

# COUNTRY LIVING



D I G E S T

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# 1. LOG HOME ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AND CONSIDERATIONS

**A** log home architectural design professional can be a tremendous help when you are designing and building your log home. There are several kinds of professionals who may be qualified to do your log home architectural design. These persons could be draftspersons or residential designers. However, the most qualified person will likely be an experienced architect.



A licensed architect will have graduated from architectural school and will have the most education in architectural design. In addition, verify that they have successfully completed log home design projects in the past. What you don't want to do is make someone a favor such as a friend or acquaintance who promises to design your log home for you. Log home design and building present special challenges that require a log home architectural design specialist with education AND experience with log homes.

Here are example considerations for log home architectural design:

1. What About Design Fees? If you'll be working with an architect, they'll likely base their fees on either your total project cost or on the log home square footage. There are major advantages in working with a local architect, especially if they're good. He or she can meet with you face to face, and they can obtain the information from you that they need to create the log home architectural design that you want. They may also be able to oversee the construction process to help ensure that your log home is built as intended. This option will likely cost the most. Ideally, you'll find and investigate several architects, then choose the best one for doing your log home architectural design.

2. What Is Your Budget? Somewhere early in the design process, the total value of the proposed log home must be considered. If you are not up front about your financial limits for the log home project, you are likely to receive a log home architectural design that will exceed what you can really afford. If this happens, everyone loses, since at some point, reality must be confronted and design changes made. Have a budgeted amount and hold your designer to it!

3. Where Will Your Log Home Be Built? Whether your land is urban or rural, flat or sloping, with trees or without and so on, finding the land to build your dream log home may be one of the major hurdles to overcome. Once you have your land, your log home architectural design begins with the site plan. What about site utilities? Are they available, or must you provide your own well, septic tank and bring in electricity from some distant place? What about access to your site? Do you need to build an entrance roadway?

You'll need to check with city and county officials about what building permits are needed, for example. Local building and zoning regulations may restrict where your log home can be placed, how far from the road it must be and so on. Utility companies may

have 'easements' or the legal right to access or cross your site to do their utility work or maintenance. Floodplain restrictions, soil permeability and topographical features can limit the log home construction that can be done. You'll want to be sure that your site will accept the log home architectural design that you're planning on building.

4. Can You Find Log Home Designs That You Like? If you prefer not to work with a professional designer, consider looking for existing log home plans that will fit your site and is the home design that you want. Every plan you see can give you ideas and you never know, there may a log home design that's just right for you that exists already. You can save considerable time and money if you can find great plans that have already been built somewhere, which means the plans will work.

Most reputable plans services can make whatever changes to the plans you need so they become exactly what you want. You can purchase log home architectural design plan books online, and you can search the websites of online plan services using the criteria for your project. Search by square footage, by number of rooms or stories and just see the plans that fit the specifications that are right for you.

Maybe you are just beginning to organize your ideas, or maybe you are well along in your log home design. Making it happen can be a lot of work, but it can also be a fun and rewarding experience. Learn as much as you can about the process of creating your own log home architectural design that will provide you, your family and friends the enjoyment and pleasure of ownership for many years to come.

## 2. OFF GRID LIVING - YOU CAN DO IT TOO

Many people have realised that it is possible to experience off grid living while still enjoying all of the modern conveniences that they have become accustomed to. Off grid living means cutting you free from the grid. You can enjoy freedom from power lines, electricity bills and the rising rates being charged by electricity supply companies for being hooked up to the electrical grid. It is a lifestyle that is environmentally friendly and cost effective and is within reach of just about every homeowner.



Even homes connected to the grid can be converted using the principles of off grid living, no matter where in the world they are. There is a steadily rising interest in the use of alternative energy sources such as solar, wind and hydro electric power generation as a means to reduce dependence on fossil fuel burning power plants. Technology has advanced and costs have been reduced at the same time. With the many kits, resources and guides available today, living off the grid can even be accomplished by do-it-yourselfers. Those that have moved to off grid living are today resting easy in the knowledge that their bills are getting less even as global energy costs are rising.

Some people are still convinced that they would need to give up their electrical appliances and gadgets to live off the grid. This couldn't be further from the truth. All that living off the grid entails is learning how to control your energy usage. There are a few very simple things that can be done to save electricity such as turning off lights in rooms that are not in use. Use appliances that don't use power when turned off, like microwave oven and stove clocks. Computers, printers and some chargers continue to leech power and add to your bills when they are off or in standby mode - see those little indicator lights?. Your luxuries don't need to be sacrificed when you are trying off grid living, you just need to learn how to be smarter when using them.

The increasing popularity of off grid living has brought about the production of high efficiency, modular and movable homes to cater for the demand. These one or two person mobile homes are similar in layout to conventional mobile homes and use passive solar design together with solar panels and natural gas to provide for living off the grid wherever they are located.

If you would like to learn more about off grid living but are not sure about where to start or if you would like to see some practical examples in action, you could use the Internet for your research. There are a great number of guides and resources available as well as a lot of people willing to share their own success stories about off grid living. Probably the best part of off grid living is when there is a blackout in your neighborhood and you don't need to break out the candles. You too can experience the freedom of off grid living regardless of where you live as this lifestyle is within easy reach of anyone.

### 3. THE WOODWORKING BENCH - THINGS ONE MUST KNOW

There are several kinds of woodworking tools that are made use of while carving different things out from wood. Some of the most important ones are Woodworking Lathe, Woodworking router, woodworking saws and many more. Now that you are quite inquisitive about all these tools, why don't you catch a small glimpse of the information that is available for such tools?



**Woodworking Lathe:** Used for Knurling, woodturning, metal spinning, glass working and metal working, Woodworking Lathe is a key woodworking machine tool. It is also widely used in shaping potteries. Things like baseball bats, table legs, crankshafts, musical instruments and cue sticks are made using a woodworking lathe. The woodworking lathe is a unique woodworking tool because unlike many other woodworking processes, the wood spins while the tool remains mostly stationary. The woodworking lathe may come in a variety of styles and sizes, but most lathes are either smaller tabletop lathes, or larger freestanding lathes with their own legs that can be bolted to the floor.

**Woodworking Router:** Used for hollowing a piece of wood, woodworking router is more often used by stair case makers and pattern makers. Also named as Old Woman's Tooth, it has a narrow blade and wooden hand plane attached to it. Varied types and forms of routers are available today. For being able to use a woodworking router, the worker must be experienced and proficient in handling it. This is because, routing is a very fast process and it includes various risky jobs like trimming and cutting of wood. The keys to good router woodworking are skills in material prep, layout, measurement, setup and router-control. 80% of all router woodworking can be done on the router table; some guys do "it" all on the table, others are convinced that hand router woodworking is all they need. To be sure, there are times when one method is preferred over the other. Whatever the case, it makes good practical sense to have at least one router table.

Along with these tools, a worker must learn how to make the best use of their woodworking bench. Woodworking benches are a very crucial part of woodworking. In hand woodworking, such woodworking tools, woodworking benches and woodworking designs holds key importance. Hand working requires proficiency in the usage of tools and off course mastery in this very art of woodworking. Two things distinguish a woodworking bench: It has at least one vise, and it has at least one row of dog holes (either square or round) along the front edge. The presence of these two items transforms a table into a big, versatile clamp. A woodworking bench is optimized for using hand tools like planes, chisels, and saws. It offers a variety of ways to hold and support the work at hand.

For being able to crate and carve complex woodworking designs, a workers proficiency and experience is a must. For example, a naive woodworker will not be able to design a loft bed plan without any assistance from an experienced woodworker. This is because

such designs require perfection and only veterans can make impeccable designs for the same. Woodworking is very often used in loft bed plan designs.

Every novice woodworker must understand the intricacies and importance of all the details that are mentioned here. These basics will certainly help you in going a long way in this field.



## **4. WHAT IS HOMESTEADING?**

**T**he practice of homesteading is once again gaining popularity both in America and in the U.K. Homesteading goes by several names; farming, simple living, self-sufficient life, independent living, back-to-basics, and more. But what really is homesteading? And why are so many people interested in starting their own homesteads no matter how small their home or how little property they have?

### **The Homestead Act Of 1862**

President Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act in May of 1862. This act allowed for anyone who had never taken up arms against the U.S. government could file an application for 160 acres of land outside the original 13 states. There were a few requirements such as the applicant had to improve the land and work it for at least five years. If all the requirements were met, the applicant got the land for free. Hence the term homestead came to refer to a parcel of land someone had taken ownership of through the Homestead Act. The law was reversed in 1976 for most of the United States with the exception of Alaska which still allowed people to apply for up to 80 acres of land. Alaska eventually ceased giving out land too and no one has been able to get free land since 1988.

### **Modern Definition Of Homesteading**

Today homesteading has come to mean any home that practices the same skills found on those early homesteads such as growing food, keeping livestock, canning, drying and preserving food, and producing basic furniture and clothing at home. Many times you will hear someone describe the way they live as "simple" or "basic" and what they are really talking about is homesteading. What you may think of as the typical small family farm is the most common usage of the word homestead today.

### **Why Practice Homesteading Today?**

It is no secret that the economy is in pretty bad shape. Financial experts and politicians have all sorts of statistics and graphs to show us that it isn't as bad as we *know* it is. However none of that means anything when we go to the grocery store and find that milk prices are up *again* and we can't afford to eat meat every night anymore. Homesteading is a way of getting back to basics and remembering the difference between needs and wants. It helps you relearn how to take care of yourself and believe me when things go from bad to worse, you'll be glad of your self reliance. So homesteading saves you money and teaches you how to survive through tough times. It also gives you a sense of accomplishment that is hard to beat.

### **What Should I Do First?**

The first thing you should do if you are thinking about turning your home into a homestead is research. Visit websites, read articles and books on the subject. Plan to do a lot of planning before you do anything else. And don't worry about having enough space or buying the right supplies, there are plenty of people who grow food on their apartment balconies and quilt on



## **5. BUYING A DIY CONSERVATORY**

**S**o you've decided to add a new conservatory to your home and are joining the growing number of people who have realised the most economical route is to buy a DIY conservatory and either build it yourself or employ a local builder to build it for you. Assuming you have already decided on the style and size of the conservatory all you have to do now is make a decision as to which DIY conservatory to buy.

It sounds simple enough but if your knowledge of conservatories is limited to what style will look good on your house and you are, like most people, searching the internet for the best deal the choice available could prove daunting and confusing. There is an almost endless choice of conservatory specifications for you to choose from ranging from low budget conservatories to high specification models and it is important not to simply look for a cheap DIY conservatory but one that will suit your specific requirements.

Using the search terms of DIY conservatory or self build conservatories in your favourite search engine is likely to return hundreds of thousands of links to DIY conservatory supplier sites plus many sponsored or paid for links which will probably direct you to auction sites as well. Research shows that most users don't click back further than the first three pages of results but this will still give you around 30 different DIY conservatory supplier sites to look at and all will have different product specifications and different prices. So how do you make the right buying decision?

Obviously you will want to get the best value for money you can but going for a cheap DIY conservatory may not be the best choice depending on what you intend to use the conservatory for and whether you want it to be a year round extension to your home.

After all, the conservatory will be a permanent fixture on your property for many years to come and there are a lot of other design features that need to be taken into consideration. To put it another way, buying the cheapest conservatory now may seem like a great bargain but once installed, you will have to live with it until you decide to move on.

There are essentially two main routes to buying a self build conservatory:

### **DIY SUPERSTORES**

Some of the search engine links will take you to the online sites of some of the major DIY superstores where you will be able to view their offerings which will normally be standard size models with minimum specifications designed to keep the price down. They will probably be quite basic in terms of design and limited in the number of options(if any)available. Opening vents and doors may be fitted with basic locking systems, you will probably be limited to a 16mm or 25mm polycarbonate roof in one finish and the double glazing is likely to be standard glass with no heat retention properties.

The fact is that these DIY conservatories are specifically made for the superstores where price is king and specification comes second. The components are usually sourced in

bulk from developing countries where costs are very low which normally means they will be made from standard size windows and doors that simply lock together using frame connectors. This keeps the price down and whilst it does simplify installation, using a connector between each single window module does increase the sightline and reduce the glass area. The PVCu frame may only be 60mm deep and the windows and door will probably feature an external glazing bead which could allow the glass to be removed from the outside.

This type of product would not generally be offered by any respectable local home improvement installer because the specification is dated and the finished product would not have a quality feel and appearance.

Buying a DIY conservatory from a superstore does however have the advantage that you will probably be able to view a sample conservatory in their showroom although you may find it difficult to find anyone who will be able to discuss the project with you in any detail due to the thousands of different products these stores sell. It is simply a catalogue number to them which may come complete with a telephone help line.

Having said that, DIY superstores sell a huge number of self build conservatories every year and if you are on a very tight budget and are prepared to accept the lower specification you should be able to find a decent size DIY conservatory for less than £2,000.

### **SPECIALIST DIY CONSERVATORY SUPPLIER**

The majority of your internet search results will contain links to dedicated DIY conservatory suppliers who specialise in supply only conservatories for the self build customer. These conservatories will usually be made to order and the specification will be much higher. As the product is made to order the options available to you will be much greater and will include extras like decorative glass and solar control roof glazing.

The PVCu frame will usually be 70mm deep which increases the structural integrity of the conservatory and the windows and doors will probably be internally glazed which prevents the glass from being removed from the outside.

Using a conservatory supplier who only supplies to the DIY market will ensure that you get all the assistance and advice you need from a conservatory supplier who knows what is needed and will provide base plans and installation instructions to make your installation as easy as possible.

Like any other purchase, you will only get what you pay for and it is important to consider the main requirements to ensure you buy a high quality self build conservatory:

- 70mm PVCu Windows & Door
- Internally Glazed for security
- 28mm Sealed Units preferably using heat retaining glass

- Minimum frame connectors to ensure traditional sightlines
- High security locking
- High specification conservatory roof system
- 35mm Polycarbonate roof glazing

Options worth considering are:

- Decorative glass fanlights
- Solar control glass roof
- Roof vents with rain sensor control
- Air conditioning unit

A new conservatory is proven to add value to your home, just how much will depend on the quality of the product and the usability of the conservatory throughout the year.

Saving a few hundred pounds on the cost of yourself build conservatory now may be tempting but if the conservatory doesn't retain heat in the winter or is like a sauna in the summer the amount of time you will be able to spend in it will be greatly reduced.

Always aim for the best specification you can afford rather than the cheapest DIY conservatory you can find to ensure that you will be able to get the maximum use of the conservatory throughout the year and remember that ultimately the higher the specification, the more desirable your property will be when you come to sell.



## 6. A BIGGER TREND - THE TINY HOUSE

"**R**evolution" is a strong and powerful word. It certainly is more powerful than the word "trend." Not so long ago the word "downsizing" was used to describe an extended period of extreme job loss that changed the lives of many and dashed the dreams of home ownership for others. From 2008 to 2010 there was an increased



awareness of American consumer habits as a result of the downturn in the economic climate that identified habits to live life LARGE including indulgence in super sized beverages, servings of French fries and even more importantly building "McMansions" that were far from modest homes. A large percentage of those homes with extreme amenities are now assets or liabilities of bank portfolios.

Historically, periods of economic hardship have resulted in success stories for large and small corporations alike. Companies that offer tiny houses may be the next great success stories on the "timeline" of our country. Without a doubt, this concept offers great spaces in great places. These homes are a creative and innovative alternative to traditional home ownership amidst a changed economic climate and a distressed housing market. Tiny houses offer alternatives to paying high rent and are portable which alleviates the red tape of building codes and permits.

Tiny houses are generally built to include 50 to 750 square feet and come complete with all of the necessary features of a comfortable home including portable heating and air conditioning. Thanks to portable climate control, homeowners of tiny houses can even have outdoor pet houses and not have to worry about their pets acquiring heat or cold related illnesses. Tiny homes do not have unused hallway spaces and promote a more "Earth Friendly" lifestyle. Tiny houses are also a great option for those who may be seeking a cabin or a "second home" away from the hustle and bustle of life. Hallways in tiny houses can be utilized for storage spaces and homes are complete with a designer feel and look much like modern day homes. The benefits of living in tiny houses are numerous and include:

- No or low mortgage payments
- A significant decrease in monthly utility bills
- The possibility of "off-grid" living
- More choices in where a person would like to live (think rural versus urban)
- Feeling a greater sense of control over one's finances, regardless of what's happening on the "national/global" scene

-The ability to add a rental property for additional income for a fraction of the cost of new building construction

-A lifestyle based upon simplicity, rather than complexity

After giving the "tiny house" concept some consideration, many may ponder this question "if my home is smaller, if I have less material items, can my house still be a home?" Is "keeping up with the Joneses" more important than focusing on our passions and dreams? More than likely the answer to both of these questions will be a resounding "yes." After all, haven't we all noticed an increased trend in restaurants offering Tapas and "mini desserts" to eager consumers?

## 7. ELEMENTS OF A COUNTRY LIVING ROOM DESIGN

**W**hen one says he/she wants a country living room design, there a number of things that come into mind. The usual common impression however, is that the house is somewhat "homey" because this is the striking quality of country living room design.

The evolution of such design style has introduced a number of looks and now country can mean modern country, cottage country, eclectic, or the traditional country look.



Regardless of what style of country you want to achieve in your country living room design, there are specific elements that must be present to give it an authentic country touch.

Country design can also vary depending on geography that is why the French country look is different from American or English country. History and sentimental appeal is introduced with vintage or vintage-looking pieces from the specific country.

So, if you are planning on having a country living room design then try to do some research on the country look that is unique in your part of the globe. The important thing to remember here is that regardless of geography, country design takes elements from the old look of the past.

Now if you decide to go for a traditional country look, remember that is still dependent on geography, but you will easily know it is a traditional look if majority of the room's shell, furniture, and accessories are made of wood and have intricately hand-carved details. The colors are often sunny and bright or muted and toned down, or even a mixture of both.

Meanwhile, a modern country living room design combines elements from the past with that of the present. The use of wood is no longer dominant because there a good number of pieces that speak modern, and this is through the use of materials such as polished metal and glass to name a few.

The colors of the room usually belong to a pastel palette or that of earth tone and muted-down colors. Minimalism is observed in the design of furniture pieces, and clean lines or slimmer silhouettes are evident in a modern country living room design.



## 8. COUNTRY LIVING GARDENING - TIPS AND METHODS

Country living gardening is loveliest of the experience you will derive from your gardening hobby or profession. Country sides either are rich in greenery or you will see some vast piece of barren land. However, in any case you have advantage of free space and ample of natural environment for your country living gardening methods.



Foremost requirement in a country living gardening is to get the soil check and soil conditioning properly done. If you face some acute nature of soil like causticity and acidity you can well deploy the neutralization measures over it. The country living gardening is to be planned very carefully and managed in for good benefits. The security measures are more important in country living gardening program. The fencing of land, installation of bird scares, fake dog barks and scarecrows etc. must be done to avoid the animals creeping in your garden. Weeds and pests are another menace in country living gardening security, should be dealt in strict methods.

With country living gardening you can experiment in many ways. A part can be dedicated to perennial plants that could be well stretched on the boundaries along the fence and lawn dividers. The next part of land in country living gardening can be used as regular seasonal outputs. Induction of waterfall designs with rocks and some imitation to natural looks can also be experimented with.

The country living gardening can be well managed as commercial venture for good profits as many methods are viable as start ups.

You pick up strategy: This is good strategy to enhance your country living gardening values commercially. You just have to invite the investment and have to reserve the fruit/ vegetable plants in name of investor. On information they will come and pick up the seasonal produces to sell or you can sell them and return their investment taking away your commission.

Share the profit: This is something like small cooperative unit in country living gardening to sell the produces in market gain some commercial profit. The investment is done by the members and profits or losses are shared.

Road side juice counter: The land pieces not far from highway have some additional advantages to open a fresh juice corner. This venture is most in demand as country living gardening setups growing the seasonal fruits.

Country living gardening is exotic in sense to attract the natural richness with the capital in abundance to be gained. You can develop it artistically to give your consumer, yourself a sense of serenity with the natural beauty.

## **9. THE LANGUAGE OF MICROWAVE COOKING**

**R**eading through a microwave recipe book, you may have come across some terms with which you are not familiar. Many are well-known cookery techniques or methods but, due to the speed of microwave cooking, are worth reviewing. Others are quite new.

### **Timings:**

As a rough guide most foods will require approximately a quarter to one third of the conventional cooking time. If unsure, always underestimate the time needed, check the result and continue cooking if needed. The more food, the longer the cooking time. When doubling a recipe, increase the cooking time by half and check the result.

### **Covering:**

Cover foods for the same reasons as in conventional cooking - to retain moisture, speed up cooking and to help tenderize foods.

**YES:** vegetables, casseroles, fish. Use a vented lid for foods with a high liquid content, such as soups, to allow steam to escape and prevent the liquid boiling over. Covering food with a sauce has the same effect as using a lid. When cooking meat or poultry, roasting bags may be used to prevent splattering on the oven walls.

**NO:** for a fry finish on cakes and crumbles; for quick-cooking items such as scrambled eggs; and for foods which need frequent stirring like sauces and custard.

### **Standing Time:**

Because microwaves only penetrate the food to a depth of about 5 cm/2 in, the centre of larger items cooks by the conduction of heat, just as it does in conventional cooking. This process continues when the microwave has switched off, so the food should be allowed to stand before serving. It can be left in the microwave cooker or it may be removed while the cooker is used to cook other dishes. Standing time is particularly important when cooking large pieces of meat and when baking cakes.

### **Stirring:**

Food nearest the sides of the dish cooks faster than at the centre. Stirring will speed up its cooking time and ensure even cooking. Particularly sensitive foods, such as scrambled eggs and sauces, need frequent stirring during cooking.

### **Turning:**

When thawing, heating or cooking large items, such as a whole chicken, start off by placing the food upside down. Turn it over half way through the required time.

### **Arranging and rearranging:**

The food at the outer edges of the turntable or dish generally receives more microwave energy than that at the centre, so place thicker or larger portions of food to the outer



edge. Rearranging, like stirring, moves the food and encourages even cooking - essential with food which cannot be stirred. Move the food from the centre of the dish to the outside.

### **Shielding:**

If microwaves are prevented from entering it, the food will not cook. Very small pieces of foil may be used to cover thinner parts such as chicken legs, fish tails or meat bones for the first half of the cooking time. Remove it to complete cooking. Use only small pieces of foil and make sure it will not touch the cooker walls.

### **Piercing, Pricking and Scoring:**

Any food which is completely covered with a skin or membrane must have it broken otherwise pressure will build up inside and it will burst open. This includes foods such as jacket potatoes and other whole vegetables, chicken livers and egg yolks. Pierce them with a fork or skewer. Never try to cook eggs in the shell.

### **Browning:**

Once you are familiar with microwave cooking you will appreciate that the lack of browning is far out-weighed by the many advantages. Large items with long cooking times will brown slightly, while small items may need some help. In the recipes we have suggested, which can be found in different articles, where appropriate ways to add colour to foods, such as brushing the skin of a chicken with soy sauce or with melted butter and paprika.

### **Stacking:**

When reheating foods in flat-topped containers, plated meals with rigid plate covers and plates separated by plate rings. For even heating arrange the plates or containers so that thicker foods such as jacket potatoes are evenly distributed in the stack, e.g. with the potato on the lower plate (or container) on the opposite side to the potato on the upper plate (or container). Stack no more than two plates or containers for best results.

## 10. COOKING WITH WINE IS EASY

**C**ook with wine a lot. You can take an easy cooking dish and use a little wine and it makes all the difference in the world. Cooking with wine does not have to be difficult or expensive. I have to say I always have wine in my house. Not just for enjoying a glass of wine, but for the purpose of cooking. Cooking with wine not only adds flavor to your dish it can also act as a tenderizer for your less expensive cuts of meats.

Now I have said it before, I only cook with wines that I will also drink. Please do not cook with cooking wine that they sell at the grocers. It is not the same. For all I care it is darn right terrible. If you think about it, why wouldn't you cook with wine that you normally drink? If you like the wine on its own there is a good chance you are going to like it in whatever dish you are preparing. Then of course there is the benefit since you are cooking with wine, you must toast yourself and enjoy a glass while you are cooking with.

I am going to go back to what I was saying before, that cooking with wine can act as a tenderizer. Take for instance beef stew. Now for the most part stewing beef is a cheaper cut of meat. Or if you are like me, I'll by a less expensive roast and cut it up to make stew. Either way the meat is usually tougher and you would not normally just eat it as is. You would normally simmer it in some kind of broth for at least a couple of hours. So why not instead of using only broth use some wine. The wine starts the tenderizing process quicker and adds that extra element of flavor. I can guarantee you that you will be licking your lips.

I know I said if you are going to cook with wine, then be sure it is a wine that you would normally consume. One other factor you want to take into consideration when you are cooking with wine. Make sure you pair your wine up with what you are cooking. What I mean by this is, when you are cooking a stew use a hardier wine. Stew is a very hardy meal so you don't want to be using a Shiraz. Instead use a Burgundy or a Bordeaux type of wine.

Now I am going to share my beef stew recipe with you. You'll find out from the quantity of wine I use, why I am talking about cooking with wine today. With stew I do so much on top of the stove and then put it in the oven for the rest of the time. Now you could also do most of the preparation the night before and then put it in a slow cooker for the day. Then finish it off when you get home.

- ▶ Beef Stew With Red Wine
- ▶ 4lbs Stewing beef nicely trimmed
- ▶ 2-3 Onions Chopped not to small
- ▶ 12-15 Baby Carrots (I use the baby carrots that are ready to use)
- ▶ 1 Large Package Whole Mushrooms quartered
- ▶ 6 potatoes

- ▶ 1 bottle of red wine
- ▶ 2-4 cups of beef broth
- ▶ 2 bay leaves
- ▶ 3 whole sprigs of thyme
- ▶ Flour
- ▶ 2-3 Tbsp butter
- ▶ Olive oil
- ▶ Salt and pepper

On the stovetop heat up a large heavy Dutch oven type pot to medium heat. Cover the bottom with olive oil and add onions. Cook until golden and softening. While onions are cooking get a plate and cover generously with flour. Season the flour with salt and pepper. Lie out your meat and start to coat the meat in the flour. When the onions are soft, remove from the pot. You may have to add some more oil at this point. Place some of the meat in the pot and lightly brown. This is a very important stage in the cooking of the stew. Because of coating the meat with flour and then browning it, there will be a more intense flavor at the end. You will have to do the meat in batches. Do Not over crowd your pot. This will prevent some pieces from getting brown.

After all the meat is browned. Remove from pot. Pour in the bottle of wine. Scraping up all the bits on the bottom of the pot. These bits are pure flavor. Place all the meat, onions, thyme sprigs and bay leaves in the pot. Then add enough beef broth to cover the meat well. Place in a 300° oven for about 2 ½ - 3 hours. While the stew is in the oven, take another pan and heat to medium high heat. Cover with olive oil and add the mushrooms, season with salt. Cook until quite brown.

After stew has been in oven for about 3 hours, take out of the oven and add the mushrooms, carrots and potatoes. You may need to add a bit more beef stock at this point. Check after ½ hour to 45 minutes. If the potatoes are cooked, you are ready to remove from the oven. Place pot on your stove top on a burner heated to medium. Here is the thickening part and just some more flavor. In a small dish take 2tbsp of butter and 2 tbsp of flour. Blend together. Slowly add this in pieces to the simmering stew. This will thicken the stew. I say do this slowly so you get the thickness you want. If it is not thick enough do it again. The ratio is equal parts of butter to flour. Taste to see if you need to further season with salt and pepper.



## 11. WHEN THE LIGHTS GO DOWN, THE DREAM WORLD COMES TO LIFE



**A**re you always looking for something to jazz up your home decor? This might be something that will inspire you! When The Lights Go Down, The Dream World Comes To Life in the rooms that this talented artist named Bogi Fabian paints. The scenes look like something out of an animated movie or from a movie set. The shocking thing is that when the lights are on, it just looks like the room has bare walls, but when the lights are turned off, and a black light is turned on, her dream scapes are illuminated and the room is transformed into another world!

The post about the starry sky with the planets and galaxies has gone viral, and people just love the concept of having this hidden art on their walls. Like a secret that only they know about and can show to those they want to show. Wouldn't this be wonderful for a kid's room? It would be like magic every night when going to bed. It would be a great idea for kids who are afraid of the dark, have all of their favorite characters painted on the wall for them so they could see them in the dark and feel safe and protected.

I remember when I was a kid, seeing the movie 'Mermaids' they made a room look like it was under water, and I thought that was the coolest thing ever, and wanted that so badly. They even made a mobile lamp that when it turned, looked like the rays of sun filtering through the water. Now this is a level up from that even! She must be booked solid with all of this new found internet fame that has come upon her! Good for her! She obviously loves what she does. Check out more photos of her amazing work, head over to 'Sunny Skyz' by following the link in the description below!

More Photos & Information Found At: [Sunny Skyz](#)

## 12. ONE HECK OF A BEAUTIFUL LOG HOUSE DOOR



**S**ome people build homes that are tiny and modest, without being extravagant or adding unnecessary luxuries. In this economy, it can be hard to find a good paying and consistent job, especially if you haven't attended school.

However, some people can still afford to spare no expense, like in this case with possibly the nicest log cabin ever. While some people try to strive for frugality and deal with the bare minimum, there is still no shortage of people that go all out and build stunning homes that are sure to impress anyone who lays eyes on them. That's definitely the case with this home. It's another mountain log cabin home, nestled in a secluded and private remote area, far in the woods and away from civilization. Whether it's a permanent home or just a vacation rental, it's sure to be a place you love spending time at. It's great for the family too since there's an ample amount of room to enjoy.

This home is built where it captures all the scenic views no matter what window you're looking from. It has beautiful wild flowers growing all around the property, and the pictures do a great job at demonstrating just how scenic of an area it is. There are exposed beams throughout the interior, and cathedral ceilings that make it feel like there's an abundance of space everywhere. The windows are massive and let in a lot of natural light so you can grow plants indoors with no problem, or just enjoy the feelings of open airiness.

More Photos & Information Found At: [Imgur](https://www.imgur.com)

### 13. RARE AND UNIQUE BEARS RUSTIC LOG BENCH FOR SALE ON EBAY



**T**he Bear's Picnic! This beautiful hand-crafted, hand-carved log picnic bench is truly a work of art. You won't find anything like this at your local furniture store! This one is available for auction on Ebay with no reserve price.

This decorative log bench is a rare and unique example of hand-crafted wood furniture that probably won't be available for long.

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



## 14. AMAZING ROOT FURNITURE DEFINITELY ONE OF A KIND



**W**hen we think of wood furniture, all sorts of images come to mind of beautiful grain textures shining through on the sleek and carefully cut logs. Images of beautiful woods like bentony, mahogany, pine, cedar, oak, fir, walnut, maple, cherry, birch... the list goes on, spur up in our heads. Each of these woods have their own set of unique qualities and properties that make the stand out. When you think of all these, in your mind you are probably picturing sleek and slender furniture that is polished and either perfectly straight or rounded to make unique designs. However, have you ever seen furniture made from the roots of a tree instead of the upper portion? If the answer is no, as it was for me, then you need to check out these photos at "Indonesia Teak Furniture".

These teak root pieces of furniture are from Bali, Indonesia. Some of them boast glass tops and others have an all wood design. You can order them through their online store on the "Indonesia Teak Furniture" website and they offer good prices according to their page. But you will need to call for more information on the subject. If you happen to be in the the Bali, Indonesia area then go ahead and check out their show room where they display all of their unique pieces of furniture open to the public. However, if you are like me, and live far away, then enjoy all of the lovely pictures they have on their site. Shipping will likely be a hefty price, but if you have some cash to spare then this might be something worth looking at. If you decide to buy one, I'm sure they will be a statement piece in your home and a focal point that will start up many conversations with guests.

More Photos & Information Found At: [Indonesia Teek Furniture](#)



## 15. UNIQUE FURNITURE AND YARD DECORATIONS FOR HOME DECORATING MADE OF TREE LOGS



**L**og Homes these days are being built and lived in by many homeowners. Aside from the natural beauty of the exterior and interior designs, it gives comfort and tranquility. Tree logs and twigs are unique and natural materials for log homes and gazebos, yard decorations, garden path borders, fences and dog houses. They also give an opportunity to show your creativity in decorating backyards, gardens and porches with a natural style. Home and yard decorations made of logs are eco friendly products that bring connection with nature and support green living ideas. Decorative logs give an attractive look and eco feel to a house design and backyard decorating.

With this kind of decorating, the interior and exterior design will have an organic shape and beautiful texture because of interesting logs and twigs as well as adding neutral colors and warmth to home decorating ideas. They also give a personal touch to your art of creation. You can create unlimited with logs and twigs making everything so unique with this durable material. Some ideas include unusual containers for plants and flowers, picnic tables and chairs, garden benches, lighting fixtures, fences and dog houses. Your log homes and yard decorations will look wonderful all throughout the years. The only thing you need to keep in mind is to make sure these materials are well protected from elements and fire.

Be inspired by this unique log bench made by David Long and Antoine Morris. With their combined creativity, they only had to have minimal sketches and then let the lumberjack carve out seat spaces from this gigantic stump. It is then hand-sewn with upholstery fabric by a motorcycle saddle maker after the rough hollows were finely clad. From a simple piece of log to a unique stunning bench, everything you have in mind will be possible with log and twigs.

To learn more about yard decoration, furniture and decor accents from logs, visit the 'Design Bup' website link below.

More Photos & Information Found At: [DESIGN BUP](#)

## 16. SOLID SLAB BAR COUNTER



**T**he solid slab bar counter is a very pleasing and luxurious piece of functional furniture. It adds a certain life for the costumers in the bar. The balance is impeccable and the single design is excellent. It extraordinarily produces a generous dedication to whoever sees the excellent product of nature.

To obtain a solid slab bar counter, unless you are skilled in the trade and with the equipment, do not operate or cut the log when it's your first attempt. When it's your primary experience, there's a possibility that the log will splinter and reduce its strength and beauty.

If you can find a piece or have someone cut it for you that is at least 24 inches wide. The expense will likely be costly for that size, but the result will all be worth it. We can create our own top that is out of the slab of the timber along the borders created for live-border material.

In backyard, there is plenty of lumber layering around because my father is a businessman in logs. Because of this, I am lucky to be able to have a slab piece like this one in my home.

This type of furniture is pure and heavy. It is notable to each person that enters regardless of what kind of social gathering or dining party. Another thin about log slab furniture is that it perfectly suits most types of homes and rooms, not just at the bar. The slab is abundant in astounding character and finished by hand flawlessly.

If you are interested in this kind of log slab bar then visit the link to the 'Wonderful Woodworking' facebook page and see what others are saying.

For More photos and Information, Visit: [WoodWorking Enthusiasts](#)



## 17. THESE SIX FREE PLAN SETS FOR TINY HOUSES WILL MAKE YOU SMILE



**T**his is such a great source for tiny house plans. Derek "Deek" Diedricksen's website has a plethora of amazing information, compiled by himself on his website that this link will lead you to. He has had years of experience in the realm of tiny house building under his belt, building many tiny houses and working on many different projects over the years.

This particular link has six FREE plans that he himself has looked into and that you can download for free! Everybody likes free stuff! One of the books, Deek even got for his 10th birthday and has been using it since. He has presented them all so you can have easy access to a range of different plans to get your tiny house project moving. From square houses to geodesic dome houses, you are sure to find a plan that suits your needs.

The pictures are fun to look at and dream up your best tiny house project made just by you! Deek has amazing videos on YouTube as well, and he is just an over - all cool guys that want to help people in this tiny house movement. For people to be able to live the life of their dreams in a home that they build themselves not having to worry about paying rent, or a loan or mortgage. It's such a service he is doing for people by presenting all of this great information on an easy to use website. He also has books that he has written and drawn himself. He also holds workshops sometimes too.

So head on over to the 'Relax Shacks' website and download your free plans to start dreaming up your first tiny house building project! It's time for people to get out there and do it! These plans give you the perfect recipe to follow to be living in your very own tiny home!

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

## 18. LIFE IN A \$10K HOME IN A FRIEND'S BACKYARD



**E**ach of us has our own reasons on why we would want to live a much simpler lifestyle. It is not just about the issue of finances, but it's really more about living in freedom. These are among the reasons of Dee Williams, as to why she shifted to living in a smaller house. Her story will certainly inspire and give you a brand new perspective in life and the best ways to make the most out of it.

You see, most people are trapped in the idea of getting a high paying job to live a good life in a big house. But the reality is that although they could get a job that pays well, they also just end up paying a plethora of bills that eventually just lead them to stress. This is not the life that Williams had in mind hence; she made a decision to live in a simple and smaller shelter. With this kind of lifestyle, she no longer has to be anxious about mortgages and a number of billing papers that comes to her doorway on a monthly basis. Her 84-sq-ft space has become more than just a house, but it's a home where she experiences serenity and a daily celebration of life.

There are many interesting facts that she shared such as the kind of power she runs her house with. She uses 240W of solar power and a small tank of propane to everything that needs power or electricity in her tiny home. She had built it just right in her friend's backyard, and we can tell that she has no regrets. She is lucky that she has a friend who was more than willing to embrace her microhome.

We want you to learn more about her amazing story, so go visit the site 'Treehugger' website below to be more inspired.

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



## 19. 500-SQUARE-FOOT SMALL HOUSE ON A CLIFF WITH WATERVIEW



**N**ow here is an article that proves you can build the life of your dreams and not have to compromise your life in return for it. Live in a house on the beach and not have to pay a fortune for it, you can seriously have it all! As it shows, a picturesque image of a modern looking house atop a cliff, ocean just below, surrounded by the natural elements you will start envisioning your own plan of how to get there yourself.

The house was beautifully built and designed by Alvaro Ramirez and Clarissa Elton in Chile for the mere cost of \$15,000 USD. A pretty significantly lower price range for a home if you consider how much the typical house in the United States costs. Especially one footsteps from the ocean and with views like this!

The 500 square foot small home boasts an open concept complete with floor to ceiling windows with amazing views of the ocean. Imagine waking up to the sunrise over the sea and watching the sunset all from your own home. The layout is quite unique as well, with the living space - the kitchen and living room that would be used throughout the day and to entertain is on one side of the patio, and the bedroom is on the other side. You can see from the floor plans offered in the article, that the space doesn't seem that large, but when you see the photos of it, you will see they utilize that space so well. Everything has its place and space and surely more than enough storage space. It just goes to show, you don't need to spend a ton of money to get your dream home. Using that time and energy toward more fulfilling endeavours.

Head on over to the website 'Tiny House Talk' and start envisioning your small house dream home!

Read More at: [Tiny House Talk](http://TinyHouseTalk.com)

## 20. TINY HOUSES ON TINY ISLANDS



In case you don't know, we would love to do the honour of informing you that there are a bunch of tiny houses built on an archipelago of islands that lie on both sides of the US-Canada border, where you will find the Saint Lawrence River. This place is also known as the Thousand Islands. It is an interesting fact for anyone who is into architecture and interior design to discover this vast area. It is also very inspiring to learn that those small pieces of land are being used to build a functioning home.

You will see a lot of small castles and large estates in many of these islands, but the tiny houses on those tiny islands are the ones that are getting most of the attention. Because who wouldn't find them fascinating? And to make them even more appealing, you will be thrilled to know that most of the tiny houses here are available for you to rent. If you are in the mood for some adventure in the middle of a living river, give this place a chance and see if it doesn't exceed your expectation in experiencing one of the best vacations of your life.

A total of 1,793 islands can be found in this border, and the smallest of them was labeled as "Just Room Enough." And to all you eager beavers who are curious about its title, it is because only when the water is low would there be enough room in this little cottage for its outdoor furniture to be put out. Many campers and boaters visit this place that it became widely known to be the fresh water boating capital of the world!

This place is also perfect for honeymooners given the romantic view that it offers to all the lovers out there. Do you want to know more about the many tiny houses on these tiny islands? Click the website "Tiny House Blog" below and feed your mind with more information about it.

Read More at: [Tiny House Blog](#)