

COUNTRY LIVING



D I G E S T

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1. CUSTOM LOG HOME DESIGN IDEAS

Custom log home design ideas can be used to help create the dream log home you've always wanted. Perhaps you have some custom log home design ideas on paper as you've been collecting design ideas. That's a great way to plan and organize your ideas, by making a scrapbook of the things you may want in your log home design. Here are some tips for custom designing your log home:



1. Explore and Select Your Log Home Style -

select the log home style that you really want and like, a style that excites you. Will you prefer the manufactured or handcrafted log home style? Manufactured log homes are made with logs that are milled into a desired shape, producing uniform logs without taper. The logs used generally range in length from 10 to 18 feet. A custom log home design using manufactured logs can vary considerably in shape and appearance because the logs have different shapes and there are different corner styles. You can obtain kits ranging from just the logs and fasteners to more complete systems that include the roofing materials, doors, windows and even more.

A handcrafted custom log home design means handcrafters will strip the bark off of whole logs. Using special skills and tools, the handcrafter will fit each log into place. Handcrafted custom log home design and construction is labor intensive, and the construction process takes longer and usually costs more since so much work is done manually. This method attempts to preserve the natural shape of the tree, and each log is carefully trimmed and shaped for a specific location in the log shell. The logs may be assembled at the company's yard, the pieces are numbered, taken apart and shipped to the homesite to be reassembled.

2. Visualize Home Traffic Flow - a good way to create a custom log home design is to take floorplans you like and pretend you're coming home, entering and moving around in the home. Come in the front door -- where will you place your coat? What do you see in front of you as you enter? Which way to the kitchen and pantry if you are carrying groceries? Visualize sitting in the living room or family room. Will you be entertaining guests? Is having a fireplace high on your list of priorities? Try to note where the bathroom or bathrooms are located. As you finish your shower, where are the towels hanging?

Another helpful exercise when visualizing custom log home design is to examine the things that you like about where you live now. What things would you like to keep and what are things you'd like to change and have in your new home? For example, perhaps you'll want a much larger kitchen. Pay special attention to the kitchen work triangle -- the distance between the sink, refrigerator and range or cooktop. Each one of these areas becomes a focal point in the kitchen and forms the three points of a triangle with different distances between them. Done correctly, proper custom log home design in the kitchen gives you the most efficient food preparation area layout. Walk through each

room of the floorplan and see how the room feels and functions and how its location seems in relation to other rooms.

3. Plan Your Home Orientation and Layout - when creating a custom log home design, pay attention to your site and how the orientation of individual rooms will be done. Locate the bedrooms towards the cooler, nighttime north. Place your kitchen facing the east to catch the early morning sun. The living room and recreational room can have a kind of transitional orientation, facing the warm noon south sun. And the dining area can be oriented towards the late afternoon western sun. Natural light, window placement, orientation and views are powerful positive factors in human health and the comfort of your new home.

A great way to learn custom log home design ideas is to view log home plans that have been successfully built already. Use the speed of the internet to view plans, plans that you enjoy. Every plan that you review can give you custom log home design ideas that you had not thought of. Instead of trying to create brand new plans from scratch, you can save considerable time and money if you can find great plans that have already been built successfully somewhere. This means the plans will work. Just be sure the plans service can make the changes to the plans so they become exactly what you want. That way, you really can create the custom log home design that will provide you many years of enjoyment.

2. OFF GRID ELECTRICITY

Off grid electricity refers to the electricity generated from off the grid power sources like wind energy and solar energy. Off the grid energy sources are fast becoming popular with consumers who are realizing the manifold advantages of using an off grid power generator at home and saving buckets of money both in the short term and in the long term. All that is required is to make some initial investment about off the grid power sources, which are going to generate dividends in the future. What more, the government too is encouraging the use of off grid electricity and is allowing tax credits and rebates for investments made in the off grid energy sector.



For starting with off grid electricity, however, you should adopt a planned approach. The off grid energy or renewable energy primarily refers to the solar powered energy systems that you can install at your home. Other off grid methods that are used for going off grid are wind electric system (by installing a small windmill at home) and microhydropower systems if you have access to a constant running water supply.

Hybrid off grid power systems are also being widely used for the purpose. Hybrid power systems generally refer to the combination of solar panels and the wind turbines to generate electricity at your home. Off grid electricity is especially economically viable in remote areas where it is actually more expensive to extend a power line to the electricity grid than to install an off grid power system like the solar energy system. Moreover, many people are also choosing to go off grid power systems, because the process is appealing to the environmental values of the individual who is feeling committed to do his bit to relieve the environment of the load of a conventional coal or petroleum powered power system. You can start with the off grid system by simply purchasing a solar panel for your home after making the required calculations about how much solar panel would you need to run the electrical appliances at your home.

In most cases, off-grid electricity won't be cheaper than the one you can buy from the grid. There is one significant exception, though. If your homestead is located far from the nearest electrical pole, you would have to spend much money to connect it to the national grid. Because of that, the investment in the alternative energy sources would be a wise idea.

3. WOODWORKING BEGINNERS: SECRET TIPS TO START RIGHT

Woodworking: Where to Start - Tips from Experienced Woodworkers

Woodworking encompasses a broad area of skills, specialties, and applications. Some beginners take on too much too soon or blow their savings on expensive woodworking tools and machines that they don't know how to use and might not ever need. And even some basic techniques can be confusing or easy to do incorrectly. Experienced woodworkers have some simple, but insightful tips to help you get off to a good start.



Do Your Research

Initiative, courage, a sense of adventure, these are all good things, and many fine woodworkers learned their skills by just jumping in and trying to build something. Chances are whatever they chose for their first project, it came out better than they thought, but not really nice enough to use or display. Even those brave souls that start from scratch with no preparation often end up seeking out some books, magazines, or experienced woodworkers to figure out how to do it right.

The woodworkers we talked to stressed that a person can save themselves some time and frustration by learning about the different aspects of woodworking before starting a first project. Many suggested finding some good books or magazines, either at the library for free or at the bookstore. Start with the basics and learn about different forms of woodworking, types of trees and woods and how they are used, various tools, etc. - just the kind of information presented here in this article.

"I have an entire corner of my garage filled with books and magazines," shared Paul Johnson, who has been woodworking since he was a young boy. "I subscribe to a couple and keep those that have projects or techniques that I would like to try. I also buy a couple new books every year. When I first started woodworking, I bought them left and right; whenever I came across one that was recommended or had information I wanted to learn. They help give me ideas for projects," he added. "I especially like those that come with patterns."

After learning about the basics, you should have an idea of what type of woodworking interests you, and you can move on to books or even classes that teach hands on skills in that particular area.

Take Some Classes

In fact taking classes was recommended by several of our experts. Whether it's a beginning class through the local college or something taught by an experienced woodworker, it will typically give you a good overview of different tools and

woodworking safety. Some building centers and lumberyards also offer classes on basics or teach you how to make a specific project.

If you aren't big on classes, but you know a person who is skilled in woodworking, ask if they would let you assist them with a project, or perhaps just sit and observe. Most woodworkers are pleased to talk about their art and share it with others. Chances are they will be happy to oblige.

Keep It Simple

The answer, "Keep it simple," came up over and over, when asked for advice for new woodworkers. Start with simple projects, preferably those that use only hand tools. This way, you will learn how to do the important things like measure, cut, shape and join. Getting good at those basic skills is extremely important.

If you are brand new to woodworking and haven't used tools much before, you might want to consider starting with a precut kit. Most kits consist of wood that is already cut in the appropriate shapes and sizes. It is up to you to follow the directions and put the pieces together. These kits typically require nailing, screwing, gluing, sanding, and finishing. You can make birdhouses and feeders, benches, plant holders, and many other fun items to get you started.

Even as you advance to more complex projects, don't worry about planning and sizing your own lumber until you feel comfortable and confident. You can buy lumber already prepped and cut in many different widths. And table legs, chair spindles, and other turned pieces are also readily available pre-made. Ease into some of those more difficult projects over time, adding greater levels of difficulty to each project.

Tool Tips

The suggestions to keep it simple applied to woodworking tools as well. Most people interviewed recommended buying tools as you need them and adding to your selection as required for new projects. If a project is purchased as a kit, or with printed instructions, the list of tools needed is included. Depending on what type of projects you choose to start with, you will typically need hammers, tape measure, clamps, a square, saws, hand drills, and a set of chisels. These will probably cost you around \$200-\$300 dollars.

Some woodworkers said that investing in a good table saw early on was important, but only if you will be doing projects with many cuts, especially those with different types of angles. For most beginner projects, a handsaw, or perhaps a circular saw will suffice.

It is strongly suggested that you begin by buying good tools, but not top grade until you decide for certain that you want to stick with woodworking. If it becomes clear that this will be an ongoing interest, then consider buying the best quality tools you can afford. Best quality doesn't always mean the most expensive, and you will have to do your research.

Kevin Warner, who has been teaching high school shop for over twenty years, had this to say about woodworking tools. "At school, I have a limited budget for tools, but I would rather buy a few high quality tools and have the kids share them than spend my money on cheap equipment. There's nothing that will turn a young beginner away from woodworking quicker than a crappy tool that doesn't do what it should."

The same is true for home woodworking. Our experts recommended spending as much as you could afford on the basic tools like hammers, saws, screwdrivers, drills and bits. "These are tools you will need around the house even if you don't pursue woodworking," Sarah Greeley pointed out. "If you spend the money up front, and care for them correctly, these tools will last you a lifetime because you bought quality to begin with."

If you have a tight budget, consider purchasing tools at an estate sale, auction or garage sale. Some may have worn handles or look like they are rusty or dirty, but if they are quality tools and generally sound, you can clean and repair them for less than it would cost to purchase new.

In general, you get what you pay for with woodworking tools, but sometimes you pay for the name, or for features that you may not use in your particular type of woodworking. So again, you will need to refer to books, magazines, Web sites, and other woodworkers to learn more about different types and brands of tools. And so you see, the tips have brought you full circle, back to the research and learning, which is what so many woodworkers stressed the most.

4. THE SECRETS OF FLORIDA HOMESTEAD

One of the biggest advantages of becoming a resident of Florida is the Homestead Exemption. Not only do Florida residents get up to a \$50,000 exemption in the value of their property for determining property taxes, the homestead property is also exempt from the claims of creditors. We'll explore both of these features in this article and learn how to qualify and apply for the exemption.



The Homestead Tax Exemption.

The first benefit of being a resident of Florida and owning homestead property is the homestead tax exemption. Every county in Florida levies an ad valorem property tax on all real property in the county. This tax is calculated by multiplying the taxable value of the property (as determined by the county property appraiser) by the millage rate (as determined by the local taxing authorities such as the county commission, city council, school board and special taxing districts). The homestead exemption reduces the taxable value of your homestead property by \$25,000, resulting in a reduction of ad valorem taxes on your home. In January, 2008, the citizens of Florida approved Amendment 1 to its state constitution and created an additional homestead exemption of \$25,000 to lower the taxable value of homestead property for all taxes except those levied by school districts. The exemption applies on the assessed value of the homestead property that exceeds \$50,000. This means that, if the just valuation of your homestead property is \$100,000, the first \$25,000 of value and the assessed value between \$50,000 and \$75,000 would be exempt from taxes. However, the value between \$50,000 and \$75,000 would still be used to determine the amount of school tax.

Also, no matter how much your property appreciates in value, the taxable value of the property used to determine the property tax can never increase by more than 3 percent each year.

Qualifying For the Homestead Tax Exemption.

In order to qualify for the homestead tax exemption you must be an individual, who as of January 1 of the year for which you are filing, must be a permanent resident of Florida, must own and occupy the property as your permanent residence, and must hold title or beneficial interest to the property.

The first of the year date is important. If you move into the house on January 2, meet every other qualification, and spend every moment for the rest of the year in the home, you will not be entitled to the homestead tax exemption. You have to be living there on January 1.

Applying For the Homestead Tax Exemption.

If, as of January 1, you meet the qualifications listed above, you may apply for homestead exemption at the property appraiser's office in your county. The property appraiser will provide a form for you to complete. You must sign the application form in person at the appraiser's office. The application must be filed no later than March 1 of the year for which the exemption applies. All persons named on the deed of the property must sign the application, except in the case of husband and wife where only one signature is required. When applying for homestead exemption, each of you must provide proof of ownership of the property and proof of Florida residency.

1. **Proof of Ownership.** Any of the following items can be presented to show proof of ownership of the property: Deed to the Property (must be recorded in the public records of the county at the time of application), Property Tax Bill, Title Insurance, Contract for Deed, Cooperative Proprietary Lease, Certified Copy of Last Will and Testament (showing that the property was devised to you).

2. **Proof of Residency.** To show evidence of your Florida residency, you can furnish a valid Florida driver's license or Florida identification card (with the date of issuance on or before January 1) and one or more of the following items: Florida vehicle registration, Declaration of Domicile dated prior to January 1, previous year's filing of your federal income tax return showing a Florida address. If you are a resident alien, a permanent visa card or a temporary visa card with official assurance that permanent residence status is approved must be presented.

Protection from Creditors.

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of the Florida homestead law is its protection from forced sale by creditors.

Quite simply, this means that a Florida resident's homestead is exempt from creditor's claims. Therefore, if you are at fault in an automobile accident, are sued, and a judgment is entered against you, your creditors could not force you to sell your homestead to pay the judgment. Also, the judgment would not become a lien against the homestead property as it would against any other real estate you own.

There are, however, exceptions to the exemption. Liens for ad valorem property taxes and assessments are enforceable against the homestead. Any liens which you voluntarily place against your homestead, such as mortgages, are enforceable. A foreclosure of a mortgage is not a prohibited forced sale under the law. Likewise, liens for improvements made to or repairs made on your homestead are not exempted. Therefore, construction liens (discussed in Chapter 9) are enforceable against your homestead property. Other liens which are not affected by the homestead exemption are code enforcement liens and federal tax liens.

Florida is one of just a few states which allow an unlimited amount for its homestead exemption. It was established in its early years as a state to draw people as residents

and to protect families from being rendered homeless in bad financial times. Lately the exemption has been heavily criticized, with the critics claiming that abuses have enabled debtors to declare bankruptcy, and use the homestead exemption to continue to enjoy a life of luxury while their creditors get little or nothing. Some examples that they cite are actor, Burt Reynolds, who declared bankruptcy in 1996, claiming more than ten million dollars in debt. Reynolds was able to keep his \$2.5 million estate, named "Valhalla," while his creditors reportedly received only 20 cents on the dollar. Paul Bilzerian has been able to avoid payment of \$200 million owed to his creditors while using the Florida homestead exemption to keep his \$5 million dollar home. And of course, most people are aware that O.J. Simpson moved to Florida and purchased a home which was protected from the \$33.5 million civil judgment against him over the slayings of his ex-wife and her friend.

Proponents of the homestead exemption point out that despite the outrageousness of some of the abuses, they are a tiny fraction of the bankruptcy filings and the homestead exemption is needed to help people who truly need the protection, such as retirees who become overwhelmed with medical bills or young families who run up too much credit card debt.

5. HOW TO REPLACE A WC SUITE

For those DIY enthusiasts who fancy themselves as skilled enough to successfully undertake many tasks in their home, replacing a toilet suite can seem like an appropriate challenge. Whether it is because your current WC suite is faulty or because you would simply like a change in your home, there is a set procedure to follow to ensure that installation goes to plan.



Firstly, it is worth noting that the replacement of a toilet suite can be relatively simple if you are installing a suite that is very similar to the one you currently have in your home. However, this can be more complicated if you decide to install an entirely new style of pan and cistern.

The most important thing to remember is to avoid damaging the soil pipe, as this can cause problems for the entire installation. Make sure that treating the soil pipe with care is a top priority when you undertake the task. In an ideal world, your WC will be located directly over, or at least near to, the soil pipe that is already in place.

The first step in the process is removing the old cistern. The cold water must be turned off and the old cistern needs to be completely drained before it can be removed from the wall. An extra pair of hands can be useful in lifting the cistern from its brackets if it is a high-level installation.

Next, it is necessary to remove the old toilet pan, which needs to be emptied of water by scooping out the liquid using whatever suitable objects you have to hand. The WC pan will need to be unscrewed, or detached from the floor with the use of a chisel, and any joint between a p-type trap and the soil pipe loosened.

The WC pan then should be able to be removed by rocking the object at the same time as pulling on it. If necessary, smash any p- or s-type trap with a hammer to further loosen the pan, taking care not to damage the soil pipe. To prevent any debris falling into the soil pipe, rags can be stuffed into it.

For the next stage in the process, you will need to have your new pan as well as an appropriate pan connector at the ready. This of course, if after making sure the floor area where the pan will be placed has been cleaned of any debris from the un installation of the old pan.

There are several types of pan connector, including the obtuse angle, straight, curve, tee shaped and knuckle pan connector. When making your choice of pan connector, make sure to consider the external diameter of the pan outlet pipe, the internal diameter of the soil pipe and the distance between the pipe and outlet when the new pan is in position.

When the new pan has been put into place, make sure that you are happy with the position it is sitting in before pushing the pan connector on the pan outlet. After checking for obstructions in the soil pipe, push the pan connector firmly into the soil pipe while sliding the new pan into position.

After these steps have been carried out, the new pan will need to be firmly fixed to the floor. This can be done by using a silicone sealant and screws to make sure that the toilet pan stays in position. If using sealant only, give it sufficient drying time to bond to pan to the floor. Before fixing, be sure to attach the flush pipe to the pan.

Finally, you will need to attach the cistern to the wall. After pre-drilling holes for the screws you will use later, hold the cistern to the wall to ensure that the position is correct and that the lid fits appropriately. After screwing the cistern to the wall, attach the flush pipe to the base of the cistern using the correct type of connector.

After all this procedure is followed, all that remains to be done is the installation of the flush mechanism and float valve inside your WC. This is the basic process of installing a new toilet suite for your home, and by following these straightforward steps and with a little elbow grease; it can be relatively quick and painless.

6. TINY HOUSE COST VS TRADITIONAL HOUSE COST

There are lots of benefits from buying and living in a tiny house. The most obvious is the cost of the home itself.

I have written this article for you to see the difference in price between traditional homes and tiny homes. This only covers the issue of the price of the home itself. It doesn't get into other

factors such as purchasing land for the tiny home to sit on. I have purposefully excluded the issue of land since many tiny home owners select to park their homes in a friend's back yard, lease the land, travel, or some similar arrangement. For small homes that are fixed and must have land purchased with them, you would need to take the price of land into consideration. Even so, the savings from purchasing a small home are still very substantial. This is just basic information to prove a basic point.



According to CBS News, the average cost of a home in the United States is \$156,100. The below numbers show the average price of a home, the interest paid and the total of both the home cost and the interest paid. The numbers also shows the same for a tiny dwelling. Although I don't have statistics on the average price of a tiny house, based on my observation I would say the median price is somewhere around \$25,000. Some cost less and some that come with all of the bells and whistles cost more.

The numbers also shows the interest paid on a 30 year note for a traditional house, and a 15 year note for a tiny house at 4.5% interest.

How much can be saved by purchasing a tiny home?

Cost of the house

Traditional house = \$156,100

Tiny house = \$25,00

Interest Paid

Traditional house (30 year loan) = \$128,636.87

Tiny house (15 year loan) = \$9,424.70

Total Paid (cost + interest)

Traditional house = \$284,736.87

Tiny House = \$34,424.70

This means that the cost of a tiny home only represents approximately 12% of the cost of an average traditional home.

A typical American family's rent or mortgage payment represents roughly 30% of their total income. This is before they put a piece of bread on the table or pay their utilities. If

a potential home buyer bought a tiny home and gave up the extra square footage of a traditional home, they could quickly pay off their home and could focus their financial efforts elsewhere, such as retirement, vacations, changing careers, more time with their family, and so on.

7. REASONS TO BUY A TINY HOUSE

Want to simplify your life? Want to lower your monthly expenses? Want to reduce your dependency on your job? Tiny houses may be the answer for you and your family.

Below is my list of the many benefits of owning a tiny home. Here we go...

Less initial cost

A tiny house is obviously smaller than a traditional home. There are less materials and the labor required to build it because of its size. Since tiny homes often have most of the features a traditional house has (kitchen, plumbing, roof, flooring) the price per square foot is usually more expensive. But since overall size of the house is so much smaller, the overall price is only a fraction of traditional homes.



Less energy consumption

Tiny homes require much less energy to heat and cool simply because they have much less interior air space. Since many tiny homes are on wheels, a tiny house owner could move their house under a large tree in the summer, and out into the sun during the winter. Two additional culprits for significant energy consumption are refrigerators and hot water heaters. Both are typically smaller in a tiny house and consume far less energy. Another use of energy is your own energy. It doesn't take long to tidy up a very small dwelling. I have seen folks who have been very creative with reducing their tiny house's energy consumption and making use of the fact that their home is very small. Solar panels, wood stoves, wind turbines, compost toilets, the list goes on and on.

Less water consumption and trash

If you have a small shower and small hot water heater, chances are your showers will be a lot shorter. If you have a small trash can, chances are you will generate less trash. Using less water and producing less trash is both good for environment and your wallet.

Less cost for repairs

Repair costs for your tiny home are simply a matter of mathematics. The cost to replace the roof of a 2,000 square foot home will be a lot less than the cost of a 300 square foot home. This is of course because of the reduction in materials and labor.

Less land to purchase and upkeep

A small dwelling will require less land to reside on. Since many cities have restrictions on the size a home can be, you may be required to purchase land outside the city with no restrictions. Land outside the city is cheaper to purchase and the taxes are less. If you

elect to buy a very small plot of land that your house will reside on, you'll spend less time cutting grass. If you buy a regular sized lot, you'll have more room your garden.

Less food

If you have a small pantry, you'll have a small amount of food in your house. If you can look through your kitchen window and see fresh vegetables growing in it, you'll spend less produce. By eating less food in your tiny house, you'll keep your food bill and weight down.

Less taxes

Since the value of your tiny home and land it resides on is less valuable (assuming you choose to buy your land rather than lease) your tax bill will be less. The savings can go towards investments, retirement, college for your children, vacations, or donations to tinyhouselistings.com :-)

Less insurance

Insurance for your home can add up quickly, especially when it comes time to use it. Tiny houses cost much less to insure because they are less valuable. Many insurance companies consider tiny houses on wheels to be an RV. Since insurance companies aren't non profits and are in business to make money, you will often have difficulty getting the money from them. By owning a tiny house you can minimize the amount you give to them in the first place.

Less interest paid

When I bought my first house, initially I was paying more towards interest than the principle. It's no secret that over the course of a 30 year loan, you will pay more for interest than you will the house itself. Most tiny house owners elect to pay cash for their tiny house, or to pay it off quickly. The amount you save by avoiding interest will ultimately be a huge amount. More than enough to buy the in-laws a tiny house and have it located on the back (way back) of your property.

More disposable income

All of the above reasons I've listed for buying a tiny house have been focused on "less". Less consumption, less money out of pocket. All of this leads to having more money in the bank at your disposal. If you write a list of your recurring expenses, you'll quickly realize that costs associated with your home represent the majority of your expenses. By owning and living in a tiny house, you are slashing your living expenses at every level.

More freedom

Ok, 11 reasons. I saved the best for last. When you own and live in a small house, you free up your two most precious resources, money and time, not to mention some of

Earth's most precious resources...water and energy. Does your current standard of living prevent you from working at the job you want? Does it prevent you from going on vacations and taking time off when you like? Do you have to sacrifice spending time doing exactly what you want simply to pay your bills? Are you worried about the Earth and environment and leaving it in good shape for those that follow us? By living in a tiny house, you free up money by cutting expenses in a big way. You use less natural resources. You free up time by spending less of it cleaning and maintaining your home. You trade square feet for freedom.

8. COUNTRY LIVING IN A BUSY WORLD

There is very little that brings out a more peaceful feeling in a person's heart than the beauty of the country. Whether it is sitting on the front porch with a glass of lemonade to watch the sunset or walking through a field of wildflowers that grew simply by the whim of nature, there is a beauty that can affect anyone. Country living is something that many people wish for. The problem, of course, is that not everyone has the opportunity to achieve that dream. Some people simply do not have the resources to make a move out to a rural area. Others work in fields that are incompatible with the rural lifestyle, or require living in a heavily populated area. Still others really do enjoy life in the city, but just want a little bit of time off now and again from the rush of the city. Well, for all these people, the good news is that you can infuse a little bit of country living into your everyday life.

To many people that statement may seem at first to be a bit of a stretch. That is, most certainly, understandable. After all, one might say, country living, by its very definition, requires actually living in the country. In the strictest sense of the term, this is true. However, if you go a little deeper and really examine the rural lifestyle, you will find that there is far more to it than just where geographically you live. That knowledge is what it takes to allow you to add a touch of the country to your city life.

There are two basic principles that really embody the spirit of country living. All of these principles work together to bring about the sense of peace that so many people look for when they turn to the country. The first of these principles is peace through simplicity. Many societies around the world have discovered that simple is often better, and that complication usually leads to confusion. Your life can be made more peaceful by eliminating unnecessary distractions and complications. This can be as easy as simply clearing a few extra items off your schedule and taking more time to relax regularly.

The second principle of country living is peace through togetherness. Often, this works well with the first principle, as a simple life can give you more time to spend together. You will find that if you spend time with those you care about, such as family and friends, your life will almost certainly be better for it. People are not meant to function without each other. No man is an island, as the old saying goes, and this means that, even if you may not always notice it, your mind is naturally wired to be social. This, too, is an easy principle to apply. Regularly set aside time to be with your family and friends, such as eating dinner together, particularly if you have a family of your own. This will help to pass on the principles of country living to your children as well.

9. THE ART OF COOKING

Cooking is the artistic act of preparing food or dishes for eating and consumption. Cooking encompasses a very broad range of tools, methods and combinations of different ingredients to modify or improve flavor, appeal and food digestibility. Cooking in general requires and involves the selection, combination and measurement of ingredients in an orderly manner or procedure to achieve a desired result or final product. However, successful cooking is hindered by a number of factors that may include the availability of tools, the pricing and accessibility of ingredients, and of course, above all, the skill and talent of the cook or the person cooking.

Globally, the diversity of cooking reflects the myriad aesthetic, nutritional, economic, cultural, agricultural and religious situations, environment or considerations that may influence or affect it. To cook, heat must be applied to food. The process will chemically transform the food, changing its flavor, its appearance, its texture, and of course, more importantly, its nutritional characteristics and properties. History have it that cooked food stuff, both animal and vegetable, in human civilizations from the ancient times used fire to cook food. Cooking techniques There a number of cooking techniques used by modern cooks to prepare sumptuous meals for people and guests. Be aware that cooking has somehow turned into an exact science because cooks have turned very systematic and exact or meticulous on ingredients and procedures. It will be amusing to know that nowadays, cooking has also become a very important profession. Around the world, lots of cooking schools and academies have proliferated. Lots of students and young people have changed their perspective of cooking and some of them even chose to make the activity or task a life-long commitment or profession. The art of cooking now has become more sophisticated.

Five-star hotels around the globe has turned very requiring and particular about the food they serve their clients. There are a number of techniques on how people cook food the most common and the most advanced techniques will be described here. Read on. Baking is one form of cooking that has advanced through the years. It involves meticulous following of procedures and utmost attention and focus to the measurement of the ingredients. Take note that when you cook, you have to be exact. Too much flour or egg yolk or sugar can ruin your project or recipe. Baking involves the use of the microwave for heat requirements. Boiling is the process when the raw food material is immersed in water and the whole thing is put up under fire until the water boils down.

You know that boiling kills germs so this is a process where it is ensured that contamination in food is eliminated. People have devised ways on how to make food taste better through boiling. In the Philippines, there is a dish called 'sinigang' where raw meat of pork, beef or even fish is boiled with water. After the water has boiled, other food ingredients are added. Frying is that kind of cooking where the food is cooked by immersing them in boiling oil or very hot oil. The oil temperature will do the cooking. Most fast food dishes are cooked. The most loved cooked foods include fried chicken, fried fish and other fried delicacies. It should be noted though that fried foods are oily and contains more cholesterol than other food cooked the other way.

10. THE JOY OF COOKING

Cooking is something very special, it is a basic human need, without food one cannot survive and the right kind of nutrition will have a great effect on your health and quality of life, as bad kind of food or nutrition will also show itself in poor health and many other complications.

Humans have perfected cooking and eating into an art form, the combination of tastes and flavors, the adding of contrasting spices and creative combinations of flavors as well as the cooking presentation and special preparation have made cookery a form of art, and in some part a science too, as cooking uses more and more elements which require precision and exact repetition.

Most of us do not want to cook in the highest levels, and are not interested in becoming restaurant chefs or kitchen workers, but most of the people who do cook would be very happy to learn new techniques and new recipes, add some ideas of their own and generally be creative in the kitchen, almost anyone who cooks like to hear the appreciation from the people who eat the food, it is a very basic need of feeding people and providing them with nutrition.

In the last few years professional cooking has become more accessible to the general public, it started when chefs gave some private courses in homes or to a selected group of people that wanted a kind of break from the routine and quickly became a fashion in which women and men alike are participating in all kind of cookery courses, not for a qualification as a cook in a public institute or business but for the joy and pleasure of their own family and friends, and the further cookery education and experience for them.

Cooking lessons are something you can find today in many different levels, from the complete beginner to the expert cook, everyone can find a new and exciting course in many different places. Some of the places that offer these cooking courses are private, some are made in private houses of one chef or the other, and some are held in culinary institutes, even though these usually serve the more professional aspirated cooking community.

A cooking lesson or course will provide most of the participants with better knowledge of cooking techniques and better ability to cook different kind of foods, combine flavors and dare to experiment with all kind of products that were probably never used before the cooking lesson, there are many things you can learn from a chef and one of them is the panning and simultaneous cooking on a few flames, which is a skill by itself.

There is also the element of fun, cooking is a hobby and even by learning to be a better cook you can find yourself having a lot of fun, meet new people and discover new things, learning how to cook can also open a lot of social doors to you, get you to know a lot of other people who share your passion, some even form cooking clubs, where each member cooks for the rest on rotation.

11. THE NEST - CHARMING



At Alchemy Design Studio our work begins with you. We understand the very reason for our relationship - your vision - is the foundation of any design solution. We are committed to placing you at the center of our work, first striving for a clear and shared understanding of your individual aspirations and ideals. We then explore the design opportunities from multiple perspectives, always led by principles of sustainability, craftsmanship and integrity. We are modern day alchemists, transforming ideas into spaces that enhance the human experience and positively contribute to the long-term health of the planet. We believe that thoughtful design can make a difference.

More Photos & Information Found At: [Alchemy Design Studio](#)

12. TRADITIONAL EXTERIOR CABIN



Kelly & Stone Architects is dedicated to providing innovative yet sensible architectural design solutions. Our designs reflect the unique sites upon which they are placed and the people who use them. With a diverse staff of professionally trained individuals, Kelly & Stone Architects has experience in a broad spectrum of project types and scales. We look at each project as a distinct opportunity to create something special, regardless of scale. As a member of the United States Green Building Council (USGBC), our architectural firm is committed to creating energy efficient designs, implementing green building technologies whenever feasible. KS|a is a member of the a Board Member of Young Professionals Network of Steamboat Springs; a Member of Leadership Steamboat class of 2010 and a Member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA).

More Photos & Information Found At: [Kelly & Stone Architects](#)

13. STUNNED BY THIS GORGEOUS CABIN



At Skywalker Construction, custom home building is not just about construction plans and 2×4's. We understand that your home is your most important financial and personal asset. Our drive comes from knowing that we've carefully managed, protected and added value to your home. We always take the time to listen well to our clients so we understand what is most important to them. We create a building process that's enjoyable by providing excellent customer service, ongoing communication, and attention to detail. Based on our reputation, you can rest assured that our full team, including owners, project managers, full time carpenters and sub-contractors, is fully engaged in your project.

At Skywalker Construction we believe it is not enough to just build new custom homes and do renovations. We believe it is critical to build responsibly. Therefore we incorporate environmentally friendly products, recycle what we can and use resources efficiently. We are consistent in our dedication to minimizing the carbon footprint of all our projects and work toward supporting our local community as well as the planet.

In summary, our goal at Skywalker Construction is to work closely with our clients at every step of the way by maintaining a direct role in the execution of your project while responsibly building a home that will withstand the test of time. We look forward to working with you to end up with a home of inspired design, quality and functionality.

More Photos & Information Found At: [Skywalker Construction LLC](#)

14. RUSTIC LOG COUNTRY CABIN PORCH VIEW



The work of our Montana ASID credited / licensed interior Designers has been featured throughout Montana as well as across the U.S including Big Sky Montana, Yellowstone Club, Montana, Moonlight Resort, Montana, Bozeman and Big Fork, Montana.

Lynette Zambon, A.S.I.D.
Interior Designer

Lynette Zambon (Principle/Senior Designer) – A third generation native of Montana; Lynette established Design Associates in 1998. Prior to founding the interior design firm she spent her learning years gathering valuable information and experience working for another designer and architectural firm. Lynette has over 20 years of interior design experience to contribute to her projects. She studied interior design at Montana State University and received her national accreditation with NCIDQ, ASID in 2000. Her interiors incorporate her love of beautiful fabrics, clean lines, textures and classic design. She works with her clients to find a design vocabulary for each project that will reflect the client's own personality mixed with Lynette's unique design sensibilities. Her attention to detail and her sense of style have won her a loyal clientele.

Carol Merica, A.S.I.D.
Interior Designer

Carol Merica (Senior Designer) – In 1999 Design Associates welcomed the addition of Carol and her extensive experience and passion for interior design. Carol also a Montana local and graduate of Montana State University, received her national accreditation with NCIDQ, ASID in 1998. Carol currently serves on the advisory board for Montana State University interior design program. Carol's signature design element is to classically create rooms which are infused with warm color palettes of richness and texture. She finds inspiration in nature; every landscape is a potential color palette. Carol likes to incorporate the experiences she acquires through travel, photography and her love of reading into design.

More Photos & Information Found At: [Design Associates](#)

15. ONE AMAZINGLY BEAUTIFUL HOME



Tim Ward and Larry Young founded the firm in Truckee, California in 1977. They then established a Bay Area studio (Lafayette, Ca.) in 1984. Today both continue to create stellar work for residential and mountain resort clients as well as urban, commercial and public works projects.

LOCATION BENEFITS

With studio offices in Truckee and Lafayette, we are easily able to access project sites throughout California and Nevada, as well as the western U.S. Having studios in both an urban area and a small town, with climatologically and geographically diverse characteristics, elevates our knowledge and understanding of site specific and appropriate design solutions. As many of our clients are "connected" to the San Francisco Bay Area and the Tahoe/Truckee Area with homes, businesses, families and/or friends, our studios provide convenience for our clients in working with us. Our IT infrastructure and continuing development of documentation standards enables seamless collaboration between our studios and with our clients.

PEOPLE

In 2000, Robert Heck and Don Fulda joined Tim and Larry as principals, after having been with the firm since 1984. Management of the firm is shared by the four principals and five associates. Senior Associates Ron Larkins, Ted Brobst, Mike Mussano, and David Bourke, have each been with the firm at least 18 years. Associate Scott Thomsen joined the firm in 2004, initially in the Truckee Studio, he now works in the Lafayette Studio. This stable and consistent ownership and management team provides clients assurance of continuity and responsiveness, resulting in the firm working with many repeat clients over many years. This continuity has bridged changes in ownership and management for several of our clients.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

This is an aspect that sets Ward-Young apart from other firms, but, one we believe is a true asset for our clients. This approach incorporates having multiple firm leaders involved and knowledgeable with the status of the project throughout its design and construction, thus providing our clients accessibility to firm leadership with project knowledge, regardless of a particular individual's availability. Every project has a principal-in-charge responsible for overseeing the services the firm is providing. Every project has either a principal or associate as a project architect, responsible for the day-to-day management of the project.

WHAT WE DO

The staffs at both studios are experienced in providing comprehensive architecture and planning services for a broad range and scale of residential and commercial projects. Our work generally falls into three areas – custom homes, resort and hospitality, and public agency. This provides us with a huge range of clientele: homeowners, developers, and local, state, and federal agencies. They come to us for our architectural expertise that spans custom homes, multi-family developments, resort and hospitality projects, commercial and mixed use projects ranging from themed restaurants to light industrial uses, and administrative offices, fire stations, and visitor centers for public agencies. Finally, our planning experience includes land-use feasibility studies, vision plans for envisioning development potential, master plans, specific plans, and assisting clients obtain development entitlements. These planning services often segue into providing architectural services for the project.

More Photos & Information Found At: [Ward Young Architecture & Planning](#)

16. THUMBS UP FOR HAWK HOUSE



Design Philosophy

I strive to create buildings that sit lightly on the land, become a positive addition to the surrounding ecosystem and are beautiful, inspirational places. My background in ecology combined with my training in architecture allows me to create buildings that bridge the natural and built environment. Below is a summary of the way I approach the design of a building.

SITE

Begin with a thorough understanding of place: learn the local ecology, social networks and use patterns of the site. Look for connections between existing buildings and strive to enhance them. Use the building to create strong spaces in the surrounding areas and don't forget to design the street.

CLIMATE

Understand local weather conditions and seasonal variation. Create facades that respond to the light, wind, and sun of their orientation. Orient buildings to take advantage of day lighting, predominant breezes, solar heating and positive outdoor space.

DESIGN

Make beautiful buildings that inspire.

Careful design creates well made buildings.

Design is fun. Maintain lightness throughout the process.

Draw with abandon.

Find solutions not problems.

TECTONICS

Careful details yield tight buildings. Express how a building is constructed honestly.

SUSTAINABILITY

Integrate sustainability at the beginning of the design process and continue designing with sustainability in mind until the building is completed.

Building form, orientation and location should all work together to create a building that is coordinated with its environment and takes advantage of natural lighting, heating and cooling.

Building materials should be evaluated in terms of life cycle costs, recyclability, embodied energy and impacts on health.

ECOLOGY

Understand local site ecology before the design process begins.

Use the indigenous habitat and wildlife to inform the building's morphology.

Use the landscape ecology principles of corridors, habitat cores, niche biodiversity and rainwater management to understand the local environmental needs.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Architecture is the creation of space and spaces should be designed to a human scale.

Architecture should create beautiful spaces that inspire.

For More photos and Information, Visit: [Alex Wyndham](#)

17. BEAUTIFUL WINTERS DAY IN A COZY LOG HOME



Lohss Construction has established itself as one of southwest Montana's most successful home builders. Known for quality log craft and detailed custom finishes since 1993, the team at Lohss Construction has had the opportunity to collaborate with a talented network of professionals and clients, creating distinctive projects from Big Sky, Montana, to the California coast. Take a tour through our Projects gallery and see why Montana's quality homes begin here.

For More photos and Information, Visit: [Lohss Construction](http://LohssConstruction.com)

18. STUNNING LOG HOUSE INTERIOR



Lohss Construction has established itself as one of southwest Montana's most successful home builders. Known for quality log craft and detailed custom finishes since 1993, the team at Lohss Construction has had the opportunity to collaborate with a talented network of professionals and clients, creating distinctive projects from Big Sky, Montana, to the California coast. Take a tour through our Projects gallery and see why Montana's quality homes begin here.

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19. CUSTOM LOG HOME



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...

#1 - History;

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.

#2 - Individuality;

Would you want the same-old, simple, just-like-all-the-others home? Or would you rather stand out from the masses with something as rustic and stately as a log home? Living in such a unique home adds a wholesome and historic feel to your life, filled with the age-old pioneer spirit, as well as to the whole neighborhood.

#3 - Glamorous Beauty;

Obviously, the rustic beauty of a log home is alluring enough to almost pull you into it by force. There's just something timeless about such construction, and the natural beauty outshines homes built in the more modern, conventional way. Finding a beautifully well-built log cabin amid other hum-drum style homes is like finding a unicorn amid a herd of wild mustangs. And the beauty isn't only just "skin-deep" - such natural rustic beauty is on the inside as well.

#4 - Contentment and Satisfaction;

You can have any kind of home that you'd like, and make it comfortable, but log home living is the coziest you can experience. Picture having your family over for the holidays, and sitting all gathered around at the fireplace after an evening meal. Imagine how cool the interior would be in the summertime, and how warm it would be in the wintertime. Imagine waking up and opening your eyes to log-constructed walls and hopping over to the kitchen for hotcakes and maple syrup for breakfast with your family in your log cabin home - ah, yes... that's the life!

#5 - Environmental Issues;

The insulative properties of log houses are perfect for keeping the interior cool in the summer heat, and warm in the winter cold. Not much energy is required at all for this, due to the log construction. Also, many log cabins and log homes kits are milled from reclaimed timbers so that there is no cutting down of forest resources.

#6 - Insects;

Termite damage, winter-nesting bees, ants, spiders and so forth can infest any modern conventionally built home... but whereas most log homes are constructed of types of wood such as cedar, this would never be a problem. Cedar and other aromatic type woods of a similar kind, have natural insect repellent in the oils which naturally permeate such woods. Much like a cedar chest is used to stow away woolen things to keep moths from consuming them.

#7 - Expense;

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.

Read More at: [Envision Get My Tour](#)

20. THE CHARMING LOG COUNTRY STYLE KITCHEN



Founded by Candace Miller, Miller Architects has consistently drawn exceedingly talented people to its ranks. People whose interests go beyond putting pen to paper to create living spaces, but who also share a genuine affection for making others happy here. When you visit our offices in the baggage building of the historic Train Depot Center in Livingston, Montana, these are the faces you will see.
Candace_Miller

Candace Tillotson-Miller, Principal, AIA, NCARB

Candace Tillotson-Miller's education didn't conclude after attending Rhode Island School of Design and Montana State University where she received her architectural degree. Living the rural Montana ranch life with her veterinarian husband on their working cattle ranch has seen to that. With one foot in ranch life and the other in the design world, she offers a rare and genuine perspective to the Western lifestyle. Whether she's revitalizing turn-of-the century homestead cabins or creating innovative new structures, her profound appreciation of the Western vernacular brings a strong degree of timelessness to her work. Both elegant and casual, her designs capture at once the romance and the reality of life out West. Graduated in 1985, a registered architect since 1991 and principal/owner of Miller Architects since 1992. Candace is an AIA member and NCARB certified, currently holding licenses in Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Idaho, Utah and New Mexico.

Joe_Roodell

Joe Roodell, Project Manager

Growing up in Montana gave Joe a deep appreciation for the Western vernacular. His passion for architecture is driven from his love of the cowboy lifestyle and the American West. Joe began working for Miller Architects shortly after earning his Masters of Architecture from Montana State University in 2005. Through Miller Architects, he has had the opportunity to successfully manage a variety of projects throughout the diverse landscapes of the West. Joe's architectural design and management skills have helped him maintain a solid understanding of each project from the early design stages through construction administration. Outside of work, Joe is always in pursuit of a true Montana

adventure. You will find him spending time with his beautiful wife and sons rafting the rivers, skiing, hunting and riding horses.

Matt_Miller

Matt Miller, Project Manager

Originally from Wyoming, Matt Miller comes to the design world with a deep understanding of construction from his years working as a carpenter and mason. This far-reaching range of knowledge was put to good use when he graduated from Montana State University in the spring of 2004 with a Master of Architecture degree and joined Miller Architects soon thereafter. For Matt, there is nothing more inspiring than the wild beauty found in the landscapes of the American West. Matt appreciates a good story, guitars near a campfire, sharing a laugh with friends and family, and is always looking forward to the next trip skiing, fly fishing, hiking or hunting.

Chris_Clay

Chris Clay, AIA, Project Manager

Although Chris did not find his way to Montana as directly as some, it was a journey that has shaped his appreciation for this place nonetheless. Receiving his Architectural degree in 1997 from Temple University, he established his career on the East coast and has worked throughout the West honing his skills for the last 12 years. Joining Miller Architects in 2013, the passion for developing exceptional projects comes from his deep respect for the process of transforming design into built form. An avid cyclist, Chris enjoys travel with friends, off-roading on single track or jeep trail and living on the north side of Bozeman with his wife and Rottweiler.

Joe_Rosenwald-1

Joe Rosenwald, LEED AP, AIT

Joe graduated with a Masters of Architecture from Montana State University in 2006. With experience implementing Building Information Modeling (BIM) software at architectural firms in both Minnesota and Montana, Joe's expertise in 3d modeling has been applied to a wide variety of residential and commercial projects. He is also a LEED Accredited Professional, backing up his dedication to energy efficient design. Joe has been known to spend some time exploring the mountains, believing that the most important thing isn't the destination but the adventure along the way. Of course, this philosophy sometimes means he spends more time in the mountains than he originally planned.

Bill_Zanoni

Bill Zanoni, AIT

Bill Zanoni grew up in Chicago and has spent the last 15 years in the West. He has a Master of Architecture degree from Montana State and has been working with Miller Architects, as an AIT- Architect in Training, since 2012. Bill's experience includes carpentry, cabinet making and furniture making. He has a strong interest in sustainable

design. When not working, he can be found exploring the mountain ranges of Montana with his wife and son.

Marit Lueth,

Marit Lueth, LEED AP, AIT

Raised in northern Minnesota, Marit has been an AIT – Architect in Training at Miller Architects since 2012 having earned her Master of Architecture degree in 2009. After several years working in interior design, she is now free to balance architecture with bike rides, welding and skiing through the woods.

Anna

Anna Smith, Office Manager

Growing up in Livingston, Montana, Anna spends time on the Yellowstone River and hiking/camping the many surrounding mountain ranges. She graduated from Concordia College with a Bachelor of Arts in 1986 and started with Miller Architects in 2000. Anna brings her experience in customer service and client relationship management to the forefront. She enjoys working with clients from the initial point of contact and providing support to team members to ensure their ability to provide the best product and experience to the client.

Read More at: [Miller Architects, PC](#)