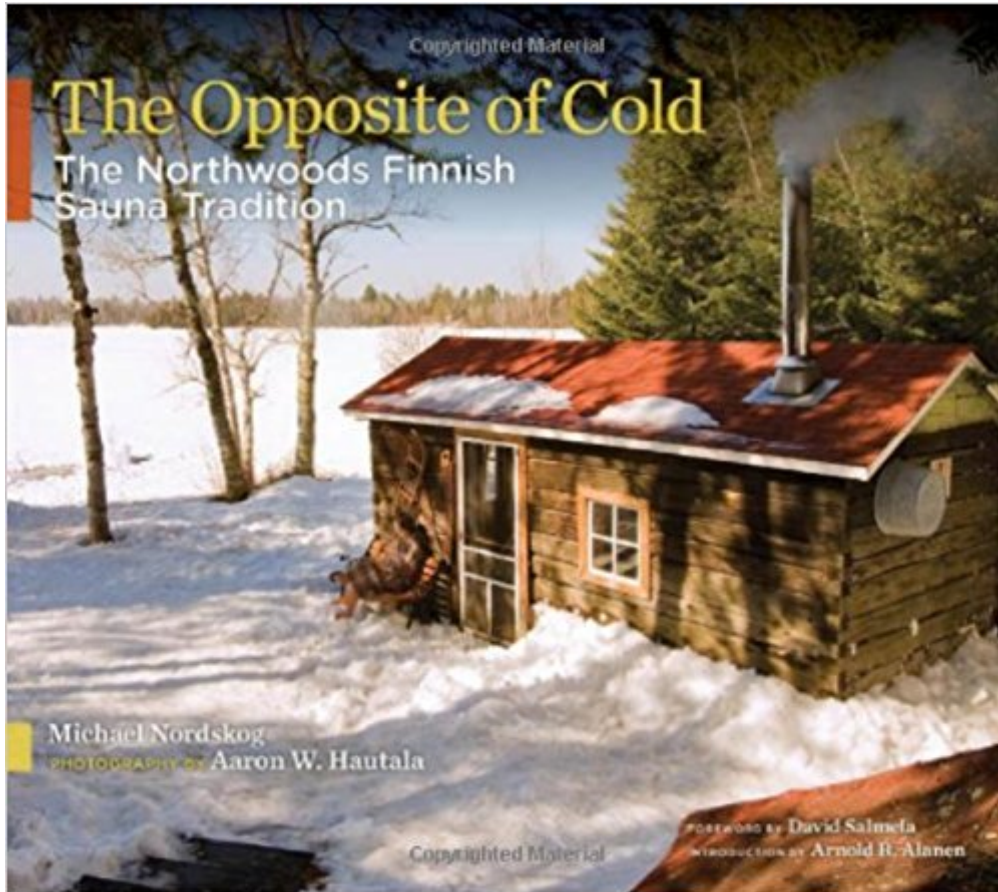


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The Opposite Of Cold: The Northwoods Finnish Sauna Tradition



Synopsis

As many in the north country can attest, one of life's great pleasures resides in the tradition of sauna-sitting in 180-plus-degree heat and throwing cool water on oven-hot stones to create a blast of steam (called *löyly*), followed by a jump in the lake, standing naked in subzero temperatures (or even a roll in the snow), or just relaxing on the cooling porch. To the uninitiated, there is a strange, alluring mystique to the art of Finnish sauna. But to an ever-increasing number of people—from their small urban saunas to backwoods and lakeside retreats—the culture and practice of Finnish sauna are as much a part of northwoods life as campfires and canoe trips. Beginning with the origins of Finnish sauna and how the practice was first brought to North America, and continuing all the way to contemporary design, *The Opposite of Cold* is an exquisite commemoration of the history, culture, and practice of Finnish sauna in the northwoods. With stunning photographs of unique and historic saunas of the region—including the oldest sauna in North America, incredible surviving saunas from immigrant farmsteads, and the gorgeous contemporary saunas from noted architects—Michael Nordskog and Aaron Hautala unveil the importance and beauty of sauna culture in modern Midwestern life. Richly illuminated by Aaron Hautala's photographs of distinctive saunas from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ontario, and Finland, *The Opposite of Cold* is for people who grew up with Wednesday and Saturday evening saunas (or watched their steaming neighbors running toward the lake) and for those who dream of one day having their own. And through this book we see why Finnish sauna tradition is vital and enduring, from the warmest summer evenings to the coldest winter nights.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was thrilled to receive an advance copy of "The Opposite of Cold", and was asked then to comment on the book. This is what I wrote and felt then, and I feel even more so now that I have the actual book in hand. "The Finnish sauna is often a modest structure, made of wood and stone. Over time the wood rots, the stones crack, and finally all that is left are memories. But what memories! I can't think of any human activity except eating that brings people together with such wholeness. Mind, body and spirit are fused by the heat and steam, and we are collectively reminded of all the things that make us uniquely human. Author Michael Nordskog and photographer Aaron W. Hautala have created a fitting tribute to the great sauna tradition of northern Minnesota. "The Opposite of Cold" makes permanent the fleeting memories of the early Finnish immigrants and the generations that followed. This is an important work and it honors everything it touches.

Though there's some good info and background on sauna history and culture, there is too much emphasis on the weird and 'over-designed' saunas of the homes of the very wealthy. These aren't the little wooden saunas that Finnish farmers would build first on the homestead to live in until they finished the farm (despite the picture on the cover) -- more likely, most of the ones in the book are in millionaires' homes or vacation houses! ... Making this book sometimes embarrassingly like something from Architectural Digest, rather than relating to what most people will ever experience as sauna in the northwoods (at least I hope, as I dread the northwoods becoming the next Aspen or Montana; the latest must-buy location for the well-connected with their massive and gated castles!) There are also some truly awful and freakish-looking "hdr" photographs in the book. So somewhat useful, especially if you can get it used for ~half the new price, but don't count on seeing many saunas in the traditional northwoods or Finnish sense here. Luckily there are better, older books available on the topic.

This is such a beautiful coffee table book. The photography is amazing and the glossy photos throughout are beautiful. It makes us dream of building a sauna someday. It contains Sauna history in the most fascinating way possible, through magnificent photography and personal stories.

This book was excellent. Lots of pictures. Also lots of names of people I know. In fact, the cabin we had growing up is in this book. Well not the cabin, but the sauna. I would recommend this book to

anyone. Like a review of cabins and saunas in the north and a history of them.. If you grew up taking saunas and jumping in the lake at almost any time of year, you will enjoy this book.

People of Finnish ancestry will likely be well-entertained by this book, *The Opposite of Cold*. Much from my home area and many familiar names. I loved the background information in regard to sauna and the Finns. The photographs in the book are delightful and those of the fancier saunas bring up the envy! Wow! They are several steps above saunas of those I knew in my younger days. But the idea that "sauna" is a ritual, a process, a healing, a shared event - all that rings true! I need to find more copies for other friends. The word does not rhyme with "donna," you ought to know - it is pronounced "sow-na." The mention of electric stoves as replacement for the wood-burning sauna stoves is a concession to modern times, but the knotty pine interior is certainly one facets that should not. Aroma of warm pine wood is an important element of sauna. The book is a very entertaining read, or to browse.

I got this book for Christmas and completely enjoyed it. The text is well written and informative, the pictures are beautiful and the topic, well, it is all about saunas in North America. As a Canadian Finn - what's not to love! Great job. Five stars plus!

Nice photos of a variety of Midwestern Northwoods saunas, many lakeside. Good write-ups describing sauna construction, operation and culture, although construction photos are non-existent. Nonetheless, the photos have given me many ideas for the saunas I want to construct at my mountain and lakeside homes.

This was so interesting to look at and read. We gave it to my mother as a gift, as she is full Finn and grew up with a sauna very similar to some of the ones in the book. Because it is tradition in Finland to use a sauna as a bath, it is important to note that there are some photographs that include nudity (tastefully done, and a true cultural representation). This was a spectacular book that includes fascinating history, photographs, and personal accounts of the wonderful thing we Finlanders call "sow-nah"!

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