WHATEVER FLOATS YOUR BOATHOUSE

Forget the rickety moorings of yore. Nowadays, ambitious cottagers are enlisting top designers to rethink their docks, recasting them as everything from waterside play spaces to fully equipped crash pads. Matthew Hague surveys three (plus how to affect their looks in your own summer retreat).

THE RUSTIC COUNTERPOINT

In certain ways, Toronto architect Tom Wilson, associate partner at YMC Architects, designed this Niagara Escarpment boathouse as an antithesis to the cottage on the same site. In fact, the wood cottage is somewhat misleading here, as the main lodge is a modern house with soaring glass walls, an infinity-edge pool and statement-making two arched (the property is 90 acres and includes a private lake). Because the cottage and its deck resemble a house and its deck, respectively—demarcated by a small shed—it's easy to see how it was designed to be the exact opposite. (There was already a deck on the site, "but it was nothing like the lake," Wilson notes.)

And it is the opposite. Well, mostly. The only thing that isn't rustic is the patio. It is, however, a small patio designed to serve and prepare midday drinks and snacks and a rooftop deck with a living platform that the water drops off steeply immediately off it. But the nooks and corners of the house are there, like the main building. And the walls of the living room are filled with simple, unadorned furniture.

The furniture fits in with the rustic story. It was all sourced through the Toronto-based store Made, which specializes in those designed and manufactured in Canada. Lumberjack-style prints, Edmund son's scops and tree-trunk stools add warmth and a sense of wilderness chic.

But for all the rustic architecture and furnishings, the view from within is the most spectacular part of the deckhouse. "There was nothing to see after the house, looking out over the lake," Wilson says. "It's as unspoiled and beautiful as being up in the trees, which you can see at the boathouse, designed by Harlan Tours and Associates."

ON THE EDGE

This sturdy boathouse was once a "little picked over" (note: it was designed to contrast the property's modern lodge, with smooth, dark and natural lines and finished with Canadian "barn" doors. This new "boathouse" opens up to a sweeping lake view.

GET THE LOOK

Akin to the plump chairs in the old boathouse are Atmanta's "CALM" CURIDIO SIDE TABLES, from neocon each; available at www.atmanta.com. A组black and white pillows on a bench made from recycled wood and set on the deck.

Want an instant hit of classic Canadian/ "Eucalyptus sofa, which you can see at the boathouse, designed with the help of Amery Tindal."

Defined by its tall-stem wall lamp, this is the perfect outdoor lamp. The "Oxford" outdoor wall lamp from www.lightingknowhow.com flowering for a lit up look, making it ideal for a lake-side escape.