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Backed by a stone wall, this contemporary wood stove successfully merges rustic and modern elements (photo courtesy of Morse) (facing page) Jetul's wood stove is small in stature but efficient enough to warm this inviting nook (photo courtesy of Jetul)

PUTTING on the Heat

BY DEIDRA DARSA

When the air is chilled by winter's spell, many homeowners find the warmth they seek radiating from their wood or pellet stove.

Both efficient and clean-burning, these stoves bring the heat to any room in the house while saving consumers money on their energy bills.

Both stoves burn renewable fuel, however their commonality ends there, and consumers

need to take a hard look at their lifestyles and needs before choosing one over the other.

"A pellet person is usually very different than a wood person," says Tom Just, co-owner of Mountain Home Center in Truckee. Although both want independence from the high cost

of gas and oil, they will often choose one because it needs electricity to operate. Usually

pellet stoves require electricity to operate, and without a backup system if the electricity goes out, the stove will not run. "We make sure that customers understand that their independence using a pellet stove is limited

because it needs electricity to operate. Usually





As an extraordinary focal point, the wood stove adds a modern touch to the living space photo courtesy of Wilius - Fire By Design (facing page) **The cozy fire of a Harman pellet stove keeps the winter outside** photo courtesy of Harman Home Heating

if that obstacle can be overcome, they stay on that pellet course. Our wood customer is usually someone who used wood for years, wants complete independence and doesn't mind the work of collecting and storing wood," says Just.

However, in snow country where some areas get 20' of snow, it is important to make sure that stove flues terminate above the anticipated

snow depth. "The venting of these appliances is so critical to safety and the performance of the unit," noted Just. A knowledgeable dealer/installer should be involved in the project.

For those looking at fuel pricing, Emily Potter of Sierra Timberline in Grass Valley mentions that pellet and particularly wood fuel is more economical, especially if used in a zone heating program. "We recommend our customers

look at zone heating—meaning heating the space they spend 80% of their time in—and utilizing their central heat system for backup or when they want to take the chill off the rooms not used," said Potter. "There are very efficient pellet and EPA-certified wood stoves and wood stove inserts that are designed to fit into existing fireplaces, turning an old fireplace into a viable and efficient zone heat source."



Used for zone heating, the wood stove provides heat to the space people spend 80% of their time in (facing page) Create an eclectic living room by combining bold colors, unique decorations and a traditional wood stove photo courtesy of Harman Home Heating

If homeowners switch to zone heating early in the season, they can oftentimes recoup the expense of buying and installing a new pellet or wood stove. "A new wood stove, including hearth and chimney, can pay for itself after the season," said Portee, adding that upgrading to an efficient, clean-burning pellet or EPA-certified wood stove that burns the wood and smoke, will improve their indoor and outdoor air quality.

And for zone heating, size is very important, says Ron Christy of Warming Trends in Santa Rosa. "We ask the typical questions regarding square footage, height of ceiling and the number of windows in the rooms," he said.

"For instance, if they have a high ceiling they made need a bigger heater. We want to make sure they get a big enough heater for the actual size as a whole and not just the square footage." Also keep in mind that if you oversize a stove and it's too powerful for the space, the homeowner may underuse it, and this will result in an incomplete combustion and high smoke emissions. When burning wood, it is important to choose fuel that is seasoned, meaning the moisture content should be no more than 20%.

With consumers worried about the high cost of energy, it's not surprising that wood and pellet stove shipments and sales have

jumped dramatically. "Our wood stove sales are through the roof on all models," said Bret Watson, president of Jotul North America, Inc. "The best seller tends to be between medium to large—meaning people are using their stove as a main heat source." Watson also noticed that people west of the Mississippi are leaning towards contemporary looking stoves made of steel and cast iron.

At Virtus - Fire By Design, Danish designers ply their European craftsmanship to create efficient steel stoves. But whether contemporary, traditional or somewhere in-between, wood and pellet stoves are now considered a centerpiece for any room in the



home, says Berger, vice president of Harman Home Heating. "Over the past 10 years, there have been incredible developments in design and technology that make stoves very attractive," he said. "For instance, pellet stoves self-ignite and can monitor their own temperature, and wood stoves have become very efficient and can maintain 16 hours of consistent burn and heat."

Whether wood-burning or pellet-burning, the new technology of stoves will provide hours of warmth and reduce the wise consumer's home heating bill. AH

Article and photography courtesy of Debra Dana of Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association, 703.522.0086 or visit lpha.org. For more information on wood and pellet stoves visit Mountain Home Center, 10948 Brockway Road, Truckee or phone 530.587.6681.



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