

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcast. So the temperatures have plummeted recently, which means we have been spending a lot of time outside cutting, splitting, stacking and hauling firewood. And as I was helping staff logs the other day, I couldn't help but ruminate a bit on why we chose this method of heating even though it's so much more work. So here are my thoughts on heating with wood plus a walkthrough of our personal wood heat routines and methods. In case you're considering going this route yourself, I'm your host Jill Winger and for the last 10 years I've been helping people who feel disenchanting by modern life. I'll help you create the life you really want by learning how to grow your own food and master old fashioned skills.
- Speaker 1: [01:02](#) I grew up with wood heat my whole childhood and to this day if I'm in a house during the winter time without some sort of heat source that I can stand by, I don't know, it's like my soul feels just a little bit empty. I just crave being able to back up to a hot fire and just soak in that heat. Now, when we moved to our little Prairie house back in 2008, it only had a forced air furnace. And I was so bummed about it. Now, not to mention the house was old, they hadn't done a good job of insulating it. So I remember when the wind would blow during the winter, even if the windows were completely shut and locked, the curtains would move. So that gives you an idea of how chilly that little house was. And on the really cold days, our poor little furnace would just run nonstop and we would still be cold.
- Speaker 1: [02:03](#) So we put up with that for about four years until we finally bit the bullet, couldn't take it anymore and installed a woodstove. So we actually hadn't done our giant farm house make-over at that point. And so we smashed this woodstove into our tiny little living room, but we didn't care because we were so desperate. Now, thankfully when the remodel rolled around, we were able to transfer the woodstove into our new living room so it didn't go to waste. But we are hardcore wood heat junkies. And as we were building the addition, it was never a question in our mind whether or not we would heat with wood. So I get a lot of questions about this topic when people see us doing our wood stuff on Instagram. Um, I have a really popular YouTube video all about heating with wood. So if you're curious to actually see our setup and see our stove, I'll leave a link to that YouTube episode in the show notes, but I thought it would be fun to dive into some of our processes and just some of the things we've learned over the years from heating with wood in case you are contemplating a woodstove yourself.

- Speaker 1: [03:25](#) So let's dive in. Now, I'll be the first to say that heating with wood isn't for everyone. There are some definite considerations that you'll need to work through, you know, availability, your location insurance. Sometimes different insurance companies do not like wood stoves or they want you to put them in in a certain way. And not to mention it is a lifestyle choice of sorts. You do have to be committed to the process. It's not just about flicking on a switch, there's some definite chores related to wood heat. Here are the reasons that we personally chose to heat with wood and have continued to do so over the years. So number one, I think the, one of the biggest things for us was that it's economical. Now notice I didn't say free because it's not free, right? Heating with wood still costs money. At least for those of us who are buying firewood, I suppose if you have many acres of timber, if you do, I'm very jealous.
- Speaker 1: [04:36](#) And you can go harvest your own firewood or you have a lot of dead trees, then it could be free other than the purchase of the stove. But even with us purchasing logs, it saves us a lot of cash as compared to purchasing propane, especially when propane prices spike, which they have done in recent years. For us in our area, if you want a cord of wood that is already split, ready to roll, it's about \$150 a cord. That's just rough. Average. We use about five cords per year. Um, so you can do the math on that one, but most of the time, at least in our last few years, we have purchased big full logs, uncut logs and that has dropped our price down to about a hundred dollars a cord. And I'll explain a little bit more of that, a decision below. But it kind of depends on where you're getting the firewood, um, how processed it is before you get it.
- Speaker 1: [05:45](#) But it's definitely, I think compared to a lot of oil or gas heat sources, it's still going to be cheaper for the most part. We also like it because a renewable resource now like I said, if you have timber on your land, I wish we had that, but I'm super jealous. We don't have a lot of trees out here on the Prairie. They don't grow naturally. The ones that do grow, we have to pray over them and beg them to grow and water them like every single day during the summer. So they're definitely not something we're going to just chop down. But even though there's not firewood trees here on our property, there's a lot of beetle-killed trees in the mountains that are about an hour and a half to two hours away from us. And those are a good source of firewood. So that's a great option for us even though we live on the treeless Prairie.
- Speaker 1: [06:44](#) Another reason we like wood heat is that it's efficient. And actually as I say this, I think I have to leave it with a bit of a

caveat. Heating with wood can be efficient as long as you have the right stove. There are some older models of stove that really burned through the wood quickly. They're not as efficient and you'll, you find yourself using more fuel than you need to really be using. And so when we were shopping for our woodstove, you know, initially my thought, cause that's how I roll. I like, let's go vintage, let's go at a antique stove. And Christian really steered me away from that just for the sake of efficiency because newer stoves can do a better job of creating maximum heat with a more minimal amount of wood. So that's something to keep in mind.

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And another issue or not issue another benefit rather of what heat that was a really, really big one for us is that it's not dependent on electricity. And I'd say this might just be the number one reason right up there with the economics of it. Because when we had the furnace only previously, I was scared to death the power was going to go out for an extended period of time. We didn't have a generator, but I knew that if the power was out, you know, we had a blizzard and, and power lines went down and the power company couldn't make it to our house for a week, we had no way to heat the house or even just keep our pipes from freezing and bursting. And I just felt like a sitting duck. And I hate that feeling more than anything. So I wanted to be prepared.

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And what I love about our woodstove is that when the power does go out, you know, we've had some day long power outages over the last couple of years. Like, we're good. We got the fire roaring. No one is called, the pipes are fine and bonus. If I had to, I could cook on our wood stove or heat up food. Now a little side note here, I have actually experimented a little bit with cooking more on our stove now and it hasn't worked as well as he would think it does. The main issue that I've run into with our stove is that in order to get the external temperature high enough to boil soup or simmer something like we're about run out of the house because it's so hot. So our type of wood stove, it's a blaze King. That's the brand name. Not necessarily designed to cook food, but like I said, if it was an emergency and we had no other way to heat food or warm up water, it would be an option.

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It'd be better than nothing. So that gives me a little bit of peace of mind. And lastly, wood heat just fits our lifestyle. Like we are woodstove junkies. We love the fire. We liked the process of building a fire. Christian actually loves cutting firewood and splitting kindling and it's great exercise. It's very physical, which we like, right? You either have the choice of going on the

treadmill for an hour or stacking firewood. And for me, I'd rather do something that is serving two purposes, exercise plus getting a chore done, right. And heating our home. So it just fits us. We really enjoy that, that part and the inconvenience of the handling of the wood is just not something that bothers us. It's definitely that hard but good idea that we've talked about before. Okay. So a little bit of info here. I wanted to share on the wood itself.

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So like I mentioned, we get whole logs that are from the neighboring mountains. They're beetle killed, which there's a pine beetle that is actually a big issue for us in this area. And these are, these are logs that have been killed by this pine beetle, so they're dead already. And so we actually have a truck bring them to us. We have not yet gone to the mountains ourself and drug the logs out of the mountains. We just don't have the setup for that. So we have a big semi-truck, bring us these logs and dump them in our back pasture and then Christian will use this chainsaw to cut them into sections and two rounds and then he has a log splitter that he built that connects to our tractor and he will use that too. Split the rounds. It goes pretty quick.

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It goes pretty easy in the years past he did it by hand and he doesn't necessarily dislike doing it by hand. We've just found that the tractor log splitter gets it done just a little bit easier, but you could really go either way. We personally don't have to have covered firewood storage because it's so dang dry here. I grew up in the Pacific Northwest where it's wet and soggy all winter and my parents absolutely needed to have a shed to keep their firewood from just becoming completely soaked. Thankfully for us here in Wyoming, it's not that much of an issue. I mean we have the occasional wet snow or rain during the winter, but it's very rare and most of the time our snow is super dry. So for example, last night I was putting some firewood in the stove. The firewood as it was sitting outside had snow on it and it was so dry and fluffy.

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I just knocked the snow off outside and the wood burned. No problem. So obviously if you're in a wet climate, a humid climate, you probably will want some sort of storage that'll keep your wood from getting wet and then staying wet all year. We have our big wood pile. Our logs and our splitters and everything out in our pasture. And Christian built this bunk out of, of wood, just the wood bunk that he can move with the tractor. So what we'll do is we'll take the bunk out to the pasture and fill it up with split firewood and then haul it back and set it right by our porch. Obviously that's more on the high

tech side. You can use a wheelbarrow, you can use just a, a basket or a firewood carrier to get it from your splitting area to your house.

Speaker 1: [13:27](#) It doesn't have to be complicated. But that's what works for us. And like I mentioned earlier, if you want to see all of this in real life, you can hop over to the YouTube channel. We have a video. They're all about our firewood processes. I'm a little bit of notes on our wood stove. I get a lot of questions about our woodstove. It is a blaze King brand. Lots of different brands. We spent a lot of time researching. We went with this one because it was a decent size. It wasn't monstrous because when we put it in, we were on a very small space restriction in our old house. So it's the blaze King princess model. I believe it has a catalytic converter in it, which has been a really good option for us. Now I have found that the topic of catalytic converters in wood stoves is like talking politics.

Speaker 1: [14:24](#) I've had people leave me comments like really passionately upset that we use the catalytic converter and saying that they break and that they're horrible and you don't want them. So I'm just telling you that. So you know, there's two sides to this story. For us personally, our catalytic converter has been amazing. It boosts the efficiency of the stove. We've had the stove for how many years? Six years though I think never had an issue with it. It's never gotten dumbed up. Never had to replace it. And what it does, this is my low tech explanation, so hopefully I'm not getting this wrong, but you start the fire like normal. When it gets to a certain level of heat, there's a thermostat on the top of the stove, it'll tell you. And when it gets into this red zone, when it gets into the red zone, you flip a handle on the stove and somehow inside Christian could tell you the details.

Speaker 1: [15:19](#) I'm just giving you my version. The smoke goes into the catalytic converter in, it burns the smoke and it just helps. So basically you get two for one, you get the heat of the wood, you get the heat of the smoke, um, and it just makes your wood stretch a little bit more. Now that's not to say that you can't have a great wood fire without a catalytic converter in your stove, but our thought, our belief is that we get more bang for our buck with the wood by using a stove with a catalytic converter. So anyway, do your own research on that. If you're shopping, we just find that it's been a great fit for us. Now lastly, I want to talk a little bit about back up heat. Um, this is another question I get from folks who are looking at putting in a woodstove.

Speaker 1: [16:07](#) As we were building the remodel onto our farmhouse, we decided to still install a propane powered furnace in the house. And our reasoning was twofold. So number one, we wanted a backup source of heat for when we were traveling or if we couldn't keep the fire going for an extended period of time. So a great example would be this past weekend, we were gone for four days on a little road trip. The temperatures took a nosedive while we were gone and we had the thermostat set for like 68 degrees. And so we didn't even have to worry whether or not our pipes would freeze while we were gone, which was very reassuring. Now 99% of the time when we're home, we are heating with the wood stove. We just prefer it. I like the way it heats up the living room. I like to stand by it, but when we're gone, it's really nice to have that peace of mind.

Speaker 1: [17:07](#) And the second reason we installed that secondary heat source was that we didn't want to hurt the resale value of our home. So we knew that if we ever decided to sell our homestead, not everyone's going to be as committed to wood heat as we were. So we didn't want to necessarily hurt the resale value. If people were looking at the house and all it had was wood heat, um, that could be a, a negative for folks. Plus putting in a propane furnace after the fact, after the house is built is going to be way more complicated. So we thought, why not do it while we were building? It's a little bit easier, a little bit cheaper and call it good. So it's been a great fit for us even though honestly we don't use it a ton when we do need it, it's really nice to have.

New Speaker: [17:58](#) So wrapping up here, heating with wood is one of those things. Like I said earlier, that falls into the hard but good category. It takes more time, it takes more effort. You'll find yourself sweating while you're cutting firewood. What's that old saying? Um, firewood is good. Or heating with wood is great cause it warms you twice once while you're chopping. And then once wallets burning. Um, so there's a little bit more mess. There's a little bit more forethought that goes into it. But we truly enjoy the process and there is absolutely nothing like coming into the house after a cold day outside and being able to stand by that roaring fire.

Speaker 1: [18:46](#) So if you are ready to dive into this homestead life, but you're not quite sure where to start. I got you covered. I have an entire library of resources I have put together for homesteaders just like you, and you can get complimentary access to this library over at www.theprairiehomestead.com/grow I'll leave that link in the show notes, but one more time. It's the Prairie homestead.com forward slash G R, O, w and that's it for this episode. Thanks for listening my friends. I can't wait to chat with

you more on the next episode of the old fashioned on purpose
podcast.