

# Turning up the heat

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**W**inter is definatley upon us. Warm clothing, hot food and heating quickly become our priorities. Being outdoors seems less appealing unless you like snow boarding or skiing and so does the thought of being out in your garden. Eating outdoors is such a pleasurable experience, but not if its cold. There are some solutions to entice you back out into your outdoor living space all year round and make it a comfortable, experience no matter the climate or the season.

Depending on your budget, you can create an inviting, warm environment outdoors with any of the following:

## **Patio heaters**

Freestanding patio heaters are available in several sizes and styles for residential and commercial use. They range in price from \$300 - \$900. They provide warmth efficiently and quickly and are really handy for small gatherings if space is limited. They are deal for courtyards, decks and patio's. Patio heaters give you the flexibility to create warmth where you want it. Mini tabletop models are also available. I suggest you do some research to find out which models provide the most efficient and even heat. On a down-side patio heaters add significantly to greenhouse and air pollution problems Also check for features such as, wheels, for moving easily, tie-downs, useful for windy locations and a cover to keep protected from the elements.

Patio heaters also come in a number of different, durable finishes, such as stainless steel and powder coated aluminum. This makes them suitable for occasional exposure to the elements. When not in use, they should be covered. If you live by the sea, then the more expensive stainless steel models would be best.

## **Outdoor fireplaces**

There is nothing cozier than the warmth from a fire. Outdoor fireplaces are becoming a popular choice for heating and cooking, they are the Rolls Royce for your outdoor heating requirements. Still deemed a luxury item, they do however add value, warmth and atmosphere. There are a many fireplaces on the market today offering the option of either gas or solid fuel (wood and coal) Manufacturers now have extensive product lines in a number of different styles and finishes to compliment your particular outdoor setting and tastes. Whether it's a plaster

or schist finish you want, your designer can assist you in choosing the right design.

Outdoor fireplaces can fit into a number of situations including, deck areas, courtyards, and poolside spaces. Position the fireplace as a focal point and have your outdoor furniture and cooking facilities close to it. Incorporate other landscaping features such as lighting, built-in seating and planting to compliment. Adding a windbreak wall or fence will help with keeping wind out and maintaining the warmth.

Selecting the right one usually starts with a simple question. Do you prefer the convenience of gas or the better heat generating capabilities of wood? Both have their good and bad points depending on your personal lifestyle and needs.

## **Gas benefits:**

- Quick, instant, consistent heat
- Low maintenance
- Clean, effective burning
- Natural gas is safer to control



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### **Wood burning benefits:**

- Ambience. The look, smell and feel of fire is intoxicating and romantic
- Can be less expensive to buy and operate

### **Gas disadvantages:**

- More expensive. The cost of gas. There are companies nationwide who will deliver your gas bottles to your doorstep.

### **Wood burning disadvantages:**

- Can be abit smokey when surrounding air pressure varies
- You will need to keep a steady supply of dry wood stored nearby
- More maintenance – open fireplaces can get abit messy
- Emissions: On September 2005, the Ministry of the Environment tightened the emissions rules for new wood burners for all urban areas. Ask the retailer whether it complies with the new rules before you buy.

### **Firepits and chiminea's**

If you like the idea of an open fire but not have the budget for an outdoor fireplace, then a firepit or chiminea could be for you. Fire pits or braziers are not particularly safe around small children, but they do provide a quick, simple way of creating fire for a more casual informal setting. There is something welcoming and primal about sitting around a fire, they are small and portable, great for the bach, camping and parties.

Chiminea's are basically a less expensive version of an outdoor fire. They are freestanding and wood burning. They usually have a handcrafted finish, made from cast iron, cast aluminum, ceramic or clay. It is best not to install a chiminea on a wooden deck without a large approved non-combustible hearth pad.

So don't let the chill in the air put you off making the most of the outdoors.

**Sandra is an award-winning designer based in Auckland.**

