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WINTER IS COMING:

Find the right heating option for your home

The facts behind three of today's most popular home heating sources. Nothing turns a house into a home more than a warm and welcoming feeling you get when you walk through the door. Whether a wood-burning fireplace, free-standing stove or masonry heater, modern heat sources can bring that instant warmth and style to a room or an entire house — often with energy-efficient and cost-saving affects to boot.

GETTING STARTED

Because of the many options, choosing the right heat source for your home can be an overwhelming task. To get started, ask yourself these five questions to help identify the right unit for you.



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1. Where will you place your home's heating source?

With today's venting options, fireplaces, stoves, inserts and other hearth appliances can be installed almost anywhere in your house. Consider placing a unit in nontraditional locations, such as the kitchen, home office or master bedroom or bath. Even creating an outdoor living room by installing a fireplace on your patio or deck is a very popular trend.

2.

Do you want a fire for its aesthetic appearance or for its warmth?

Some heating products are simply decorative, while others are extremely efficient and beautiful to watch at the same time. How much heat output does your space require? Also, think about if you're planning on using your heat source for cooking food items (think pizza, casseroles, bread — you name it). Answering this question can lead you toward different options.



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3.

What fuels are accessible to you?

Use the HPBA fuel efficiency calculator (hpba.org) to determine your best options and savings based on your local fuel availability: wood, natural gas, propane, wood pellets, coal, oil or electricity. Retailers also can help you decide on the best heating fuel, factoring in your climate, floor plan and lifestyle.



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4.

How much of your home do you want to heat?

Once you decide whether to use your heat source to warm one room, living zones or your entire house, your local dealer can help you determine the right size appliance for your home.

5.

Are you concerned about having heat during power outages?

One of the benefits of most hearth products is that they can operate during power outages, when you need the heat the most. While there are emergency options (think kerosene heaters and temporary stoves), permanent wood-burning options like masonry heaters and fireplaces will heat your home every day — even during unexpected outages. Just make sure you have enough fire wood on hand and be sure to equip your house with a carbon monoxide detector for safety.



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POPULAR HEATING OPTIONS

Once you have an idea of what you'd like out of your heating system in terms of performance, heating capability and aesthetic, it's time to choose. While there are a number of hearth options to pick from, there are three main types to consider.



Masonry Heaters

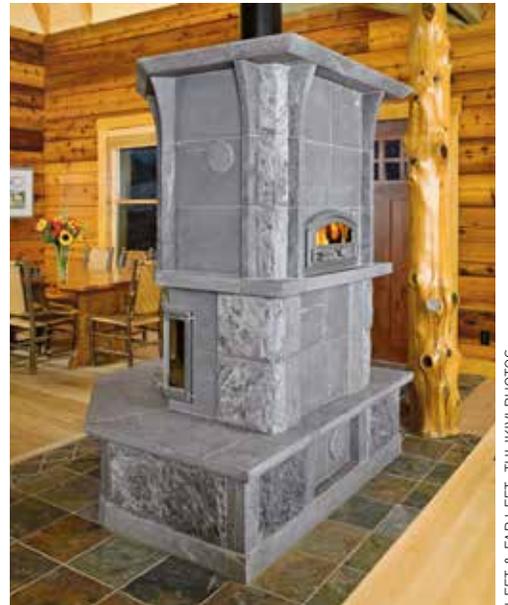
Masonry heaters are gaining in popularity as one of the cleanest and most efficient wood-burning technology options for the home. Constructed entirely from stone, several thick pieces comprise the top, sides and back of these heaters. Inside, the stone directly absorbs the heat from the small, hot fire, while outside, it slowly radiates heat into the room from its polished surface. Many of these heaters are made specifically from soapstone because of its heat-retaining properties that produce a steady heat that makes them a perfect choice for all climates. The stone of a masonry heater absorbs heat making it safe to the touch, making it a smart option for homes with young children or pets.

Another unique benefit of masonry heating: these units also can be used for cooking, as some models allow you to burn wood separately in a bake oven. Because of the even-heat qualities inherent to these heaters, the whole unit warms steadily from top to bottom, ensuring well-cooked meals without much effort.

This time-tested heating method is paired with top-of-the-line engineering and innovative designs in most current models. Prefabricated options are available, including site-built units and one-of-a-kind designs. Because of their weight, masonry heaters do require a solid foundation, but only have to be fired a couple of times a day and can even heat your home over night. The firebox and shape of the heater also are designed to prevent the creation of tar inside the chimney so, if burned properly, these heaters need almost no cleaning or maintenance.



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Fireplaces

Fireplaces remain the most popular choice, and they fit in nicely with the rustic materials often found in a log or timber home. While some fireplaces are still made from traditional brick and mortar (or stone, as if the case with many custom wood homes), many new options are engineered and pre-built by major manufacturers.

A factory-built fireplace is actually a

firebox enclosed within a steel cabinet. A blanket of insulating air keeps the outer wall cool and land spacers surrounding the cabinet allow it to be installed in close proximity to the wood framing, giving them their name "zero-clearance fireplaces."

Because factory-built fireplaces use a safe, lightweight chimney, they do not need any additional footing or structural support. With that said, if the material

you choose to face your fireplace is heavy, such as real stone, your floor might need added support to hold the extra weight. Factory-built fireplaces are available in a range of sizes, and can be open on one, two ("see-through" and corner models), three ("peninsula") or four sides ("oasis"). Brick, stone, marble and other facing materials can be combined with your choice of mantels to suit your decor.



Freestanding Stoves

An incredibly versatile hearth product, stoves are available in a wide selection of sizes and styles, making them a smart option for almost any type of home. Stoves are made of steel, stone or cast iron, and finishes include porcelain enamel and high-temperature paint in an array of colors. They also typically feature a piece of front-facing ceramic glass to provide fire viewing.

Freestanding stoves, which burn wood, gas, coal, wood pellets or oil, are generally used to heat a specific room or zone of the house. Stoves are very efficient and control of the fire, heat output, burn times and installation options have been greatly improved in recent years. If your wood-burning stove is large enough, you also can use it to cook small amounts of food by placing pots and pans on top of the stove with a roaring fire inside. While controlling the heat can be a bit challenging, cooking on a free-standing stove is a great option for those trying to conserve fuel and feed a small group.

