

# Black is the new black



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## ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

**B**lack Birch: one of the most beautiful, and certainly most dramatic, cottages we've ever had the good fortune to visit. Perched high on a lushly forested hillside in beautiful Haliburton, and overlooking expansive Drag Lake, it's an entirely commanding vision of contemporary architecture.

We first heard tell of Black Birch whilst researching com-

pany (of our lake) with a smile on his face and a cache of brochures concealed in his waterproof backpack.

Coffee brewing, we informed our guest of our frantic TV timetable and found his honesty immediately reassuring. "Come on, guys: I'm certain I can create the best windows for your project, but I just can't rush the job. I've worked for 28 years building my reputation and, as

to be without Chris's involvement. We just had this very good feeling.

Listening as we rhapsodized about our plans for a 'Danish style cabin in the

woods', Chris smiled and said simply: "Come visit my place: it may give you some inspiration. And bring your team: we'll arrange lunch." Lunch and a spot of property porn? We were hooked.

Arriving at 'Black Birch', we were immediately smitten. Designed by Brad Netkin of Stamp Architecture in Toronto, and somewhat Bauhausian in its aesthetic, it's a joy to behold.

Sided with a combo of board and batten and black corrugated steel and featuring a low pitched steel roof, the modern vernacular seems initially at odds with its woody, verdant environment but, in the same moment, perfectly at ease.

As our eyes survey the building's every line, the front door swings open and we're met by Chris, his wife Susan and their teenage daughters Rachel and Taylor. Together, they've prepared a beautiful table scape of gastronomic comestibles.

We're gob smacked: our crew numbers ten but the family have catered for everyone. There's chilled bubbly, a delicious pork roast, all manner of beautiful breads and an array of dreamy salads. When people indulge our team (and not just us) we rate them highly... and Chris and

much as your show sounds interesting, my guarantee of quality is paramount. It'll take several weeks, because of the custom nature of this job, from site drawings to delivery."

Hmmm. We've witnessed people rush to be involved in our TV endeavors: the same people who delivered unrealistic promises that subsequently collapsed leaving us with scheduling nightmares and frazzled producers.

Chris, however, made no such promises. His suggestion that we rejig our schedules (if we truly wanted to invest in his brand) was met with some concern by those who manage our timetable.

But we begged them to loosen our diary. In short, we recognized that our cottage simply couldn't be that which it needed



The great room features a comfy mix of furniture and a stunning view of lakes and forest through dramatic black framed windows.



Who needs mechanical cooling? The rear wall tilt and turn window configuration ensures efficient air conditioning.

panies to tackle our own ambitious cottage glazing requirements. The existing (rotting) windows in our latest bolthole soar seventeen feet but, to maximize light even further, we plan augmenting the glass quotient by around 35%. But you'll have to wait till Cabin Pressure 2 airs in Spring '15 to view the outcome. Sorry, no spoilers for now!

In the first instance, and on high recommendation from several trusted contacts, we set up an appointment with Chris Meiorin owner of Euro Vinyl Windows and Doors and indeed owner of the wondrous Black Birch.

A veritable athlete, Chris arrived by paddleboard to inspect our cabin (his cottage, coincidentally, is on the other side

Susan went to town.

But anyway: windows. Those at Black Birch (expertly manufactured by Chris's company) are painted deepest jet (inside and out) and, whilst some are fixed panel, others operate on a 'tilt and turn' basis to open, door like, or flip forward: this level of flexibility is crucial where natural 'passive' air conditioning is concerned.

Over lunch, we plot the perfect solution for our own cottage. Euro Vinyl, it transpires, provide a custom service, as well as a range of 'off the shelf' options to moderate spend, and, via a combo of each, our plans evolve.

For the elevation facing our lake, we aspire to large

terrace portals (a mix of fixed panels and sliders) and a towering window configuration that'll shoot skywards to fill the apex of our A-frame cabin.

At the rear, we hope for 'entire wall elevation' windows if it turns out we can punch out the areas currently occupied by ridiculously tiny glazed panels. Sure, we have big plans, but everyone seems confident they can be materialized.

Our visit reaching its conclusion, we thank the Meiorins for their hospitality and prepare to leave. In a single page of photographs, it's

difficult to convey the full majesty of such a wonderful abode, but if you scan the Euro Vinyl website (a portion of which showcases Black Birch) we promise you won't be disappointed.

For enough window inspiration to leave you glazed and dazed, visit [www.evvin.ca](http://www.evvin.ca) And prepare to swoon.

— photos by Brad Netkin of STAMP Architecture.



Perched high on a lushly forested hillside in Haliburton, Black Birch is a stunning example of contemporary architecture.