

DOWN-HOME CHARM AND HIGH-END LUXURY COMBINE.

# MODERN

BUILDER + DESIGN

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# MODERN RUSTIC: A NEW TREND WITH AN OLD SOUL

BY NAOMI NEILSON HOWARD

Just as the most interesting paint colors are those that straddle two hues—i.e., the watery color created when blue and green mingle or the chic “greige” that comes from gray and beige—the most interesting homes color outside the lines of any one design style. “Rustic modern” may sound like an oxymoron, but the name (and others like “rustic contemporary” and “urban rustic”) suits this emerging design style perfectly. Today’s modern rustic homes hit all the right notes with builders and homeowners who seek eclectic spaces with the warmth and charm of an old farmhouse or ski lodge and the bells and whistles—and sophistication—of a new build. The following trends drive this movement.

## The Design Bridge between Chic and Country

At the intersection of modern design and ancient tradition, the modern rustic home celebrates the juxtaposition of chic and country, of old and new, of rough textures and clean lines. Because it’s not tethered to any one style or era, the modern rustic style has real staying power and can work as well in a modestly sized urban loft as in a rambling rural farmhouse. No matter the setting or the size, this style favors wide-open spaces — in particular grand farmhouse-style kitchens with ex-

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posed beams. This little bit country/little bit rock ‘n’ roll aesthetic mingles down-home comfort with high-end luxury. Think of a dramatic double vanity in the master bath that’s artisan-built from reclaimed wood, but underfoot are heated tile floors and overhead energy-efficient lighting. Or, imagine sleek modern chairs gathered around a farm table.

## Natural-Born and Natural Minded

Inside and out, the modern rustic home reflects nature: in its tendency to have large windows that invite the outside in, its emphasis on sustainable design and its use of natural materials and earthy colors. Not the place for splashy colors or wallpapers, the rustic modern home relies on soft, simple colors and fabulous solid fabrics for its upholstery and linens. From floor to ceiling, texture is favored over color; the ceiling might be lined with planks of reclaimed wood or punctuated by rustic beams. Wood or stained concrete floors are layered with rugs made from natural materials — jute, sisal, even repurposed hides. Dramatic feature walls are often made of wood or stone.

## Sustainable Style

These homes are likely to include materials that are reclaimed and given a “second life.” Through repurposing, a traditional material can acquire new life, such as a wine barrel that’s been repurposed into a bath vanity, a tractor wheel reinvented as a chandelier or a bucolic barn door reimagined for interior use. Some materials are completely transformed: copper wiring and pipes can be melted



*TRUE ARTISAN-MADE PRODUCTS EXUDE A SENSE OF THE CULTURE AND HERITAGE OF THE ARTISANS WHO CRAFTED THEM.*

UP FRONT | MODERN RUSTIC DESIGN

down and turned into a modern farmhouse sink for the kitchen. This design style includes an overall ethos of sustainability. Reusing, reclaiming and recycling are part of any modern design and fit perfectly into the lifestyle of the homeowner who is comfortable with this urban rustic aesthetic.

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**Time to Shine: Metal, Stone, and Concrete**

What allowances are made for glitz in the modern rustic home come in the form of metals like copper, nickel, iron and zinc, taking

center stage in the kitchen and bath on sinks, range hoods, fixtures, faucets and hardware.

That's because these materials are luxe by nature, as are marble and soapstone countertops.

Speaking of stone, the stone fireplace is a centerpiece of the rustic home. Concrete is also finding its way onto countertops and floors, and into the bathroom and kitchen in the form of sinks.

The no-nonsense, industrial appeal of concrete is undeniably modern and plays well with the warmth of wood and other natural materials.

Plus, it's naturally more environmentally friendly than porcelain, glass and ceramic, and is one of the least energy intensive materials one can specify in a bathroom design.

Concrete can be made to be even more energy efficient — and stronger — by adding sustainable materials such as natural plant fibers to the mix.

**The Soul of Artisan Design**

Future-forward design is sometimes associated with a cold and impersonal aesthetic, but modern rustic homes are anything but — instead embracing character and imperfection.

That's because many of the textures so intrinsic to this style are created by the human hand, as in a hand-hammered copper bathtub or hand-scraped hardwood floors.

True artisan-made products don't just contribute beauty and uniqueness to a space, they also exude a sense of the culture and heritage of the artisans who crafted them.

Whether created with hundreds-of-years-old techniques used by American artisans or thousands-of-years-old traditions handed down through generations of international craftspeople, each piece can be a window into the history and soul of people, past and present. ■



**NAOMI NEILSON HOWARD** is the founder and CEO of Native Trails, the premier source for functional, earth-friendly products for the kitchen, bath and home. The company's new headquarters, designed in modern rustic style, is located on California's central coast.



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