

Adirondack Unbound



Design by evolution. California chairmaker Robert Erickson pushed the Adirondack in two different directions (left) before arriving at his current version (below), which blends the two.

Robert Erickson built elegant indoor chairs for 40 years before he tackled that casual outdoor stalwart, the Adirondack. Erickson's chairs typically feature gleaming hardwoods, traditional joinery, and softly sculptural surfaces shaped to fit the body like a glove—none of which pertains to most Adirondacks. So Erickson knew right off that he wanted to rethink structure, comfort, and color. He also wanted a chair that could face the weather with impunity.

In his first prototype (top photo, left), Erickson worked out a design based on triangles and diamonds. To address the weather, he painted all parts before assembly and joined them with brass, bronze, and stainless-steel fasteners. For his second prototype (top photo, right) he reinterpreted the traditionally rectilinear Adirondack with a vocabulary of curves and added a sculpted solid-wood seat and aluminum legs (shaped entirely with woodworking tools). In the chairs he's built since,



Top photo: Sugar Pine Studios
Bottom photo: Robert Erickson

Erickson has married the straight lines of the first prototype with the lumbar-pleasing, bent-laminated back of the second. He's happy with the current version (above), but envisions still other directions for the enduring American classic.

—Jonathan Binzen

How They Did It Turn to p. 90 for a detailed look at the anatomy of Erickson's comfortable, weatherproof Adirondack.

Audio Slide Show To see the wide range of superb chairs Erickson has made in his four-decade career, go to FineWoodworking.com/extras.