideas should really focus around the mantle and the fireplace. The other pieces should be more neutral with eyelet lace curtains or a tapestry rug. This is a selling feature in your home and it's also a much more traditional focal point than the TV. This can be a warm gathering area whether or not the fireplace is actually in use.



The mantle should really have a rustic edge to it. If you have traditional pieces then try painting it a country kind of color. This would include a red or blue. Stay away from a stark white or black because this is too traditional and modern. You can even just sand down your paint job to really give it that rustic kind of effect. The wood of your mantle is also very important. In this case it should resemble an oak or a weathered kind of wood. Stay away from a more elegant cherry stain. It's also really important to consider what you hang over your mantle. This could be a humorous sign. You could also have a special family photo taken for the occasion. This could be a picture of everyone in cowboy hats. For more of an artistic flair you could just focus in on a line of cowboy boots. This is a way to get a totally unique family portrait that is also a conversation piece.

This should also really be the focus of your Christmas decorations. Of course hanging stockings from the mantle is traditional. You could also have a lot of fun just by finding a quilted stocking or even sewing some that are either in red, white, and green colors or just play around with a lot of Christmas motifs like trees or berries.

Another thing that's very important to consider for a country living room is the color of the wall behind the mantle. If you have a smaller fireplace that seems a little bit too modern then just try going with more of a country paint color such as a rustic brown or a natural looking green. Then you can hang a forest print over the fireplace for more of a natural feeling. This can also work well in small spaces because it's almost going to mimic a window but you'll always have a perfect view.



## 9. TIPS FOR COOKING WITH REAL FIREWOOD

I love to cook over real fire! Whether on a gas grill, charcoal grill, smoker grill, and fire pit or even in my fireplace, cooking with fire is fun and creates unique and delicious aromas and flavors that enhance many foods greatly. But by far my very favorite way to cook is over a real hardwood firewood fire. While good charcoal and smoker cooking can certainly give you



some nice char-broiled wood flavors, there is nothing quite like a real wood fire. There is something very primitive and romantic about it, harking back to pre-modern times when food was all cooked over an open wood fire.

Most people do not take advantage of real wood to cook anymore because technology has made things easier for us. Between gas stoves and grills and easy to light charcoal, cooking with fire is quick, easy and pretty much hassle free nowadays. However, there is something to be said for a leisurely afternoon, building a real fire and then using that fire to perfectly cook your grilled meal. Sometimes I don't want "quick", "easy" or the bare minimum.

So for all those like-minded grillers out there, those who want to get a little more primitive and a lot more delicious, here are some tips for how to cook with real firewood on your grill, fire pit or even in your fireplace. It takes some time and it take some practice to get right, but I think you will love the results!

### **Choose Good Hardwoods**

At the heart of great wood cooking is good firewood which burns long, hot and gives off savory aromas. Don't skimp in this department! All of the smoky, grilled flavor that you get in your food comes from your wood so if you use bad wood, your results will be bad. So what is bad? First of all, avoid softwoods in general.

Softwoods burn easily and hot but don't burn as long and don't tend to develop long-lasting hot embers at their core. Softwoods, like pine for example, also tend to be fairly resinous and many give off piney or other sharp smells which, while not unpleasant, do not pair well with food. You can use softwoods to help get your fire started, but what you really want for the majority of your firewood is good, seasoned hardwoods.

Hardwoods are denser and will burn longer and hotter. They take longer to get started, but the extra work is worth it. There are dozens of hardwoods that make great fuel for cooking, some of which have very distinct and delicious aromas and flavors. Oak is very common, which gives off a rich, smokey aroma. I prefer fruit and nut woods as they tend to have a milder, almost sweet, aroma. Some excellent choices are almond wood, apple

wood, pear wood, and pecan wood, if you can find them. Most people know about mesquite and hickory for smoking, but they are also hardwoods which make excellent fuel. If you happen to live on a vineyard, old grape vine cuttings make great wood for quick fires!

### **Build Your Fire Ahead**

As I mentioned above, starting a hardwood fire can take some time to really get going. In addition, because you want to cook with embers as much as possible, you want to give your fire a chance to burn down as much as possible before you throw food on top. This can take quite a long time and depending on how much you are planning to cook and how big your fire pit or grill is, this can take literally several hours to build the fire, keep feeding it to build up a core of embers, and then let the large flames die down before starting to cook. Of note, while I generally prefer to do this type of wood fire cooking on an outdoor fire pit with a grill grate, most people don't realize that you can burn a wood fire in most heavy duty charcoal grills as long as it is big enough. I have used the large Weber 22-1/2" charcoal kettle grills to good effect as well as some Char-Broil charcoal grills.

### **Cook with Embers**

As mentioned above, when cooking with real firewood, cooking over the hot embers is ideal. Why? A new fire, which has just been started does not give off much heat. Additionally, there are large flames coming up from the wood. If you lay a grill grate across this young fire, you will not get much radiant heat and instead will have big open flames lapping up around your food. This spells disaster for grill cooking! Your food will not cook on the inside very fast and the outside will catch fire and get burned to a crisp in no time!

To avoid this and to get the most of your firewood, take your time and start early. Red glowing embers give off *tons* of heat and don't have big flames. If cooking in a fire pit or large grill, start your fire early and keep adding wood for a while to build up a deep core of hot, glowing red embers at the bottom. Then let the top wood burn down until you barely have any flames left, just a big, deep pile of red embers. These embers give off a lot of heat and because they don't have large flames, they are less likely to char your food to a crisp. Only then should you lay your grill grate across and add your food. If you are cooking a lot and the heat starts to die down, stirring the embers with a poker helps to get more oxygen to the wood and will increase the heat for a while. If you really need more fuel, you can add firewood to the side and only push it over, under the cooking area, when it has burned down and no longer has large flames.

### **Rotisserie Cooking**

One way to get a lot out of your wood fire cooking is to use a rotisserie. There are various rotisserie contraptions that can be purchased at grilling and camping supply stores. These are basically a large motorized or hand-turned spit that rotates over your fire pit. This is advantageous for several reasons. First of all, for large roasts, such as whole

poultry, pigs, and other large roasts, it gives you a very even, consistent cooking heat throughout the meat so that your food stays succulent and evenly done.

Also, for these larger roasts, laying them directly over hot embers can burn the surface long before the interior is even warm. Finally, the rotisserie can hold your food a considerable distance above your wood fire so that you can even cook over open flames without your food burning. If high enough, only the rising heat, not the actual flames, reaches your food, which is perfectly rotated in the aromatic smoke. Therefore, prep time is reduced as you don't have to burn your wood down to embers first, although some embers help to supply adequate heat. For grilled leg of lamb and whole chicken and game birds, rotisserie cooking over a fire pit is one of my favorites!

### **Fireplace Cooking**

In the winter it is often too cold outside to cook outdoors. However, many of us have a wonderful real wood cooking area right in our homes, although some of us don't realize it. Most fireplaces are used exclusively for heat and ambiance these days, but years ago it was the primary cooking area in many houses. I love hearth cooking and it is not as difficult as most people think. For most types of fireplace cooking, special equipment is needed. There are fireplace cranes available which hold a handled Dutch oven pot or kettle over your fire to cook stews, soups or coffee. Fireplace grills are available which is basically a grill grate that sits over your firewood grate in the fireplace and allows you to grill any number of foods.

Even fireplace rotisseries are available which sit just in front of the fireplace and slowly turn your roast meats. But if you don't want to invest in any extra equipment, there is always string-turned fireplace cooking. Traditionally a way to roast a leg of lamb in front of the fire, I have adapted string-turning to roast a number of different types of roasts, from whole poultry to tri-tip. All you need is a long piece of kitchen twine and a screw or hook installed in your mantle above your fireplace. The weight of the roast slowly spins it on the string so that you have a poor man's rotisserie without a lot of extra equipment!

### **An Alternative**

Finally, if all of the above seems like too much work and too much hassle there are easier alternatives to infuse wood smoke flavor into your food. Using smoking wood chips or chunks in either a barbecue or dedicated smoker grill is an option. Smoker cooking can really give you rich, aromatic smoke flavors in your foods. However, because you are using standard charcoal or gas as a fuel source, you avoid much of the hassle of cooking with real firewood.

I hope these tips help to get you started cooking with real firewood to bring your grill cooking to a new level of fun and flavor. Remember to always be safe when using fire of any type! Follow all basic fire safety rules so that only your food gets cooked!

## 10. COOKING GAMES FOR GIRLS

Cooking games for girls used to be cliché but now with the rise of cooking video games and handy mobile games for cooking that act as self guided cooking classes they are rising in popularity. When you say cooking games for girls and for boys its not just the plastic Fisher Price games that bring the world of make believe to life. Nintendo DS is a popular platform for cooking



video games for kids and also adults as it walks you through cooking different types of meals. This article will walk you through the different types of games for girls, boys and adults. The article will follow up with the benefits of using the different games in your child's play time as well as benefits of adults using the cooking video games. Its fun for the whole family.

The first niche of cooking games is the classic make believe games. Generally these games are stereotype as cooking games for girls but as the culture grows games involving cooking should be included in any genders toy collection. Cooking games made by Fisher Price or Smart Gear were top on the list years back when you searched online. Now you have to scroll a few pages to find quality cooking games for girls and boys made from high quality plastics meant to last a childhood or two. The benefits of these types games are the same as you get from sending your child to soccer or youth football. They allow for the creative part of the brain to develop and help with social skills. A few of the children using cooking games will turn out to be the next Chef Ramsey. So be sure that you include cooking games for girls and boys of the make believe variety in your home.

As of recent the top searches for just "cooking games" returns Cooking Mama, Cooking Dash, even Cooking Mama 2 and Cooking Mama 3. What are these titles you ask? Video Games of course. The days of playing outside or playing house and make believe are dwindling sadly taken over by the hand-held graphical games. Nintendo seems to have cornered the market on games about cooking and even pulls in the adult crown with "Personal Trainer: Cooking". This is not all bad although make believe toys mentioned above such as "Smart Gear Cooking Center" provide imagination through play the video game version can bring the reality of flour plus water and sugar equals dough without destroying your kitchen.

Better yet adults can learn how to cook in the comfort of their home while using their kids Nintendo DS. Personal Trainer: Cooking will have you delivering mouth watering food to your families table in no time. So although cooking games for girls and boys deliver hours of stimulating play for them; these video games can be just as entertaining



for adults. Girls cooking games usually come in pink, but recently you will see blue as a popular color for these toys noting the shift in gender role association.

If your child shows interest in these games encourage them to take cooking classes for children. Your local community center often will have cooking classes that you can take with your children. If not be sure to include them in baking activities you partake in. Even if you are not a particularly great cook your children will appreciate the time you give them. Be prepared and don't get mad there will be a mess made. Make the cleanup just as fun as the cooking. It is important to raise your children with an appreciation for cooking and baking especially as families lose the sit down family dinner and restaurants are more often the default over home cooking.

## 11. AWESOME TINY HOME USING SALVAGED MATERIALS

We don't like to agree with it, but we think that Madonna is right when she said that we are living in a material world. Based on observations about most people and their attachment to things nowadays, perhaps you'd also concur with us in that statement. It's just that every day, high-end designer are making a name with their extremely costly style to bring luxury even to the tiniest places. We understand how it could be expensive to design a huge place, but it would seem unreasonable to do it to a small home. It doesn't even feel right.



To save on cash is one of the main reasons why anyone would resort to live in a tiny house. But you will be surprised to find out that some small spaces even cost more than the price of a standard sized home. This is something that Scott Brown is opposed against, as he believes that it goes against the purpose of the tiny house movement. Instead of purchasing expensive materials such as granite counters and posh appliances, he kept everything old-fashion, by using recycled items to match his small and inexpensive home that is only 83 square feet.

For less than \$500, Brown was able to finish building his tiny home. He made use of some salvaged materials such as a wood stove and other gift items. His tiny home is situated on a 20-acre land that his friend owns. Some won't find it comfortable living in his house since he doesn't have indoor plumbing and a fridge. But it works for him because he has both an outdoor toilet and an outdoor shower that he could use. He's got everything he needs inside the house, so he's got no complaints.

To build your house with only that amount is something out of the ordinary. Visit the website 'Inhabitat' below and find out more about how this guy did it.

Source: [Inhabitat](#)

## 12. MUST SEE DREAM-LIKE INTERIOR

A new bar has opened in Toronto called after Barcelona's 'El Raval' neighbourhood, complete with Gaudiesque wood panels that appear to be "liquid" and its already boasting standing room only - except for a few stools. This new "College West" pintxos bar from Bar Isabel chef Grant van Gameron, feels like a real Barcelona pintxo bar feel.

A quote from Grant van Gameren, Owner-Chef Bar Isabel and Bar Raval states:

"Bar Raval will be as much an art piece as a restaurant, the architects we hired is the only people in Canada and perhaps the world capable of achieving my vision for one of the greatest Bars in the World."

PARTISANS were in charge of creating this "legacy space", one that compared to the art-nouveau histories of hot-spot pintxo bars throughout Barcelona. Indeed 'Bar Raval' itself, is named after a district inside the downtown of that city.



The designers found inspiration in Spanish cuisine, art and their culture. The design was created from the histories of art-nouveau, the curing hanging slabs of meat, and the artisan chefs. The wood is a masterpiece that sets the stage for some of Toronto's best culinary masters to perform. The metal shrouding the windows is a metaphor for the

mystery that Toronto's culinary and creative worlds have to offer. Very inviting atmosphere with warm, rich carved wood interior that encapsulates guests. Another of PARTISANS amazing pieces of work is found on the private San Souci Island in Toronto, called "the Grotto Sauna" and was also designed to be energy efficient. The concept was a contrast between a simple/modest exterior with a curving and sensuous wooden interior. It is made out of cedar - a quality wood which is known for its aromatic abilities and resistance to rot - perfect for the interior of a sauna.

Make sure you check out this wooden work of art at [Inhabitat](#) link below!

Source: [Inhabitat](#)

## 13. NEW TYPES OF HOMES IN OUR CHANGING WORLD

**B**reaking news, everyone! The world is changing. Actually, this is not news anymore. Ever since, the worlds have been changing. Like they always say, “The only permanent thing in the world is change.” Since the world is changing, we should adopt this attitude personally – and our homes too. Our houses have their own thing, you know. They can change. Anyway, so much for the changing thing. This time, we’ll check out some houses that are chic for our changing world. Let’s go!



Shipping container homes are in, fellas! Honestly, when I was browsing for home styles over two months ago, I come across shipping container houses. Then I’m like ‘Whaaat? That’s just silly!’ Well, everything’s silly for me. However, according to Wikipedia, “the use of containers as a building material has grown in popularity of the past several years due to their inherent strength, wide availability, and relatively low expense.” Cool? No. It’s super cool! No wonder in the world of four-digit bills, shipping container homes have become trendy.

Guerilla architecture is no doubt a 21st century style. Again, this style of house turns old buildings into a new function with a socially responsible and sustainable design. Well guys, we should also consider living in this house in the near future, shouldn’t we? \*winks\* Also, as stated in Wikipedia, “Guerrilla architecture is both a social and political movement. It challenges the established architectural hierarchy by creating interventions in a very non-conformist way.”

Off grid homes? Yes! They’re the new hip! Off-the-grid means “to not being connected to a grid, mainly used in terms of not being connected to the main or national electrical grid.” In other words, you’d be living using other resources – typically Mother Nature. Mother Nature would lend its helping hands when you live off the grid. This would also mean leaving less expensive. Well, that’s what we all like and hope for, right? \*winks\*

Want to go with the changing world? Let’s start with your home. Click Critical Cactus link below for more!

Source: [Critical Cactus](#)



## 14. ANOTHER 22 TINY HOUSES WE LOVE

Lots of people are now embracing the lifestyle of living in a tiny home. They find it more reasonable; especially if they are able to build one on their own without having to spend as much on the materials and even the labor. Others don't care much about the amount of money they

will spend to invest in one, as long as they get to live in it comfortably despite the issue in space. What they lack in space, they make up for the design and the style of its interior. Here are some of our favorite tiny houses that would surely inspire you to eventually own one.



1. A shipping container in San Antonio, Texas was later on turned into a livable tiny home by Poteet Architects. They simply added the must-haves in a home like doors, windows, HVAC and they even added plants on its roof to keep it green. The floors are made of bamboo and the interior design was made to keep things cozy and warm inside.

2. A 540-square-foot cottage styled by interior designer Jessica Helgersen will inspire you and make you believe that size doesn't matter, as long as it is efficient and the design is of high quality. Once you got those covered, then it would eventually be a livable place. This small house is located in Portland, Oregon and it was constructed using a lot of reclaimed materials. It also has a green roof since she added some moss and fern on it.

3. Located on an island off the coast of New England, you will find this off-the-grid small cabin that runs on solar energy. This tiny house is self-sufficient and that's one of the things we love about it.

To know more about the other tiny houses that we adore, check out the website "Bob Villa" below and you surely won't be disappointed.

Source: [Bob Vila](#)

## 15. ONE GORGEOUS LOG HOME KITCHEN

Log home living is a wonderful experience, and if you're in the mind to buy or build a new home, you might just take a moment to consider the benefits of living in a log cabin of your very own. Here are seven major reasons why log home life is the life for you...



Perhaps your ancestors lived in a log cabin in the old days? This type of iconic home was built and enjoyed by many settlers and pioneers of different new lands, and some still stand today. Some log-built structures in Northern and Eastern Europe are still standing today and have stood for many centuries, even since the 14th century.

In the case of log homes kits, which by the way is how most log-built structures are made today, the expense of both time and money is drastically reduced. Construction time used to take many months, perhaps more than a year - but with pre-milled logs shaped to precise specifications in a factory setting, parts numbered in the order of construction, and all delivered to the construction site with most of the work done for you, building it can now take a mere few short weeks. Due to the way such pre-milled logs are produced, it also creates the situation of the lowest per-log cost there can possibly be. This is why log cabin kits are the most sought after means of achieving log home living today.

Source: [Imgur](#)

## 16. AMAZING LITTLE LOG CABIN THAT COSTS ONLY \$5K

**T**his charming little cabin from Ecolog Homes is just small enough that it doesn't require a building permit in most municipalities. Therefore it is the idea living space extension for your back yard: As a studio, bunk house for guests, a play room for your kids or a party room.



The optional covered porch provides a nice protected outdoor space and adds to the charming look of the cabin

Ecolog Homes in Victoria is owned and operated by Hermann Thoene. Hermann founded Ecolog Homes in 2008 to bring these beautiful square log homes to the west coast. In January 2010 the company was incorporated, and the full official name is "Vanisle Ecolog Homes Inc.".

The building kits delivered to our customers are produced in partnership with Cowichan Lake Timber Ltd, a well recognized sawmill in Lake Cowichan on Vancouver Island. We use second growth wood from sustainably managed Vancouver Island forests.

### **EcoLog Homes Background**

The EcoLog Home concept has been developed in 1996 by EcoLog Building Concepts, a Canadian company located in the Haliburton Highlands of Ontario. Ecolog Homes are very popular in the Haliburton highlands, and more then 100 homes have been built as cottages, residences and for various commercial applications.

EcoLog Homes for the eastern part of Canada are produced in Haliburton, Ontario, and customers in the western part of Canada can get their homes from Vanisle Ecolog Homes on Vancouver Island.

Source: [Eco Log Homes](#)



## 17. BUILD A PERFECT LITTLE \$500 LOG CABIN

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Follow the link below to Off Grid World for more information, photos and how to!

Source: [Off Grid World](#)



## 18. WOOD SLICE STOOLS

Here is an amusing little story. There was a guest from the foreign country in our house last week, and we had served and prepared him different dishes and created this a wonderful dinner menu. We thought it was a great dinner. We at the time had counter stools made of plastic-type materials. Our guest was a larger person. So, let's begin the story.



As we were sitting, eating and talking around the table, we recognized that our that guest was full and had taken complete pleasure in all the savory foods that we cooked. We were talking and enjoying ourselves and then, much to our alarm the stool he was sitting on broke, and he crashed to the ground. As we mentioned earlier, the chair was made of molded plastic.

What an embarrassing moment. He did not want our assistance and got up, and lightheartedly laughed it off. How very kind of him. I was upset after the laughter and felt distracted. I had just purchased those plastic stools and I expected them to be strong. The outcome was not fair. Thank goodness he was not injured!

I never wanted this to happen again and did some research for another type of stool. I found these fantastic looking wooden stools that have a log round top and now I am planning to buy these stools. I recognized that the wood slice stools are becoming trendier and I frequently see them in modern designs of the house in the magazines and the celebrity houses. Wow, so I could see that my kitchen would look great with these stunning stools. Also, I could have a classy looking kitchen just like I've seen in photos in the beautiful and quality homes.

I don't ever want an incident like I experienced ever to happen again! Wood slice stools are durable compared to the plastic chairs, and I am thrilled that I will be adding a set of wood slice stools to my kitchen.

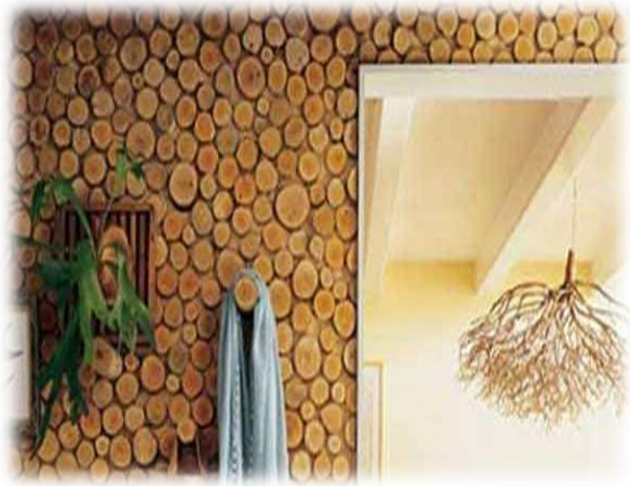
The natural looking products are extraordinarily marvellous! Please visit the 'Main Home Design' website below for more inspirations.

Source: [Main Home Design](#)

## 19. DIY RUSTIC WOOD WALLS

People have been using wood to build things for centuries, and it remains an unparalleled building tool that is so versatile and practical.

The best part is that by using it compared to other building materials, it's an eco-friendly option because it will ultimately degrade and return to dirt. Other Plastic, synthetic materials take a lot longer to decompose resulting in overburdened land waste sites. When you think of a building being demolished, they need to transport all that waste somewhere, and it usually ends up being hauled to the country away from the city, where it pollutes the environment and neighbouring towns.



But there's a better way of building and decorating our homes, and that's the time and tested use of wood! In this DIY article, you will see how people are using logs in creative ways to make beautiful arrangements to add a rustic touch to their homes. There are 40 examples of ways to use wood from simple and elegant candle holders and coat racks to the most complex arrangements of tables, bar carts, and light fixtures.

One of the examples is for DIY rustic wood walls where they covered a wall in wood slices to make a geometric pattern that adds a super interesting texture that brings a dull and boring painted wall to a whole new level. There's no reason wood needs to be used in the old traditional fashions, there are many ways you can incorporate it into your decorations. Go ahead and check out this article to get inspired on some anything but traditional ways of adding some style and character to your abode. Some of them require a bit of handyman skills, but others are simple enough you can do it as a craft with your kids on the weekend!

Please visit the 'WooHome' website below for great photos and inspiration.

Source: [Woohome](http://Woohome)

## 20. BOLD BAMBOO LOG RIDE SEAT

The living room in my house now is using the 'bold bamboo log ride seat'. Pretty cool! Earlier, I intended to acquire the latest sofa. Nevertheless, I was skeptical because of the disadvantages of the sofa. So what was the disadvantage? When my place is enduring an inadequate electric supply due to power shortages, we certainly gain quantities of perspiration! The fabric on many sofas are not very breathable. I am dwelling in a tropical country where air conditioner at home is essential!!!



So I decided to purchase the bold bamboo long ride seat. There are tons of bamboo chairs in my place and remain as a top seller because of the lower demand, but high-quality of the product. The bold bamboo ride seat is not just appropriate to the living room; it may also be used at the lawn and the balcony. The experience is very pleasant because of the serenity and refreshing accommodation when you are relaxing. The experience appears is closer to being in the middle of the forest! I frequently assume that I am adjacent to nature very much and catch the inner calm and solitude when relaxing at this masterpiece. I can always assume that I am walking to the field of the Eden and smell the wonderful fragrance of the beautiful flowers and the green grasses and trees. When I was in a deep sleep, I began to understand that everything considered impossible to happens become possibilities. The experience is like I am living in the ideal world that neither one has never believed to exists.

A piece of furniture CAN offer you and experience and create a mood. This is the excellent thing about this long ride seat that everyone should know. This is very convenient for recreation, motivation and is very friendly to the environment. This masterpiece today is widespread not just in the Philippines, but also around the world.

Please visit the 'Trendhunter' for more.

Source: [Trendhunter](#)