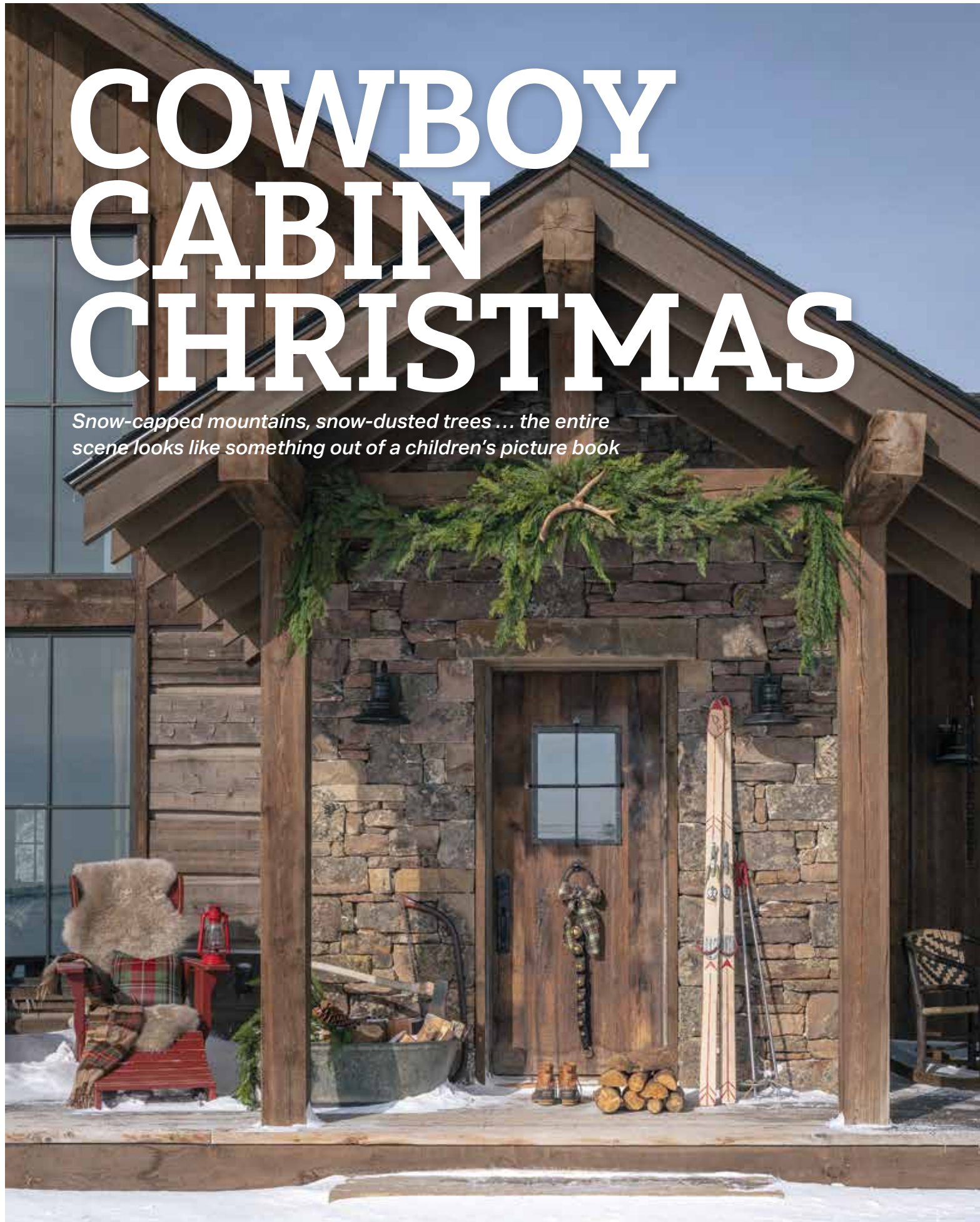


COWBOY CABIN CHRISTMAS

Snow-capped mountains, snow-dusted trees ... the entire scene looks like something out of a children's picture book



OPPOSITE: Amish-made Belsnickel sleigh bells and a plaid bow say "Merry Christmas" before the door is opened.
THIS PAGE: Navajo rugs and a mix of plaid pillows and blankets give the great room a snug-in-winter vibe. "Homes with a lot of wood can carry a lot of color," says Jeremiah Young, owner of Kibler & Kirch. "For Christmas, don't be afraid to add even more color." >>

STORY **IRENE RAWLINGS** PHOTOS **AUDREY HALL**
INTERIOR DESIGN AND INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE **KIBLER & KIRCH**
ARCHITECTURE **MARK WEIRICH** CONSTRUCTION **BATTLE RIDGE CONSTRUCTION**



Christmas is a magical time at Scott and Victoria Evans' cabin in Montana's Paradise Valley. The valley is flanked by the towering Absaroka Range and the Gallatin River Range. The home is surrounded by tall spruce and pine trees. Outside, the snow is deep, and the temperatures are frosty. Inside, everything is cozy, bright and festive.

Before the rest of the family arrives, Scott and Victoria and their two dogs (Mowgli, a 14-year-old beagle mix, and 3-year-old Cowboy, "a proper Montana ranch dog") hike into the forest to cut a tree. The tree is decorated with special ornaments that Victoria has collected for their three children. "Each ornament is significant," she says.

But this Christmas story started many years earlier for this San Diego-based family. "We have been dreaming of a Montana home for more than 30 years and have vacationed in many areas of the state," says Scott, who is an avid fly-fisher. The family also loves to ski. "The kids grew up skiing at Mammoth Mountain, Bridger Bowl and Big Sky," he says.

In the summer of 2020, they purchased 20 acres—with no neighbors in sight. "It is not a huge piece of land but enough to give us some elbow room," says Scott. "We wanted a classic Montana ranch house that looked like it had been there a very long time," he adds. Mark Weirich, principal at Bozeman, Montana-based Mark Weirich Architect, drew up the plans. Having designed homes in Spanish Peaks, Moonlight Basin and the Yellowstone Club, Weirich's work fits squarely within the mountain-and-ranch architecture tradition of the American West.

Scott and Victoria created a "vision board" of images that inspired them—pages torn from architecture and design magazines, photographs and fabric swatches. They also wanted a home that, while cabin-like, would be large enough to host family gatherings, especially as their now grown-up children began to marry and have children of their own.

They chose Jeremiah Young, owner of Billings, Montana-based design firm Kibler & Kirch, who worked with Russell Drost, owner of Battle Ridge Construction in Livingston, Montana, to make the homeowners' cabin-in-the-woods daydream become a reality. "They were on the same page from the very first moment," says Scott, who adds, "It is not easy to build a home from 1,100 miles away ... but Jeremiah and Russ made the project practically seamless."

"I like using lots of natural layers," says Young. "Natural materials bring the outdoors in." Old Hickory chairs covered in plaid with leather seats surround the table. On the walls: Clyde Aspevig paintings of four months in Paradise Valley—July, August, September, and October.

DECK THE HALLS

Jeremiah Young, owner of design firm Kibler & Kirch, has a more-is-more approach to Christmas decorating. He shares his tips with Mountain Living readers.

PILE ON THE GREENS Stuff your tree with a mix of evergreen species in various shades of green, stick the greens in vases, and weave them into a garland on your mantel. This trick gives wonderful complexity and reduces the number of ornaments needed. **GATHER SIMPLE AND BEAUTIFUL PINE CONES**—then mound them in bowls and tuck them into greenery, add to wrapped presents or incorporate into a tablescape. **ADD SLEIGH BELLS**—the sound of bells is literally the sound of Christmas—on the front door to ring out a festive greeting. Young's favorites are Amish-made Belsnickel Bells on sturdy leather straps. **MIXING PLAIDS IS OK, EVEN PREFERRED** Cozy blankets in a range of plaids piled up, dripping over furniture or little tables, and spilling out of baskets add both decoration and a cozy vibe. **PRESENTS ARE THE ULTIMATE DECORATION** Start with a base paper—a black, a tan (think craft paper or white tissue) and maybe one color, like red—but then get creative in the use of layered ribbons, simple leather string, or ornaments tied to presents that match the tree they sit under. Wrap presents early and you've both decorated and taken the stress out of that last-minute dash to wrap everyone's gift.



OPPOSITE: "The entry sets the tone for the rest of the house," says Young. A chest to store games and extra blankets complements a stone wall. Above, an Edward S. Curtis print. THIS PAGE: "Our daughter is the chef in this family, and I don't set foot in the kitchen when she's here," says Victoria. Ingredients for an informal fondue dinner are laid out on the counter (made from a thick slab of oak). "Everything is satisfying and rustic to the touch," says Young. "Nothing slick, nothing modern."

“WE WANTED THINGS THAT WERE TOUCHED AND SHAPED BY HUMAN HANDS ... NOT MACHINES.”

—INTERIOR DESIGNER JEREMIAH YOUNG



Young remembers that the homeowners asked for a quintessential ranch cabin—something not contrived, something that felt like it had been there forever, something properly rustic. “They had me at the word ‘rustic,’” Young says. He mixed rustic touches with elegance and included as many handmade, locally crafted elements as possible. “We wanted things that were touched and shaped by human hands, not machines,” he says. Drost adds: “The choice of materials, from rough-sawn planks to Montana moss rock, contributes to the warm and rustic look.”

The 4,100-square-foot home has five bedrooms and four-and-a-half baths. It is not a huge house, but it can accommodate a large group of family and friends while retaining an intimate feel. A favorite gathering place is the quaint but highly functional kitchen. “Our daughter is the chef in the family,” says Victoria. “At Christmas, she doesn’t let me set foot in the kitchen.”

As darkness falls and the stars shine bright in the inky sky, the Evans family sits down to a celebratory Christmas Eve dinner in their cozy cabin, decorated for the perfect cowboy Christmas ○

BELOW: Comfortable chairs and plenty of plaid blankets make an inviting seating area. **OPPOSITE:** Two wingback chairs (in the lofted area that overlooks the great room) make this a cozy spot for reading. For Christmas, Young has decorated it with a multitude of fresh greens, festive red-and-green plaids, and even a little blanket over the table.

» For a guide to this home's products and pros, visit mountainliving.com/ChristmasCabin

