

Decore Score: Wood-burning stoves heat well, use less fuel

by Rose Bennett Gilbert

Q: We've bought a country place that is simple contemporary in style. We wanted to add a wood-burning fireplace, but it turned out to be too expensive for our budget. My husband thinks we should install a stove - easier and lots less money - so we've been shopping. There are a lot of modern styles available. Our question is, can we put it in the center of the space, kind of like a room divider? How will that look?

A: Very smart, I'd say, judging from the handsome, contemporary example in the photo shown here. Borrowed from a book you would find both inspirational and informational, "Fire Places" by Jane Gitlin, (Taunton Press, 426), it features a free-standing modern version of the Franklin stove that has been around since you-know-who invented it. Ben's version has warmed Americans since the 1700s, efficiently and much more effectively than traditional wide-open fireplaces, which sent most of their heat straight up the chimney.

COZY AND EFFICIENT - A wood-burning stove doesn't have to be against the wall. This free-standing modern version of the Franklin stove uses less wood than a typical fireplace. CNS Photo courtesy of Jane Gitlin's 'Fireplace.' Installed between the kitchen and living areas of an all-in-one room, this version is vented straight up, but radiates its warmth from all four sides. No melting faces and freezing backsides while one enjoys the dancing flames through the glass door. And, as you see, it also makes both a compelling focal point for the sitting room and a dandy divider of floorspace.

Q: I am a single woman, 34, who has just bought a house. I have my own home and my own mortgage. It's both exciting and scary because it was my dad who used to take care of stuff that went wrong around the house. Now he's way across the state, and I've quickly gotten the drift that most guys my age either don't know how to fix things, or don't want to get involved with someone else's maintenance problems. Too big a commitment? Anyway, I'm pretty comfortable making decorating decisions, but wondering if I should go to plumbing school, or what?

A: Here's what: Send off for a helpful, new booklet called "Refresh: For Women Only," available free from American Standard, (www.americanstandard-us.com or 800-899-2614, Ext. 1887) The plumbing manufacturer has realized that more women like you are owning or running homes on their own. In fact, according to Fannie Mae's figures, by 2010, single women will own 28 percent of the houses in America - that's 31 million female homeowners.

American Standard isn't the only company to pick up on the trend. Sears, Home Depot, and Lowe's have begun running do-it-yourself classes for women. According to a Sears' survey a couple of years ago, 63 percent of women questioned said they'd rather have an hour's advice from handyman Bob Vila than from Dr. Phil, the TV shrink.

The trend has launched several specialized women-owned businesses, too, among them Tomboy Tools (www.tomboytools.com).

It's a brave new world, indeed, and now it lies just inside your own front door.

Q: Is it true you can buy reproductions of Frank Lloyd Wright's furniture? We are beginning to collect pieces for the Arts & Crafts bungalow we're restoring, and have bought several Stickley reproductions, but would love some FLW's, too.

A: Yes, Copeland Furniture of Vermont introduced the first-ever authentic reproductions of Frank Lloyd Wright's furniture in mid-2006. The pieces are drawn from Wright's Prairie Period, from about 1899 to 1910, and include his well-known barrel chair, plus a dining room set, a seating group, a bedroom group and accent tables.

Wright's best known as an architect, of course, and an especially demanding one, at that. He didn't want interior designers (whom he famously called "inferior desecrators") diluting the message of his architecture, so he designed and usually built in more than 1,000 pieces of furniture for homes, offices and hotels.

Many of the pieces were famously uncomfortable, too. Not that Wright cared. But the Copeland line is made by hand and so handsome you may not care, either. Take a look at www.copelandfurniture.com.

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