

Jonna Chalmers adds a pinch of contemporary to her rustic home with a round dining room table and upholstered chairs. Place settings feature quality china and wine glasses with a deer motif, available at Jonna's Rustic Refinement, along with the cowhide rug. **OPPOSITE TOP:** A mix of equestrian paraphernalia and antiques gives the entranceway an old western feel. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** Situated at the top of a hill outside Meaford, Wind Haven certainly lives up to its name.

Rustic, DEFINED

BY WILLIAM SHELLEY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY

Nothing exudes character like an original North American log cabin. This sort of character can't be imitated – the knots of the old-growth trees and the notches on the hand-hewn logs give these buildings a distinct time signature. *Continued on page 97*





Such structures are rare in Ontario today, though a few survive. Wind Haven, the home Jonna Chalmers shares with her husband, Ralph Kertcher, near Meaford, is the happy marriage of two heritage log cabins. The front portion of the home is a cabin made of rock elm dating from the early 1800s that was probably one of the first European-built structures in Sullivan Township south of Owen Sound, where Jonna found it 37 years ago. The excellent condition of the wood attests to the durability of rock elm, a tree prized by pioneer builders, but all but wiped out by Dutch elm disease. The back half of the home is a pine log cabin, well over a century old, that Jonna found in Quebec. She had both structures dismantled, the logs numbered and then painstakingly reassembled. She originally envisioned the home as a chalet and planned to keep her house in Toronto, but she became attached to this area. She soon made Southern Georgian Bay her permanent home and today owns **Jonna's Rustic Refinement**, a décor and furniture boutique near Blue Mountain.

Jonna made the architectural drawings for her home and then brought in an architect to check them. Both cabins were two storeys but Jonna removed the second floor of the back cabin to open it up, retaining a loft as the master bedroom, accessed by a spiral staircase. The front cabin has a second floor containing an office, guest bedroom and second bath. The unifying element between the two original structures is a large brick fireplace and chimney. When Jonna found the front cabin, it had been converted into a barn with an oversized doorway. Instead of filling it in, Jonna saw an opportunity to use this space. "Looking at this big opening, I thought, 'this is the perfect place to put a fireplace.' I wanted it double-sided," she says. "When I had company here and I was cooking, I wanted to see the fire." The fireplace provides comfort and a cheerful spectacle for anyone seated in the dining room or in the living room. Jonna keeps her holiday décor low-key and natural, using pinecones and pine and cedar boughs. "It's always festive in here, so I don't have to add a lot," she says. *Continued on page 100*



ABOVE: Jonna's collection of native North American handicrafts is prominent throughout her home. Hanging on the wall is a circa-1900 Navajo rug. **LEFT:** In the kitchen, antique windows serve as cupboard doors and a lime green backdrop makes the white dishes pop. **OPPOSITE, LEFT:** Kim Hall of Pinetiques built the distressed kitchen island, which offers both seating and storage. **TOP RIGHT:** Jonna enjoys a hot cup of coffee at home. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** A country-inspired whiskey decanter set – just one of many entertaining accessories available at Jonna's shop.

feature

Her home may be small, but it's full of character and style. Jonna had her sofa custom-made from 19 cowhides, to last her lifetime. It's the ideal spot to cuddle up by the double-sided, wood-burning fireplace. Flower arrangement by Paperwhite Flowers in Thornbury.





feature

In a cosy nook on the other side of the living room is a mid-19th century thick-hewn pine school desk from Quebec. **TOP LEFT:** Modern and rustic come together in the main bathroom, which features a glassed-in shower with stone walls. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Antique sports equipment - wooden skis, a handmade toboggan, leather saddle and old ice skates - offers the nostalgia of winters passed.



The living room with its two-storey height and pine floor (not original to the cabin, but installed by Ralph in more recent years) is the showcase for much of Jonna's custom furniture and collectables. She sells many of the items in her store - the Mongolian sheepskin throw, the copper-shaded Lodge-style lamp, the slate-topped tables and iron lamps made by her son, John, and the cowhide rugs and furniture, to name just a few. The sofa is custom-made from 19 cowhides. "I wanted this to last me the rest of my life," she says, turning the cushions to show that the quality is consistent. "Leather looks better the older it gets." The rugs and accent pillows are also cowhide, as are the dining room chairs. "I love cowhide rugs and I sell a lot in my shop," says Jonna. "They last, you can vacuum them, and if you spill on them, you just wipe it off."

Every piece of Wind Haven has a heritage story behind it. Against the

living room wall stands a thick-hewn pine school bench and desk, dating from the mid-19th century, from Quebec. Like most of the antiques in the house (and the logs and beams of the house itself), it is old and rare. "It's a double bench, meant for two kids side-by-side. There's even graffiti on it," says Jonna.

Her extensive collection of antique native North American handicrafts, including hides, leatherwork, baskets, blankets, prints and twig furniture, is one of the home's dominant themes. One of the rarest pieces is a circa-1900 Navajo rug that hangs on the living room wall. Jonna points out how native art is increasingly rare. "I can't find these anymore," she says, referring to an Ojibwa reed basket decorated with sweetgrass and porcupine quills. "And very few people make new ones anymore." *Continued on page 102*

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TOP & BOTTOM LEFT: At the top of the spiral staircase is the master bedroom loft, outfitted with warm, plush bedding and another cowhide rug. A small antique desk and open shelving serve as bedside tables. **ABOVE:** The upper level of the front cabin has a second, more traditional bathroom with a claw-foot tub.

Jonna had the kitchen, dining room, bathroom and front hall renovated recently, and re-floored in stone. **Kim Hall** of **Pinetiques** in Clarksburg, oversaw the kitchen renovation, which embodies a rustic style similar to the rest of the home, with antique windows serving as the cupboard doors, and detailing like old-world lime green inside the cupboards.

The iron pot rack-lamp over the island is one of several forged pieces in the house made by Jonna's father, Ernst Mortensen. Fascinating decorative details abound throughout the home, including panels, picture frames and other detailing in birch bark and twigs by the late Diane April McVittie. On the living room wall is a colour print from an early 20th century automobile calendar in which a native man in traditional dress, paddling a canoe in a lake, looks up at a shiny new car passing on a winding road. This sums up Jonna's sense of style: a deep regard for the past and an eye for the contemporary. **OH**

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