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# HOMES

## & GARDENING

STAR TRIBUNE/AIA HOME OF THE MONTH



# REVISION ON THE RIVER

A smart layout and handcrafted elements by local artisans turned a summer cabin into a year-round home.

Story by LYNN UNDERWOOD • lynn.underwood@startribune.com  
Photos by SUSAN GILMORE

Back in 1991, Ann and Doug McMillan walked into what appeared to be a no-frills, knotty-pine-paneled cabin from the 1950s. Then they saw the stainless-steel countertops and backsplash in the kitchen. "The kitchen drawers were even lined with steel," recalled Doug. "The cabin was one of a kind."

And ahead of its time. The McMillans found out that the cabin's original owner, George Marzolf Sr., was the engineer who invented deep-drawn stainless steel. He installed the no-seam, smoothed-edge steel on his kitchen countertops, a look that previewed today's modern kitchen applications.

Even the dock on the St. Croix River was stainless steel, "which got really hot in the sun," said Doug. The couple were charmed by the unique features — and tranquil setting — of the Marzolf's rustic summer place near Hudson, Wis.

White pines towered over the property, which boasted 220 feet of sandy shoreline along the river. It faced west with spectacular sunsets over St. Mary's Point.

On the flip side, the basement had water damage, and the interiors were wedged inside a 1950s time capsule, and would require extensive updating. "But it was a fine solid box we could work with," said Doug.

Ann fell for the rushing river below big picture windows inside the cabin. "The pines framed an enchanting view of the river," she said. "It spoke to us."

The couple bought the property and turned the 1,500-square-foot, two-bedroom cabin into their own summer getaway home, only 20 miles from their St. Paul Colonial. First they built a big  
See **AIA** on H5 ▶

## How to grow veggies in pots

Here's what you need to know to successfully produce edibles on your deck or patio.

By MARY JANE SMETANKA  
Special to the Star Tribune

It's a sad summer when you don't have garden space to grow fresh tomatoes. Sometimes it's because trees shade most of a root-clogged yard. Or perhaps you've moved to a condo or apartment building.

Take heart. You can grow veggies in pots, and get good results if you follow a few basic guidelines.

First, most vegetables need at least six daily hours of direct sun to thrive. Eight or more is better for tomatoes and peppers. West, south or southeast exposure is best. If you get less sun than that, you may still be able to grow leafy vegetables like lettuce and kale.

Next, for plants like tomatoes, get the biggest pot you can handle. I consider a roughly seven-gallon pot — about 14 inches across — the smallest decent size, and most tomatoes want a pot bigger than that.

Third, plant only in fresh potting mix. Soil from your garden or yard isn't good enough for these plants, which in their restricted growing space need all the nutrients they can get from decent soil.

Finally, be prepared to water often, to fertilize occasionally and find a plant sitter if you go to the lake on a 90-degree weekend. In July and August or even on a warm, windy May or June day, plants in pots will quickly dehydrate and could wither beyond rescue by the time you get home unless someone is around to give them a drink.

### Tomato tips

Probably the most popular veggie to grow in containers in Minnesota is the tomato. Even if it's warm in early May, hold off on planting tomatoes until mid- to late May, when the risk of frost is past. Tomatoes hate cold soil and can even rot if planted too early.

Some tomato varieties, with "patio" or "bush" in their name, were bred specifically for pot culture. They tend to be smaller plants that slow their growth once they reach a certain height.

Tomatoes have extensive root systems and like a roomy pot. My own preference is to find a pot at least 18 inches across (about 15 gallons). Make sure your pot has drainage holes, and if you're a condo dweller with a neighbor who has a balcony below make sure to put a tray underneath to catch excess water! Plastic pots are  
See **VEGETABLES** on H6 ▶



**Top** Big shed dormers created space for an upstairs master suite inside the 1950s home above the St. Croix River in Wisconsin. **Left** The bedroom evokes a casual rustic elegance with craftsman details such as a hand-carved bureau and built-in window seat. **Right** The "before" attic bedroom.

## South of the border decor is at home in Minnesota

A collector and shop owner styles her Minneapolis house with a Mexican accent.

By KIM PALMER  
kim.palmer@startribune.com

Cinco de Mayo, a national holiday in Mexico, comes around once a year. But Anne Damon's southwest Minneapolis home is fiesta-ready year-round. It's vibrantly decorated with handmade Mexican textiles and ceramics, whimsical figures and masks, and a large cut-paper portrait of painter Frida Kahlo.

Damon's passion for all things Mexican started in high school, when she spent a summer studying Spanish in Toluca, a large city

in the central part of the country. "I absolutely fell in love — with the culture, the cuisine, the color," she said.

She returned to her Wisconsin hometown with a few mementos — a woven basket, a tree of life sculpture, some earrings and a pair of huarache sandals. Later, as a public health nurse working in Tucson, Damon made frequent trips across the border, and usually came back with a few handmade artifacts. Even after settling in the Twin Cities, she continued to return to Mexico every year, adding to her voluminous collection of folk art.

Damon is drawn to unusual pieces — "the things you don't see in the tourist destinations," she said. "I love to go to the artisans' homes,

to the markets."

By 2008, she had amassed so many bowls, platters and table linens that she had a sale in her home. That went well, so she started doing pop-up sales, four times a year, at Guild Collective, a boutique in St. Louis Park. Four years ago, Damon decided to open her own store, Zinnia Folk Arts (zinniafolkarts.com), in a former upholstery shop at 50th Street and Bryant Avenue S. There she sells everything from sculptures to Day of the Dead *ofrendas* and skulls to Mexican-themed party supplies, such as *papel picado* (perforated tissue-paper flags) and paper flowers.

Now she travels to Mexico three or four times a year, typically flying into Mexico City or Guadala-

jara, then heading to smaller towns that have particular craft specialties, such as Chiapas for textiles, Guanajuato for ceramics, Olinalá for Guerrero lacquerware, which is painted then finely inscribed with a turkey quill.

One of Damon's favorite finds was a whimsical clay sculpture of lovebirds on a swing, with devils tempting them. She found it in the town of Ocumicho in the state of Michoacán. "It's extremely remote. I hired a taxi driver, and it took three hours to get there."

Fanciful juxtapositions are a staple of Mexican folk art, such as figures that depict the Last Supper, with Jesus surrounded by mermaids as the disciples. "Mermaids  
See **FIESTA** on H3 ▶



A colorful tree of life decorates Anne Damon's dining room.



## STAR TRIBUNE/AIA HOME OF THE MONTH

Home of the Month appears in the Homes section the first Sunday of every month. The program, a partnership between the Star Tribune and the Minnesota chapter of the American Institute of Architects, features architect-designed houses selected by a jury of experts. The houses represent a range of prices, styles and locations.



Photos by SUSAN GILMORE

# Revision on the river

◀ **AIA** from HI wraparound deck to expand living space and create an outdoor spot for relaxing under the pines. Later, they added two small dormers in the unfinished attic to turn it into a fun sleeping loft for their four kids.

Other cosmetic improvements included replacing eyesore acoustic ceiling tile with pine beadboard, and worn linoleum floors with maple. "We wanted to bring warmth, and update the inside with natural materials," said Doug.

## Time for a change

For two decades, the McMillan kids had a blast boating, water skiing and fishing. But by 2012, the couple were empty nesters and ready to undertake major improvements on the cabin so they could stay there for longer periods into the fall and winter.

Ann and Doug decided that architect Mark Nelson and designer David Heide of David Heide Design Studio were right for the job; they'd already done some remodeling on the St. Paul house.

"They know how to preserve the original character, but add an element of elegance with detailed craftsmanship and quality materials," said Ann.

And there was no doubt what was at the top of the list: a spacious master suite to replace the tiny bedroom, closet and cramped adjacent bathroom on the main floor. "But we didn't know how to get a big master suite out of the kids' bunkhouse," said Ann.

First David Heide Design sought and received a variance, due to strict regulations on new construction within the St. Croix River District. Since the cabin's original footprint couldn't be altered, the firm's

design solution was to raise the roof 3½ feet and build four large shed dormers, creating usable space for a spacious bedroom and bathroom. "The dormers also add more windows, light and ventilation to the second floor," said Nelson.

At the top of stairs, an autumn-themed art-glass skylight sets the tone for the finely crafted features throughout the upstairs bedroom suite. Pine bookshelves are built in below a wall of windows facing the river. Rough-hewn tree trunks support rustic ceiling beams, and "bring an organic quality to the architecture," said Heide.

A local craftsman designed and built a free-standing bureau that doubles as a headboard and separates the dressing and sleeping areas. Wood-carvings inspired by tramp art, and branch-shaped bronze pulls decorate the piece. Rustic meets high-tech with an automatic lift that raises a TV from inside the bookcase — so that it doesn't block the view.

A second art-glass skylight — this one depicting spring flowers and a dragonfly — draws light into the windowless new master bathroom. Dimmer-controlled LED lights illuminate the art glass at night.

The two pine vanities, heated floors and basketweave tile give the bathroom a vintage luxe feel, as well as providing lots of storage.

Ann picked a William Morris traditional floral wallpaper that was hung above white-painted wainscot. "He was a great textile designer from the Arts & Crafts period," she said. "The wallpaper brings nature inside."

As the project progressed, Doug and Ann decided to remodel all three levels of the cabin. "They recognized the benefits to creating a cohesive

working home for their family," said Nelson.

This involved rebuilding two stacked staircases, which widened the front entry and opened sightlines through the house and to the river beyond. "Sometimes just moving a staircase can be cheaper than an addition to gain space," said Heide.

Although the ceilings are only 8 feet tall, the main-floor living areas feel airy and open. "And we're no longer bumping our heads when we climb the stairs," said Doug.

In the living room, the McMillans preserved the original knotty-pine paneling, while replacing the wood-burning fireplace with an Arts & Crafts-style green-tile surround. Finally, they installed energy-efficient picture windows that span the back wall overlooking the river.

## Updating the kitchen

The quirky galley kitchen still showcases Marzolf's innovative stainless-steel handiwork. Ann appreciates the timeworn steel work surface below a window where she can hear birds chirping.

But the McMillans decided the kitchen needed some upgrading with new appliances, and they also tore down a hallway wall in order to add a curved pine breakfast bar. "The peninsula opens up and connects the kitchen to the rest of the house," added Heide.

Down in the basement, the couple remodeled a second "catering kitchen" for better functionality during holiday family gatherings, as well as refurbishing the rec room.

The renovation was such a success that the McMillans ultimately sold their St. Paul home so that they could live along the St. Croix year-round.

## ABOUT THIS PROJECT

**What:** A three-level renovation within the original footprint turned a 1950s family summer cabin into a permanent home on the St. Croix River.

**Size:** 3,000 square feet with four bedrooms and four bathrooms. Does not include the finished basement.

## Design team:

Architect Mark Nelson, designer David Heide and Kyle Veldhouse, interior designer Michael Crull, David Heide Design Studio, Mpls. 612-337-5060, dhdstudio.com.

**General contractor:** Reliable Builders, Eagan.

**Art glass:** Century Studios, St. Paul.

**Decorative ironwork:** Clay Beardshear, Live Oak Ironworks.

**Custom cabinetry:** Frost Cabinets, St. Paul.

Although it feels like they're in the North Woods, Doug is closer to his job, and it's a short drive to the Twin Cities for Minnesota Twins games and to visit their adult children.

In honor of Marzolf, Doug lined the fire pit with a steel rim. It's where they sit with a glass of wine and watch eagles soaring over the St. Croix. "George Marzolf is looking down on us with a smile on his face," said Doug.

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**From top** A new curved breakfast bar and cabinets match the existing pine kitchen. The "before" kitchen with original George Marzolf stainless-steel counters. The remodeled basement "catering" kitchen continues the green-hued and pine theme.



New green tile on the fireplace surround adds Arts & Crafts character to the pine-paneled living room.



The new front entry staircase with handcrafted wrought-iron railings.



An art-glass skylight, William Morris floral wallpaper and custom pine vanities in the roomy master bathroom. At night, the skylight can be illuminated with LED lights.

See more photos and past homes of the month at [startribune.com/aiahomes](http://startribune.com/aiahomes)