



Mountain COTTAGE STYLE

After years of vacationing at resorts in Highlands, North Carolina, this family decided to put down roots in their favorite mountain escape.



Tennessee-based interior designer Eric Ross and his wife, Ruthann, spent years traveling to the western mountains of North Carolina where their daughter attended camp. “We loved the luxury mountain resorts in the area,” Ruthann says, “but it was breaking the bank.” That’s when the couple decided to start looking for a place of their own that they could share with friends and other mountain travelers.

What they found was a cozy mountain retreat nestled in Highlands, North Carolina, equipped with good bones—especially when it came to the bathrooms and an updated kitchen that didn’t need much work—leaving the renovations affordable. One year later, with a handful of cosmetic updates under their belts, the Rosses’ dreamy mountain cottage is open for business. Dubbed “Roostica Cottage” after the rustic setting and a charming hand-painted rooster found on the original screen door, this cottage is a breath of fresh air. “We were trying to set ourselves apart from the lodge and cabin look,” Ruthann says. “A mountain cottage is a little bit different. It’s lighter, it’s brighter, it’s more of a cheerful environment compared to the heaviness of the typical lodge or cabin decor.” While they do hint at the surrounding environment and local critters





"Cottages are about cozy spaces, but when it comes to entertaining you want your home to feel spacious, not confining or claustrophobic."

—RUTHANN ROSS





in their cottage décor, the Rosses tastefully scale back the bears, foxes, owls, and pinecones, to a more contemporary, subtle nod.

With whitewashed brick and painted paneling, the Rosses turned the original dark, wood-heavy cabin into an airy oasis that feels as tranquil as the cool mountain air outside. “We wanted to tone down the knotty pine by painting it white, which really helped brighten up the whole space,” Ruthann says. “You still have all those cozy textures that shine through, but painting it all white made the rooms more cohesive and honestly, it makes the space feel bigger.” The design duo didn’t

The kitchen was in good shape when they bought the house with granite countertops and new stainless steel appliances, so the Rosses simply added a fresh coat of paint, nice dishes, and charming accessories to complete the space.





paint over all the exposed wood in their Roostica Cottage, however, as it was important to strike a balance of texture, light and dark, and masculine and feminine touches.

Using fabrics as a jumping off point for design, Eric found quiet comfort in neutral gray and yellow tones, accenting with blue and green hues. Emphasizing detail and luxury, he found that blending masculine and feminine accents like the strong plaids with the soft ruffles and florals, creates a welcoming, neutral space both family and visitors enjoy. "I think the taste level of Highlands' visitors tends to be a little more discerning, so they're looking for something that is different from [other] mountain cabins," Ruthann says, noting they wanted the property to be on par with luxury inns in the area, but affordable for families.

The Rosses replaced every light fixture in the house when they purchased the property a year ago. "That was one of the things coming in that was very 'lodge style,'" Ruthann says. "Everything either had a bear or a pine cone or heavy mica glass on it. The lighting throughout was pretty dismal, so we replaced every single fixture in the house, and in the end, it paid off."



One of the biggest—and only—construction projects to the Roostica Cottage was the addition of the screened porch complete with the fireplace. "That was my number one thing," Ruthann says. "I wanted an outdoor fireplace. It's my favorite thing about going to the mountains—sitting outside on a cold or rainy night and having a fire, snuggled up with friends and family." The Rosses will agree the cozy porch is easily guests' favorite gathering place. "Fireplaces and time spent by the hearth side are what people always crave in the winter months," Ruthann says. With four fireplaces this charming cottage offers just the right amount of luxury and comfort that will have visitors calling this mountain retreat home—if only for a weekend. 📍

