

HOW TO BUY A HEARTH PRODUCT

Take Care in Making a Decision

Hearth products add incredible warmth and comfort, as well as ambiance, to a living space, and can last for decades. Because of their prominence within a home, purchasing hearth products should be approached with both décor and functionality in mind. The best place to start this process is with a specialty retailer. With the remarkable variety of hearth products available today, working with a specialty retailer can ensure the entire process of making a purchase is both enjoyable and satisfying.

What is a hearth product?

The category is immense and includes fireplaces, freestanding stoves, fireplace inserts, masonry heaters, gas logs, outdoor hearth products, and hearth accessories, such as mantels, hearth pads, firescreens and glass doors.

Final Choice is Personal

The enormous variety in hearth products means there are many features and benefits to consider before deciding on the final choice. For example, the question of heat versus décor and ambiance is a good place to start. Other factors that can impact the final decision include: the extent of usage, the placement within the home, the maintenance required, design and style preferences, as well as which fuel works best for the users. The answers to these questions can help shorten the list of appropriate hearth products for any given situation.

Early Planning Creates More Options

When building a new home or remodeling, it's best to start researching early about where to add hearth products and exactly what to add. Builders and architects need to know the wish list when they are in the planning stages. There are hearth products for every room in the house, including bedrooms, bathrooms and backyard decks. Many homes today have hearth products in multiple rooms, providing a unique and soothing experience throughout the house.

And, be sure to ask builders and architects for options. Just as with countertops and appliances, there are varying levels of hearth products within each category, from basic to luxurious, and the price differences between the levels are generally affordable. When considering the purchase of a woodburning fireplace, consult the *Best Practices for Woodburning Fireplace Installation* guide to avoid drafting and smoke issues after the fireplace is installed. Download the document from the consumer section of www.hpba.org.

Easy Hearth Updates

Many hearth products can be installed in an existing room with very little effort. It doesn't take a major remodeling job to gain the benefit of a new fireplace, fireplace insert or freestanding stove. Whether the plan is to update an existing, and outdated, woodburning fireplace or add a new fireplace or freestanding stove, there are many different products available to create a convenient, efficient and beautiful fire. And, better yet, these products don't require building a foundation or a masonry chimney, knocking out a wall or changing the layout of a room.



Value of a Specialty Retailer

Expert assistance when choosing a hearth product is invaluable, and a specialty retailer is the best partner available. Specialty retailers' showrooms are also one-stop shopping. They can help with research, decision-making, the final purchase and installation, as well as maintenance and service. **To locate a specialty retailer, go to www.hpba.org.**

STEPS TO BUYING A HEARTH PRODUCT

Information to consider when selecting a hearth product

» Visit a Specialty Retailer's Showroom

Taking the time to talk with a specialty retailer can help define the best hearth product for a specific installation. A specialty retailer demonstrates many models of fireplaces and other hearth products (some burning and some not) in the showroom, and has staff on hand to explain the benefits of each. Don't worry about asking questions. They are expected. A specialty retailer will also expect many visits from a potential buyer before the final decision is made. To continue the research after leaving the store, be sure to ask for product literature to take home. It's also a good idea to visit more than one specialty retailer, as they all carry different brands and models.

» Research the Options

If more information is necessary, use the Internet or read home decorating magazines (fall/winter issues) to gain more input. Start at www.hpba.org to review manufacturers and brands, as well as categories of hearth products (woodburning fireplaces versus gas fireplaces, or pellet stoves versus coal stoves). Local home shows or regional fairs are other valuable resources.

» Head Back to the Showroom

The specialty retailer can help answer any additional questions and help pinpoint the ideal final product for purchase based on the research.

» Home Visits by the Retailer

Many specialty retailers will visit a home prior to the final purchase to assess how the selected hearth product will blend into the home environment, and what installation challenges might exist. This can be a complimentary visit, but it's important to ask in advance.

» Installation

Professional installation by a qualified technician is essential to the proper performance and safety of a hearth product and its venting system. Unlike a malfunctioning refrigerator, a hearth product that doesn't do its job properly can have serious consequences. Many specialty retailers offer installation by factory-trained and/or nationally certified staff. To verify if an installer is certified, contact the National Fireplace Institute (NFI) at www.nficertified.org, or to verify factory training, use the hearth product manufacturer directory at www.hpba.org for contact information.

» Service

After installation is complete, it's wise to request a detailed review of the recommended service required for the hearth product purchase. Most hearth products require annual inspections of the appliance and the chimney and venting system, as well as maintenance cleaning.

HEARTH PRODUCTS CATEGORIES

See fact sheets on each category at www.hpba.org for more detailed information

FIREPLACES

Gas Fireplaces

- Natural vent
- Direct vent
- Vent-free
- Decorative
- Heater-rated

Woodburning Fireplaces

- Traditional
- Clean burning
- EPA-certified

Electric Fireplaces

- Plug n'play
- Built-in

FREESTANDING STOVES

Gas Stoves

- Top vent
- Direct vent
- Vent-free

Wood Stoves

- EPA-certified

Pellet Stoves

Electric Stoves

Oil Stoves

Coal Stoves

Corn Stoves

ACCESSORIES

FUELS

FIREPLACE INSERTS

Gas Fireplace Inserts

- Vented
- Vent-free

Gas Logs

- Vented
- Vent-free

Wood Fireplace Inserts

- EPA-certified

Pellet Fireplace Inserts

Electric Fireplace Inserts

Oil Fireplace Inserts

Coal Fireplace Inserts

Corn Fireplace Inserts

OUTDOOR HEARTH PRODUCTS

Fireplaces

- wood and gas

Chimineas

- wood and gas

Firepits

- wood and gas

Fire/Fountain combinations

MASONRY HEATERS

FURNACES

- Outdoor wood
- Pellet
- Corn