

# What's New In Log Homes?

Log-home innovations are popping up all over the industry, representing the latest advancements in design concepts, technology and energy efficiency.



story by DANIELLE TAYLOR

For many, the draw of a log cabin is the return to simplicity. The very construction of such a home has so much historic significance, and for many homeowners, a rustic cabin symbolizes the ultimate getaway.

So the introduction of modern innovations to what has always represented a humble retreat from modern, urban existence may seem a little contradictory. However, some of today's developments make it easier than ever to simplify your home — and your life.

### Design Developments

In response to consumer requests, many log-home companies are developing new design technologies, both in planning tools that help customers make well-informed decisions as well as advanced engineering concepts that are revolutionizing current building practices. Both allow customers more options and information with which they can make wise choices regarding their future home.

To start, Wisconsin Log Homes has developed advanced 3-D rendering software that allows the consumer to see his or her potential home virtually built on an actual photograph of the building site. Log walls, roofing products, stone details, furniture, appliances and actual property views as they will be seen from inside and outside the home all help amplify the three-dimensional floor plans. These amenities allow customers to fully visualize what their future home will look and feel like, and give them the opportunity to make changes before construction begins.

"Before the floor plan is built, customers have the option to literally walk through their home via the computer," says Dave Janczak, owner and founder of Wisconsin Log Homes, based in Green Bay, Wisconsin. "It's difficult to tell the difference between the 3-D rendering and the actual photograph of the completed home." The cost for their rendering services starts around \$1 per square foot, making it significantly more affordable than the many change orders often required when owners find unwelcome surprises during construction.

Other companies have developed design principles that change the very structure of the log homes themselves. Bracebridge, Ontario-based True North Log Homes has created a unique timber-frame king-post system that uses a hanging post in the center of the home to support the extending roof beams. By stretching the post instead of compressing the load, as in traditional post-and-beam construction, this engineering system allows for varying rooflines and greater versatility in design, as it reduces the need for load-bearing walls or support posts.



**ABOVE:** These renderings by Wisconsin Log Homes show homeowners precisely how their proposed design will look and feel on their exact site when built.

**OPPOSITE:** Even a cozy, traditional-style cabin can benefit from modern innovations. This Honka log home features laminated logs and nearly impenetrable corners, making it significantly tighter than its drafty predecessors.



True North Log Homes borrowed ideas from timber-frame architectural designs to create this innovative king-post system, which allows for larger open spaces within the home. This system uses the load-bearing upper ridge post to support hanging beams that extend across the roofline.

### Logs of Variety

Different log options also are popping up all over the marketplace, and consumers have a wider variety of choices than ever before for their home's construction. Estemerwalt Log Homes, based in Honesdale, Pennsylvania, gives new meaning to "cutting edge" with its revolutionary new lathe. This state-of-the-art piece of equipment is capable of milling logs up to 38 feet in length and 20 inches in diameter.

Affectionately dubbed the "Amber Lynn" (an enigmatic name found scrawled on the lathe's carriage upon its arrival at the mill), this immense machine can mill round logs as well as flat edges down the entire length of the log, making it an extremely versatile, in-demand tool at Estemerwalt. Mammoth-sized logs are becoming more and more popular among modern log-home owners, both for their aesthetically pleasing characteristics as well as their increased thermal mass.

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