



The Opposite of Cold: The Northwoods Finnish Sauna Tradition

Michael Nordskog

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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.

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