

WOOD BURNING INSERT BUYERS GUIDE

Properly installed, fireplace inserts can be a much more efficient supplemental zone heater than a traditional fireplace.

What is the difference between a Fireplace and a Fireplace Insert?

A fireplace is the entire structure that you burn inside of. ... A fireplace insert is basically a stove, wood or gas, that is designed to be inserted into a fireplace that is already there. Usually a wood burning fireplace built with the home will get an "insert" put inside of it. To sum it up: An insert goes into a fireplace that you already have. If you don't want a construction project and you want heat you are after an insert. If you don't have a fireplace in the home –OR- you want to remove and entirely replace the existing one (tear open the wall, remove tile, drywall, paint, etc.) then you need a new fireplace.

Efficiency

Fireplace inserts have a sealed, air tight door system which generates more heat because the fire burns much slower and the heat isn't wasted. The efficiency of fireplace inserts can be as much as 80%. ... A more efficient wood-burning heating system means less gas, oil, or electricity is required to heat your home.

How long do they last?

Although they can last for as long as 20-30 years when well maintained, most masonry chimneys can last for generations. Unlike most masonry chimneys, prefabricated chimneys tend to come with warranties.

Do wood inserts need electricity?

Since you are only getting a fraction of the heat compared to a standing stove and a lot of the insert's heat goes up the chimney, you need that fan to push a lot more of the heat out to make it work to its ability. The fan is implemented to spread heat away from the insert into the rest of the house but is not necessary for function. If this is your only source of heat, and the power goes out for several days your insert will keep you plenty warm in the room it is located. But the rest of the house won't be as toasty as usual without the fan.

Wood Burning Fireplace Inserts VS. Masonry Fireplaces

In the case of a traditional fireplace, whether it is a masonry fireplace or factory-built fireplace, there are a few factors that make these beautiful works of art more form than function: between 10%-20% overall efficiency. An open damper can send your home's heated air straight up the chimney when not in use. (That problem can be fixed by either closing the damper or purchasing a money saving Top Seal Damper. Ask us how!) The open hearth also reduces the temperature within

the firebox thus reducing the efficiency of the burning process. By enclosing the firebox and reducing the flue with a fireplace insert, the fire is more efficient to heat the home: between 60% to 80% overall tested efficiency . Wood inserts are an improvement over your built-in fireplace. You still have the woodpile, bark, ashes and hauling, but the natural flames, crackle, and woody smells also remain. Wood fireplace inserts seal off the original firebox; there is a refractory chamber inside the insert that circulates room air around the hot firebox and back into the room. The hotter firebox burns the wood more completely than your fireplace and will and reduces pollution and chimney emissions and allergens. Embers are contained as well, and a smaller stainless steel flue liner goes inside the chimney to emit gases and smoke and bypass the existing chimney.

Maintenance

Fireplace inserts require just as much maintenance as the fireplace itself. Because the insert is wood burning, homeowners must regularly clean out ashes and examine the chimney for creosote build-up. An annual chimney inspection and cleaning is required. Having a professional clean and inspect the insert annually is important in the upkeep and maintenance of your unit and will greatly aid in protecting your home from a dangerous chimney fire. It is critical that you get creosote deposits removed from your fireplace insert on an annual basis, as it's residue contains fuel that can ignite a fire without ever even having exposure to direct flame.

Can I convert from wood to gas?

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Venting

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Every new unit has specified requirements for the proper venting components as determined by code and the manufacturer. Specific brands or types of pipe apply to a particular category. For example, you would not use the same pipe on a wood stove as you would for a vented gas fireplace. Purchasing the correct chimney components is absolutely essential. A frequent misconception we see often is a homeowner or contractor assuming that existing chimney pipe from an old fireplace can be used on a new model, especially if the pipe diameter used on the new unit matches the chimney that is already in place. However, this is a truly rare occurrence because most old chimney and vent systems are no longer used with new units. Most inserts are vented vertically through the roof, via the existing chimney.

WARNING: Misinformation and mistakes can be deadly when dealing with hearth products and vent pipe. If a vent system does not meet the manufacturer's requirements and/or local codes, the consequences may be severe — including possible carbon monoxide leakages and chimney fires, which can result in death, serious illness and significant property damage. Also, your insurance company will not cover any damage caused by a unit with improper venting or maintenance.

Benefits

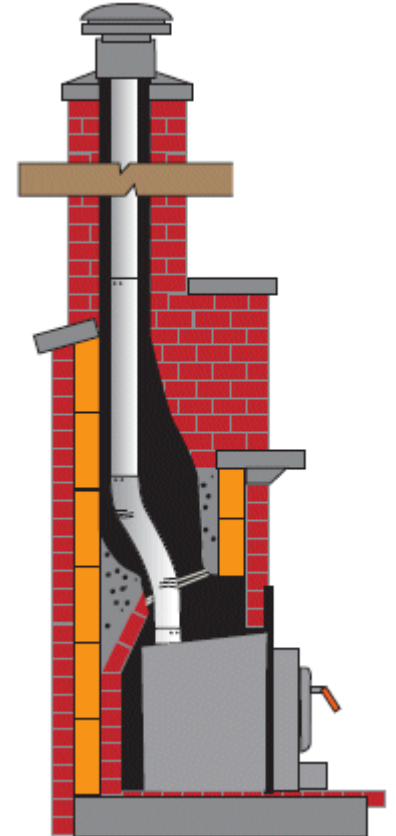
- Most inserts contain a fan and blower that pulls room air around the firebox, where it is heated and then blown back into the room.
- They have long-burning fires. In general, the bigger the firebox, the longer the burn.
- Some inserts can heat an entire house.
- Air wash technology can keep viewing glass clean on some models.

-EPA-certified fireplace inserts can reduce wood-burning emissions to practically zero, meaning that your environmental footprint is much smaller than with an open hearth fireplace.

Installation

When installing an insert, there are very specific building code requirements regarding the flue liner to the appliance. It's usually necessary that a chimney professional install an **appropriately determined** chimney liner to ensure that the chimney's draft satisfies the insert's specifications, and that the new appliance functions safely and properly.

If you are installing a new appliance, such as a wood insert, it will more than likely be necessary to install a new flue so that the size meets with manufacturer's instructions for proper installation and operation. A liner that is sized incorrectly can cause chimney drafting problems and result in excess creosote deposits. The appliance will be unable to operate efficiently without a proper draft, and creosote can cause obstruction and make the chimney vulnerable to a dangerous chimney fire. A sound liner that is correctly fitted is **truly** a matter of safety.



Cost

The insert and installation tend to be at the top end of the price scale. But, what you save on heating bills alone is enough to justify one. An energy-saving wood insert lets you transform your existing hearth into a super-efficient heater that can cut your energy bills — by as much as 40%.

Inspiration Photos

