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## The Big RUSTIC Issue

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# RUSTIC REIMAGINED

A MONTANA HOME IS RENEWED WITH A  
FRESH NEW SPIN ON RUSTIC STYLE

A photo from Tracie Spence's Wild Mustangs series provides an eloquent Western focal point for the living room. "It's all about comfort," interior designer Rain Houser says of the family-friendly space, designed to be "light, bright and refreshingly serene." The room features upholstery in leather and boiled wool and a modern cream, gray and brown color palette. The log walls were darkened and the chinking changed to white to create dramatic contrast.



When a busy California couple with two young daughters craved an escape from their fast-paced lives,

they recognized Montana as the ideal wilderness getaway: “Big Sky graces us with clean air, a slow pace and uninterrupted natural landscapes as far as the eye can see,” they say. They found a cabin on a pine-forested site that offered breathtaking views of the Spanish Peaks, but the decade-old dwelling would need a lot of work before it could truly feel like home.

“Only the floor plan and the bones of the house worked for us,” the homeowner recalls. “The decorating was not our taste and was dated and well-worn. We didn’t want the stereotypical dark, heavy, rustic cabin, but rather a happy and light space with warm rustic-modern touches.”

During their search for an interior designer, the couple

found they responded to the “clean, modern, warm, authentic, organic and livable” spaces created by Rain Houser, and so they hired her—and her team at Bozeman-based Pearson Design Group—to completely refresh their cabin, creating a new aesthetic that was neither entirely modern nor rustic, but a fusion of the two styles.

For starters, the original décor had to go; it was heavy and loud, with shades of deep brown, burgundy and peachy-orange. “We began by lightening the ceiling in the great room to visually open up the space,” Houser explains. “Then we darkened the log walls and changed the chinking to white. With that contrast, the finishes and furniture come to life, and details are highlighted.” >>



FACING PAGE: Honed black granite countertops and a Moroccan tile backsplash complement the kitchen's ivory-hued La Cornue range. The design team removed the original upper cabinets and installed reclaimed white oak cabinets below. Pendant lights made from studded rubber from conveyor belts illuminate the island and "add texture against the light-colored walls," Houser explains. THIS PAGE: Houser repurposed a rusted steel fire bowl as a light fixture above the custom dining table. "We wanted something more intimate, more moody and completely unique," she says.



“TO CREATE SERENITY WHERE THERE WAS ONCE AN ABSENCE OF LIGHT AND GRACE IS SOMETHING WE TAKE GREAT PRIDE IN.”

RAIN HOUSER



FACING PAGE: The living room's plush furnishings include a clean-lined mohair sofa and a pair of soft and sculptural Brazilian Mole Chairs by Sergio Rodrigues. LEFT: Photographer Tracie Spence's evocative photo of a wild mustang graces the entry hall. Houser wrapped pieces of cozy sheepskin around the customized steel-and-oak bench "for an extra layer of detail," she says. BELOW: Extra-large vintage French light fixtures, a custom iron vanity and petrified wood sink add a sophisticated mix of textures to the whitewashed powder room.



But the design team still hadn't tamed the rustic beast.

They painstakingly converted the kitchen's garish acid-green concrete floor to a neutral shade of beige, and stripped the white oak floors of their reddish-brown stain, coating them instead with a clear varnish that highlights the wood's natural beauty. They replaced the kitchen's existing upper cabinets with simple shelves and installed new reclaimed white oak cabinets for extra storage space. New honed black gran-

ite countertops strike a handsome contrast with a Moroccan hand-glazed tile backsplash.

Reclaimed materials, often with local origins, and a soothing gray, cream and brown color scheme give the home a more tranquil and organic feel. "Montana is so inspirational—the colors, the sense of space and the texture," Houser says, "and we like to take our cues from our surroundings." >>

The rugged environment inspired her choices of comfortable, clean-lined furniture pieces in sumptuous yet “indestructible” materials—leather, mohair, boiled wool—and a fascinating mix of textures from natural and exotic sources: rusted steel; barnwood; petrified wood; caribou, badger and coyote hides; Icelandic sheepskin; African kudu horns; and Cameroonian juju hats made from clouds of white feathers. “In a neutral palette like this, texture is a form of pattern,” Houser

says of her plan to “create visual interest without being too loud or overbearing.”

The family is overjoyed with the inviting and casual ambience of their renewed cabin: “It’s a place we love to go to and hate to leave!”

Rain Houser agrees. “When I walk in the home, it’s like a breath of fresh air,” the designer says. “This is how I think the next generation of mountain homes should feel: classic yet light.” ○



**RUSTIC SWAPS** Mountain homes can look dated if they rely on too many rustic design clichés. Interior designer Rain Houser offers these tips for swapping old ideas—we’re looking at you, antlers and cowboy prints—for bold new mountain motifs that will breathe a little life into your lodge.

**STREAMLINE FURNITURE** Overscaled upholstered furniture was once standard in rustic homes. No more. Consider clean lines that show off a sofa or chair’s shape in front of a rustic log or stone wall. To create warmth, add texture instead of the clichéd burgundy-and-brown color palette.

**RETHINK WOOD** If the logs in your home are orange, go darker or paint them white. Choosing natural, neutral tones for your furnishings and accessories will help highlight the beauty and grain of the wood.

**LIGHTEN UP** Think of lighting as your home’s jewelry. Light, graceful fixtures are always better than oppressive and monolithic choices.

**MIX STYLES** If you incorporate pieces that are unexpected—eclectic, or even modern—it adds a little interest to the room and highlights the space’s rustic style. Have an antler sconce or chandelier? Paint it white, black or even gold to instantly update the space.

more  For a guide to this home’s products and pros, visit [mountainliving.com/rusticreimagined](http://mountainliving.com/rusticreimagined).





“ I GET SUCH GREAT SATISFACTION OUT OF REMODELS, OF KNOWING THAT IT WAS KIND OF AN UGLY DUCKLING AND THAT WE TURNED IT INTO A BEAUTIFUL SPACE FOR A LOVELY FAMILY. ”

*RAIN HOUSER*

FACING PAGE, FROM LEFT: In the serene master bathroom, a reclaimed sawn timber functions as a step into the tub. Houser wanted the girls' rec room to be "youthful, but not childlike," with a whimsical sense of color and forgiving fabrics. ABOVE: Muted cream tones make the master bedroom a peaceful haven. A Moroccan wedding blanket adds texture to the bed, and feathery Cameroonian juju hats hang on the wall.