

# Luxury at The Lodge





The owner of Bear Trap Design annually turns her log home into a magical holiday gathering place.

BY MOLLY GUTHREY PHOTOS BY STEVE VOEGELI

Put on your best boots, ladies and gentlemen, because we're taking you to a holiday party in the country.

Yes, the gravel road is a bit bumpy but the destination — a place called "The Lodge" — is worth it.

Oh! A moose!

But wait, it's not real. It's a wire statue. And see how the moose's neck is wrapped in a garland? It's welcoming us to the party. Let's pull into the driveway; the gates are open.

And you're right, you really can see the stars better way out here in Grant, way out here in horse country, way out beyond all the city lights of Stillwater. But I'm glad for the glow of these handmade ice luminarias, lighting the way down this long driveway.

There it is, the log home! Isn't it sweet, all dressed up for Christmas in those twinkly white lights?

Oh, and there's our hostess at the door, waiting for us. Let me introduce all of you to Tami Holsten.



#### THE LADY & THE LODGE

Tami opens the custom-made front door and waves us in.

With a gasp, we take in the soaring ceilings, the fieldstone fireplace and the moosehead on the wall.

"Welcome to our home," Tami says. "People say it's magical, unexpected, like stepping back into time."

It was back in 2002 when the Holstens built their dream log home on 12 acres near Stillwater.

"We were inspired by the National Park lodges of the American West," Tami says.

Tami served as the general contractor for Project Dream Home, designing, managing and executing the realization of a home that was handcrafted by Andersen Log Homes

Co. of Walker, Minn., using traditional Scandinavian building methods.

Inside, it has American primitive touches, like the vintage sled that was turned into a hanging pot rack in the kitchen.

"I have a passion for primitive antiques," Tami says. "My house is filled with turn-of-the-century antiques and rustic furniture. I mix Old Hickory with Stickle, the buttery leather couch in the great room is by Henredon. My philosophy is to buy the best you can and to buy what you love, and I happen to love primitive antiques.

"I love the history and the simplicity and the authenticity they bring to my house."

Tami goes antiquing to find her treasures, including trips out East.

The lodge isn't just a showpiece or party

venue, though; it's home.

"This home reflects our personalities and lifestyle," Tami says. "We love the outdoors, we have a passion for antiques, we love history."

Word spread about this special place.

"What happened was I built the house, people I knew came in and saw it, and I started getting job offers for design and project management services," she says.

Tami returned to college to earn a degree in interior design as well as a certification in kitchen and bath design. Her business, Bear Trap Design, is a high-end, award-winning residential design firm that has built a following completely out of referrals; it's a company that specializes in working with local artisans.



#### CHRISTMAS AT THE LODGE

It was Tami who welcomed us to the lodge — Tami and her gentle Newfoundland, Kodiak, a giant black dog who is soft to hug, just like a teddy bear. The lodge's previous greeter passed away recently.

"Our golden retriever, Glacier, was the official greeter," Tami says. "He would patiently sit on the front porch waiting for guests to approach the front door — like a statue. When a guest reached the top step, Glacier would raise his paw for a handshake."

Clients, colleagues, friends, neighbors ... there's a long list of people who have enjoyed ringing in the season at the Lodge with Glacier & Co.

Really, who wouldn't enjoy drinking eggnog and nibbling Christmas cookies at the Lodge?

The great room of this 3,500-square-foot lodge is a soaring place to decorate.

"We always look for the biggest tree we can find," she says. "A 12-footer, at least."

Guests can sink into the buttery leather furniture, or they can move on to the kitchen with its painted green cabinetry and its long farm table. The kitchen opens onto a sunroom, which provides views of the prairie landscape.

"Our backyard is all prairie," Tami says.

There's also a new attraction at the base of the lower level.

"Previously, it was an unfinished space that was used as a catch-all storage room," she says. "I was inspired by the storefronts of Stillwater and designed a wine cellar."

Now when guests walk down the steps, they see what looks like a wine shop. Stepping inside the climate-controlled room, they see custom cabinetry with a barreled, faux-brick ceiling, a primitive chandelier and a designated Scotch cabinet, as well as all those bottles of wine. Once they have their glasses filled with Cabernet Sauvignon, they can sip the richness from one of the hickory rocking chairs on the front porch or sit back down in front of the fire of the great fieldstone hearth.



The dining room is ready for guests, top left. Above, the wine room in a previously unused space in the lower level. Bottom left, the fieldstone fireplace in the great room.

#### 'TIS THE SEASON

At press time, Tami was still mulling over this year's holiday plans. Here's how it all comes together:

- "Sometimes I design to a specific theme," she says. "One year I came across a 5-foot (taxidermied) peacock in a client's storage area. They lent it to me and I was able to mount it on the fireplace. That was my inspiration for how I decorated that year — everything that year was green and blue peacock colors."

"Other times I go through my inventory and I'll pick something I haven't used before and build from that," she says.

- "I'll combine natural and artificial materials, like real candles low on tables but flameless candles up high, intertwined with greenery on the mantle."

- "I prefer white lights. I put little white lights everywhere."

- "I buy a few things a year, during the post-Christmas sales, like silver statues from Gertens or really beautiful glass Christmas ornaments. I believe in buying quality pieces, not quantity."

- "Keep things clean and simple. Less is more. Don't feel like you need to put everything out there that you own."

- "I remove furniture to make room for cocktail tables. This works great for mingling."

- "I keep the menu simple. I usually serve heavy hors d'oeuvres, like petite beef tenderloin canapes or a smoked salmon board. I serve both red and white wine, a variety of specialty beers, Ghiradelli hot chocolate with marshmallows and chocolate-covered peppermint sticks. A couple of years, I've hired a traveling gourmet pizza truck. It comes with a brick oven."

This holiday season, Tami also knows she's sure to get one particular comment when guests see how she's decked the halls:

"Everyone says, 'You should be in a magazine!' " says Tami, laughing.

Now, she is. ■

Molly Guthrey, a Pioneer Press reporter and columnist, is a frequent contributor to Spaces.