

Redefining rustic

Owners are going high-end on their second home interiors

BY SUZANNE BEAUBIEN

For Adene Lucas, it all started with a stain. The proud owner of a log cabin in Kimberley, B.C., wasn't happy with her colour choices for staining the exterior of her family's newly built mountain home.

So one afternoon Lucas poured and mixed until she came up with a caramel colour that became the basis for all her home decorating decisions, from the wrought-iron and amber glass light fixtures, to the black, distressed cabinetry.

Together, those details helped Lucas and her husband attain the "refined rustic" feeling they were going for — an all-important first step in planning to decorate your home away from home, says the Calgary-based interior decorator.

"I wanted something comfortable with lots of texture — and informal too because it's a log cabin," says Lucas, who hopes her family will be vacationing at the new property by summer.

As an interior designer, Lucas says the sky is the limit when it comes to spending on your second home.

"It's really high-end right now," says Lucas. "People are out to nest in their cabins.

"The days of dragging out your old, plaid sofa are over.

"We joke that our cabin will be nicer than our house," she

adds. And for many Calgary residents, that is the case, Lucas says. People are spending more on their second homes because they're often less limited in terms of space. After all, the price of a puny bungalow in the city could net you a spacious spread in the mountains.

Interior designer LeAnne Bunnell says function is as important as feeling when it comes to decorating your recreation home.

"Really look at how you want to live out there," says Bunnell of elle design.

"And plan for lots of storage — so you're not looking at floaties in the living room."

With a location just five minutes from the ski hill, Lucas said it was important her cabin's interior be rugged enough to withstand ski boot scuffs, and not so fancy that visiting family and friends feel scared to put their feet up.

That means distressed five-inch plank hardwood floors, multi-functional furniture, neutral shades in a variety of textures — and not a stitch of what Lucas calls "cabin kitsch."

"I said to my husband, 'No antler motifs,'" she laughs.

Choosing robust surfaces will help add years to the life of your second home's interior, agrees Bunnell.

"It's important to recognize that you do want to be comfortable, and you do want to put your feet up," she says.

to spend your vacation cleaning.

“You go to a vacation home to have less stress and less worries,” she says.

For the floors, tile and sealed laminates are good choices for high-traffic areas, says Bunnell. Newer cork floorings have factory-applied finishing, and are easier to clean, as are pre-finished hardwoods, which add warmth throughout the bedrooms and other living areas.

In sun porches, where sand is likely to be tracked in, Bunnell recommends woven vinyl flooring such as Chilewich “Plynyl,” a commercial product that has many residential uses, and comes in wall-to-wall or tiles.

In addition to guests, some owners may share their second home, either with another family, or with renters. So furniture that can withstand a lot of use is a must, says Bunnell. She suggests durable fabrics that are easy to clean, such as washable polyesters, or other synthetics like Crypton, which is stain-resistant and microbial.

For Lucas, function was key to choosing her cabin’s furniture. She choose practical, modular pieces with multiple functions;

differently depending on how many people are staying in the cabin.

Bunnell also recommends nesting tables that stack neatly atop each other to offer plenty of room to set down a hot chocolate when entertaining, and clever coffee tables that hide four cube ottomans, which can be slid out for extra seating.

Bringing the same colour schemes and decorating decisions you have in your primary residence out to your vacation home may mean you end up feeling like you never left the city, she adds, recommending owners take this chance to live out another one of their decorating dreams.

“It gives you a chance to play with another side of your tastes — another side of your life,” says Bunnell.

For those who plan on pairing old pieces with some new buys, she suggests commissioning a local artisan to craft a great coffee table — part of a trend toward natural, organic pieces such as Brent Comber’s carved wood tables.

Incorporating natural fabrics such as bamboo and hemp is another way to bring a bit of the outdoors inside, she adds.