

*A ski-in, ski-out home  
in the snowbound  
village of Sugar Bowl  
combines the best of  
rustic and contemporary*

# SUGAR BOWL MAGIC

With the snow piled high outside, this cozy corner of the great room is warm and inviting. The chairs (custom-built by Kroll; leather by Dualoy) are a modern take on the traditional wingbacks.

STORY **IRENE RAWLINGS** PHOTOS **PAUL DYER**  
ARCHITECTURE **MARK BECKER**  
INTERIOR DESIGN **JENNIFER ROBIN INTERIORS**  
CONSTRUCTION **MT. LINCOLN CONSTRUCTION**



The kitchen with its marble sink and black-granite island is light, bright and an inspiring place to cook and to eat. Black onyx light fixtures by Laviva Home provide a warm over-the-sink light; a circular David Alexander above the island pendant is modern and decorative. James Perse stools add a rustic element in the Scandi-modern space.

The homeowners—she's originally from Colorado, he's from California—love skiing. "We were married in Vail and skied on our wedding day," she says. So, even as their jobs took them to New York City, their hearts remained in the West. "Finally, we packed up our kids and drove across the country to be closer to family," she says. Knowing they were avid skiers, a business associate loaned them his weekend home in Sugar Bowl, an under-the radar, family-owned ski area near Lake Tahoe known for its steep chutes, open bowls, deep powder and rich history. Walt Disney was an original investor when the resort opened in 1939. Old Hollywood skied here, including Marilyn Monroe, Rita Hayworth and Errol Flynn.

Sugar Bowl is a snowbound—that is, car-free—village. In winter, it is only accessible via the resort's iconic gondola (opened in 1953, the first in the West). "We loaded all our belongings on a gondola and, when we got to the village, we dragged them (on a sled) to where we were staying," says the wife. The village is small, quaint, safe and family-centric. "People were walking or skiing everywhere, and kids were running around in the snow," she recalls. "It was magical."

It is no wonder that when it came time to build a home of their own, they chose Sugar Bowl. "The welcoming community is small, and the whole ethos is 'run by families for families,'" says the husband. They found the ideal lot—200 yards from one of the main lifts and near the rope tow that takes the children to ski team. They put together their ideal team: Oakland, California-based architect Mark Becker; Mt. Lincoln Construction, based in Truckee; and Jen Robin, owner of Jennifer Robin Interiors in San Anselmo.

"The husband and wife have very different design aesthetics," Becker notes. "We went through several sets of plans, 3D models and hand sketches until we created something they both loved"—rustic for the husband and modern for the wife. On the outside, the home is a traditional Craftsman with reclaimed split-log timbers (sourced in Montana). "The area's severe snow load necessitated a metal roof with pitch that was steep enough and an overhang that was deep enough to easily shed snow," says Becker. The plaster-and-wood interior is more modern in form and materials. >>



## OPPOSITES ATTRACT

*Couples often have very different tastes. Sometimes they are even polar opposites. One likes the cowboy Western look and the other has a more L.A. or East Coast sensibility. Or one likes homespun and rustic while the other prefers clean, contemporary lines. Jennifer Robin, founder and owner of Jennifer Robin Interiors, has some tips and suggestions.*

**DISCOVER EACH PERSON'S PRIORITIES** Conflicting tastes ultimately bring out an interesting, eclectic and more unique design. I always try to discover what makes each partner excited, and where they are willing to compromise with their partner's vision. **BLEND VIEWPOINTS** Ultimately the goal of the designer is to blend differing viewpoints in a harmonious way to tell the couple's and family's unique story. The dining room of the Sugar Bowl home is a great example. We fused his desire for the more rustic by using plaid fabrics and a custom, reclaimed-wood dining table with her attraction to the more modern and minimalist with B&B Italia dining chairs and a simple, sculptural light fixture by Brendan Ravenhill. **THINK ABOUT DURABILITY** We also made sure everything was extremely durable and thus functional for the kids ... so no tension exists in the design or in the homeowners' real life. To achieve this balance, the interior designer should be working with the homeowners and architect before construction begins. Ideally, the interiors and architecture are integrated into the drawings before they are handed off to the contractor. >>

TOP: The homeowners wanted their home to feel like a 100-year-old house that had been recently remodeled to make it livable for a modern family. BOTTOM: Winter wood is stored in a cubbyhole under the stairs. The metal railing is a contemporary contrast with the room's rustic timber beams.



"WE LIKE TO SIT ON THE COUCH, ENJOY A CUP OF COFFEE IN FRONT OF THE FIRE AND LOOK OUT...AT THE WINTER WONDERLAND OUTSIDE!"

—THE HOMEOWNER

The large stone fireplace has a reclaimed wood mantel that complements the reclaimed wood ceiling. Dmitry & Co. sofas share the space with a custom leather-and-metal coffee table and Liaigre twig stools.

THIS PAGE: The primary suite with its clean, straight lines is inspired by minimalist/functional Scandinavian-modern design. Bookshelves on either side of the windows add texture and personality. The vintage reading lights are from Obsolete; the ceiling fixture is by Workstead. OPPOSITE TOP: Blue plaid fabric on Verellen chairs adds a whimsical touch. OPPOSITE BOTTOM: The primary bath is serene and relaxing. The walls and oversized tub are clad in white-washed wood.



Construction started during what Chris Tennant, president of Mt. Lincoln Construction, describes as a "historic winter." His company is experienced in winter builds in Sugar Bowl, making certain to have all materials (including "a significant amount of structural steel") on site when the roads close in mid-November. "But, in 2019, we had record-breaking snowfalls with more than 300 inches falling in February alone," he says. Snow removal and "chipping the ice off the building materials" was a daily task for the construction crew.

Despite challenges, the 3,800-square-foot, three-level, four-bedroom, 4.5-bath home was completed in early fall of 2020. Designer Robin describes the interior as "organic mountain home meets Scandinavian modern." The light, bright and functional kitchen has a whitewashed ceiling and oak cabinetry that's continued all around the room. Even the refrigerator, freezer and stove hood are clad in oak. "It balances out the marble and the black granite island," says Robin. The great room, anchored by its monumental stone fireplace, is the homeowners' favorite spot. "We like to sit on the couch, enjoy a cup of coffee by the fire and look out the big windows at the winter wonderland outside," says the husband.

Husband and wife agree that they have the ideal home in which to entertain extended family, including two sets of grandparents, brothers, sisters and cousins. "And," says the wife, "we love to share the magic of Sugar Bowl with friends who have never been."

» For a guide to this home's products and pros, visit [mountainliving.com/SugarBowlMagic](http://mountainliving.com/SugarBowlMagic)

