

Charlotte

BEST OF GUIDE 2017

# HOME

DESIGN & DECOR®



Contributing Editor

BUILDING A  
BETTER HOME



MARY  
LUDEMANN



## FIRESIDE



**I**t's fall once again. The weather is crisp, the leaves are turning vibrant colors, and the holidays are just around the corner. I don't know about you, but one of my favorite things to do this time of year is to grab a good book, pour myself a glass of red wine, and snuggle up in a comfy chair in front of a crackling fire.

My love of fireplaces goes back to my childhood. I grew up in the snowbelt of western New York. We had a roaring fire in our fireplace nearly every night from October through April. To this day, the crackling of fireplace logs and the cozy warmth of a good fire bring me comfort and many fond memories.

As a designer and builder, I love to put at least one fireplace in each of our homes. If I'm lucky, I get to put in more than one! Fireplaces can be so beautiful and so personal—each hearth and mantel design is unique to the homeowner. I love working with different materials and playing with different heights and proportions to achieve different looks.

That said, there's much more to a great fireplace than a beautiful design. The first and most important aspect of choosing a fireplace is functionality. You need to consider both your lifestyle and the type of fireplace you'd like to have.





Everybody loves a crackling wood fire and most of my clients tell me they want a real, full masonry wood-burning fireplace right off the bat. However, once we discuss the logistics of a genuine wood fireplace, many change their minds and go with gas. Wood fireplaces are messy, time consuming, and a bit of a challenge to light. They require hard work, a place to store a lot of wood, and they tend to be more expensive to build.

If you can't give up your dream of having an authentic fireplace, a convertible unit might be the right option for you. We really like Isokern's Magnum and Standard All Fuel Series. You can burn wood if you choose to, or you can use a fitted gas log set. The lack of a glass front really adds to the authentic look and feel.

You could also opt for a gas fireplace with a glass front. Heat&Glo offers a great variety of products that heat effectively and efficiently. They are a breeze to operate and look so realistic that it's very difficult to tell that they're not wood-burning.

If you just can't decide which type of fireplace to go with, you can do what I did and put one of each in your home. You can have a genuine, crackling wood fire on your back porch on nights when you have more leisure time. Meanwhile, your gas unit inside can summon that dancing flame with just the flip of a switch on even the busiest of nights.◆



Mary Ludemann is the founder of New Old and has been designing and building homes for over 12 years. To discuss your next dream build or renovation project, contact New Old at 704-975-5196. For more information, visit [www.newold.com](http://www.newold.com) or email them at [building@newold.com](mailto:building@newold.com).