

Gas Stoves and Fireplaces

Gas fireplaces are an ideal choice for anyone who wants to enjoy the warmth of a fire without the chores of hauling wood and cleaning ashes.

Gas log fireplace are growing in popularity every year, so manufacturers have geared-up to offer us a wide selection of appliances. You'll find gas logs, freestanding gas stoves, and contained fireplace units that are mounted to a wall.

Top Vented Gas Logs

Vented gas logs take the place of wood in a traditional hearth and chimney. You can choose a unit that burns either natural or propane gas, but both types are always burned with the damper open.

- Gas fireplaces are not a solution for a problem chimney. If the chimney is damaged, dirty, or doesn't draw air well enough to burn wood, it isn't suitable for a gas log fireplace, either.
- Chimneys previously used to burn wood should be thoroughly cleaned to remove creosote before gas logs are used.

Flames that Resemble Wood Fires

Some vented gas fireplaces burn with a yellow flame that closely resembles a wood fire. That type of flame produces soot, so you might not want to use a blower. Other vented gas units burn with a blue flame, which is (usually) hotter, with more complete combustion and fewer byproducts.

Building Codes

Building codes may require the damper in your chimney to be permanently blocked open. You can reduce drafts and heat loss by installing glass doors in front of the gas fireplace, but they must remain open while the fire is burning.

Other Venting Options

If you do not have a chimney for top-venting, a special pipe can be installed to vent the logs or stove. Ask your installation expert about the options for a top-venting pipe.

If a top-vent isn't practical, you might consider direct venting, which uses a 2-layer pipe running through a hole in the wall behind the unit, or positioned slightly above it. The outer pipe draws air in from the outside to create combustion for burning the gas. The inner pipe takes waste to the outside.

Direct venting is considered a safe system, since no air from inside is used in combustion, and all wastes flow to the outside. Both actions reduce the risks of carbon monoxide buildup within the house.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, potentially lethal gas produced as a byproduct when fuels such as natural or propane gas, kerosene, and wood are burned. In general, the less complete the combustion, the more CO. It's important to follow a manufacturer's instructions exactly when using any type of fuel-burning appliance. Malfunctioning or improperly used appliances can result in dangerous levels CO.