

HOT STOVE DEBATE

Which is better: Gas or Wood?

By Stacey Marcus

As the leaves turn color and temperatures drop, homeowners across the region begin to think about the impending New England winter. While no one likes to shovel snow or pay heating bills, the cold-weather season does have its perks, like the allure of a roaring fire on a cool, winter night. “Watching a fire is quite mesmerizing,” says Sean Rosser, general manager of Hearthside Fireplace & Patio. “I remember [noting] when my younger son Dylan was about 14 years old that he liked to watch the flames in the fireplace rather than television.”

Today, Rosser and his older son, Ryan, take great pleasure in creating beautiful and relaxing indoor and outdoor spaces for New England homeowners at their Hearthside Fireplace & Patio showroom locations in Warwick, Rhode Island, and Westport and Holliston, Massachusetts. In addition to helping families outfit their backyards with a play set or patio, the team at Hearthside Fireplace & Patio often assists homeowners with choosing the best way to add heat to their home. For homeowners trying to decide between a gas stove and one that burns wood, Rosser offers a closer look at each heating method.



Low maintenance and easy to use, the Harman Accentra 52i-TC pellet insert has a built-in programmable thermostat, Easy Touch Controls and a hopper capacity of 64.5 lbs.



The Jøtul F 600 Firelight CB wood stove's design was inspired by colonial American furniture, and offers both front and side loading access.

GAS STOVES

Using natural gas is an inexpensive and convenient option for adding heat to your home, says Rosser, adding that you will never have to worry about adding more wood to keep the fire going. Plus, you can instantly ignite a fire at the push of a button. The installation of a gas fireplace is also simpler than a traditional wood-burning fireplace because a traditional masonry chimney is not necessary with modern direct vent systems, making ventilation options simpler and more flexible.

Rosser notes that the cost of installing a traditional masonry fireplace can be two to five times the cost of installing a gas fireplace, although there are many variables to consider when comparing the two. For instance, a traditional fireplace or other wood-burning heating source will require a working chimney and a gas stove will need a gas line that has already been installed.

Fall is a terrific time to think about installing a fireplace, before the winds of winter start knocking at the front door. "While many customers want a pellet stove because they don't want to burn oil," says Rosser, "I like a traditional fireplace because I love chopping wood and making a wood fire." What lights your fire? •

WOOD-BURNING STOVES

"Burning wood has been a part of our human nature since the dawn of time," Rosser notes.

And, there are more than a few options for wood-burning heat sources, including fireplaces, an insert that fits into a fireplace, a freestanding wood stove or a pellet stove. Many homeowners come into our stores looking to purchase a wood stove or fireplace insert," Rosser points out. Many customers appreciate the historical New England look of a freestanding wood stove, says Rosser, while others opt for the space-saving benefits of a wood insert that fits into a fireplace.

A wood-burning pellet stove regulates itself for consistent heat. "Pellet stoves offer a very nice option for the urban/suburban dweller who wants to heat their home with something other than oil or electricity," says Rosser, who notes that pellet stoves heat more like furnaces, and can warm more than just a room. If you are not around to feed the pellet stove throughout the day, the automatic feed mechanism and built-in thermostat will keep the room temperature within one degree of the set temperature.

While some people love to chop wood and gaze at an open fire, there are some drawbacks to wood-burning home heating methods: it's an inefficient way to generate heat, requires a chimney that will need to be maintained and wood storage can attract bugs and create bark and ash.

Gas vs. Wood: 7 questions to ask yourself when choosing a stove

1. Do you work at home or are you at the office most of the day?
2. Are you looking for a functional heating solution for a room/ floor or a fashionable way to make an area feel toasty?
3. How much do you want to interact with the fire?
4. Do you prefer a wood stove or a fireplace?
5. Is saving money and/or energy one of your primary goals?
6. Do you have a chimney?
7. Do you have a natural gas line running into your home?