

So Solid Fuel



Soaring heating bills have meant people are looking towards alternatives. Open fireplaces and stoves are proving a popular option and the choice is wider than ever

The last decade has seen a growing interest in heating stoves and today there are a diverse range of designs on the market to suit every style of home.

The rising cost of energy and the fear of fuel shortages, combined with the green movement, has led many of us to look into alternative methods of central heating and, increasingly, people are choosing stoves – particularly multi-fuel and wood-burning models. Sometimes this will be to meet overall heating and hot water requirements but more often to provide ‘another string to the bow’ to supplement or link up to their current heating system.

Stove options

The traditional stove designs – cast iron, typically painted black and very heat-resistant – remain popular and these classic designs can now be found in a range of different coloured enamel finishes.

New styles on the market include the cost-effective steel-bodied stoves, often with cast-iron door frames, and more contemporary designs using Scandinavian-type styling. With larger windows and mountings, the newer models can have decoration plates, stone, cladding and other finishes. These are great for those opting for the minimal contemporary lifestyle.

Although many of the models available are imported from Europe, the UK and indeed the South West plays host to a good proportion of stove manufacturers.

Fireplaces

It's hard to beat dancing flames in an open fireplace, which adds both focus and comfort to any room. Fireplaces nowadays are available in a huge range of designs, materials and even types of fuel to power them.

It's hard to beat dancing flames in an open fireplace

Whether it is wood, stone, marble, brick, cast iron, veneer, faux-effect, reclaimed or antique, there will be a fireplace design to suit your needs, and once this is decided upon the next stage is to look for a fire or appliance to complete the feature. Then all that's left is to choose the accessories, such as the tools, screens and guards, log baskets, coal buckets and hods.

Types of fuel

As stove designs have diversified, so have the fuel options to power them.

Traditionally, wood-burning has been the preserve of country dwellers and

farmers, but nowadays our stoves can be fuelled by oil, gas (mains or bottled), electric, multi-fuels (coal, smokeless fuel and wood), wood and, more recently, wood pellets.

The quality of fuel is important. For example, a good-quality approved smokeless solid fuel or dry and seasoned wood will maximise the stove performance.

Recent developments in technology have meant that many multi-fuel and wood-burning stove designs now incorporate systems for circulating air back into the system. This allows re-ignition of unburnt gases, which leads to extra heat generation, greater efficiency and, in turn, a cleaner environment. The carbon dioxide released from burning wood helps to create a balance between emission and absorption, thus providing a ‘greener’ solution.

A new fuel option which is catching on fast in the UK is to use wood pellets to power stoves. Already widespread in the US and Canada, it will be interesting to see how popular this fuel becomes over the next few years. □

For more information contact Derrick Shrubbs at Jeffery's Energy, ☎01626 832250 or visit www.jefferys-online.co.uk