

CHRISTMAS — at the — LODGE

Inside the home of designer Tami Holsten with her dogs, Kotzebue and Kodiak.



There's nothing better than a restful and cheerful place where family and friends can retreat from the hustle and bustle of the holidays. For inspiration, we took a tour at the home of **Bear Trap Design** owner and principal designer Tami Holsten, her husband Michael and their dogs, Kotzebue and Kodiak.

It's a hideaway nestled on 13 acres in Grant, Minn., and dripping with vintage charm and rustic character. But come December, the lodge-like space owned by Tami and Michael Holsten is transformed into a layered and lovely holiday masterpiece.

The Holstens bought the former farm parcel from Michael's family and built a house inspired by a trip to Glacier National Park. The owner and principal designer at Bear Trap Design realized, "We're log-cabin people. We're outside people," Tami Holsten says. She acted as general contractor on the home that would transform her family's lifestyle—and also her career. As the story goes, family and friends—and eventually friends of friends—walked through the home and began offering Tami design-related jobs. The attention inspired her to return to school and shift her career path from athletic training and equipment sales to home design. "This home is truly a reflection of who we are ... design just found me," she says.



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Tami and Michael Holsten designed the construction of their lodge after a trip to Glacier National Park. Knotty pine walls and Australian cypress floors lend authenticity to the build.

It's easy to see why. Visitors are wowed from the second they enter the Holstens' driveway—Christmas lights and fun outdoor statement pieces abound. Luminaries line the gravel driveway and welcome party guests this time of year.

The home was finished in 2002 by Andersen Log Homes and features attention-grabbing, hand-scraped logs visible indoors and out. A wraparound porch frames a gigantic custom front door decked with a fresh, oversize magnolia wreath and matching garland, and an antique sleigh and toboggan. A 7-foot-tall wooden bear, an anniversary gift from Tami to Michael, is dressed up for special occasions and has "Tami + Mike" carved in the back of it.

"I have so much fun with that bear! He's been a pilgrim, a graduate ... I dress him up in Halloween costumes," Holsten says with a laugh. "I could make a book with all the things I've done to that bear!"

Inside, a huge antler chandelier covered in crystal ornaments welcomes guests to a great room with knotty pine



The 7-foot wooden bear that adorns the Holstens front porch changes his attire seasonally.



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walls and Australian cypress floors, commanding two-story windows and a fresh 12-foot Fraser fir standing front and center. This year, it's covered in white twinkling lights, frosted pinecones and glittery branches with a stuffed owl on top.

"I love to mix antique and new things, and throw some elegance and bling on top of rustic materials," Holsten says. "One of my tricks is to mix artificial and real greenery. The artificial stuff gives you structure; the real stuff gives you life." On the massive stone fireplace, a reclaimed antique potbelly stove door hides spare candles, and her signature mixed greenery garlands and glitzy accessories pack the mantle. The brick fireplace hearth was reclaimed from the streets of old Stillwater and once belonged to Michael's dad.

As for furniture, Holsten loves to shop High Point Market, Ralph Lauren and Hancock and Moore, believing in the power of carefully selected, high-quality basics. Her massive, distressed leather Henredon sofa and coordinating chairs are surrounded by a large Woodland coffee table and hickory side tables. Resin pheasants, vessels full of feathers, colorful books and greenery fill the tables.

The mounted moose sometimes wears a Rudolph nose, ornaments or a wreath. This year, vintage bulb lights cover his antlers for a bit of colorful flare. A collection of nutcrackers, a basket of lit-up pinecones, and wool blankets soften up the primitive jelly cupboard, old rocking horse and antique painting of Mount Hood up year-round. In the kitchen, a vintage sled holds hanging pots, with colorful utilitarian items and playful *objets d'art* living side by side with the custom green cabinets. More greenery and quirky accessories soften the kitchen, mudroom cabinets and dining room table.

The Holstens wait until after



Thanksgiving (for which they hosted 32 people last year) to begin decorating, and it's a fluid process. Tami keeps her extensive décor collection in storage wings off of her design studio above the garage.

"I pull everything out—all over the pool table—and see what I have," she says. Then comes the theme and a few core pieces selected from her 30-plus years of antiquing. This year, a hiking trip to Lake Tahoe and Yosemite inspired the north woods look, subdued colors and loads of natural materials. Holsten even collected the gigantic pinecones and shipped them home from her trip (the postal staff said it happens all the time).

Holsten's over-the-top Christmas designs are a contrast from her normal tendencies. "If you looked at all my projects—whether they're traditional or contemporary homes—everything is clean and concise," she says. "But I design with my heart. My things have really good memories attached to them—I only buy what I absolutely love. Like the lamps in the living room—it's like I swiped them from the Yellowstone Lodge ... none of my designs are cookie cutter." 🐾

Tami Holsten insists "it's all in the details" when it comes to her approach to design. This year's holiday theme has a backwoods feel; the giant pinecones are authentic, imported from Lake Tahoe.