

Triangle

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HOME

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KRISTIN THARPE'S
TREASURED TROVE
IN NORTH RIDGE

PLUS
ALL-THINGS
HIGH POINT MARKET

*Contributor*BUILDING A
BETTER HOME

E V A N B O S T

ON
FIRE

As we head into autumn and chilly breezes rustle colorful leaves loose from their branches, nothing will conjure nostalgia quite like the smell and warmth of a burning fire. Fireplaces are a wonderful amenity for your home, offering warmth and comfort and serving as an eye-catching anchor to a room or outdoor space. Before choosing a fireplace for your new home or remodel, it's important to understand the basics of fireplace function and design.

First up, what fuel source will be used? Of course, the answer is that it depends on your home and preferences. The most common options are natural gas, propane, and wood-burning, but there are also biomass pellet- and bioethanol-burning fireplaces. Additionally, there are combination gas and wood-burning prefabricated fireplaces that offer added flexibility.

Before answering that question though, let's discuss how fireplaces breathe and vent. Thick smoke from wood-burning fireplaces must be vented entirely to the outside to prevent harmful vapors from entering the home, and a make-up air supply must be provided specifically for the fire to avoid depressurization. Although some gas fireplaces are sold as ventless, systems, we recommend all fireplaces be vented to the outside due to moisture and carbon monoxide concerns. So, if it must be vented, does it require a chimney? Not necessarily. For gas fireplaces, direct-vent systems are becoming very popular for their installation flexibility. A direct vent fireplace mounted on an exterior wall draws in combustion air and exhausts fumes directly outside through the wall. If you'd like to add a fireplace on an interior wall, flue pipes can be routed through chases in the framing up through the roof without a vertical chimney.

Traditional wood-burning masonry fireplaces of yesteryear have fallen nearly extinct in new home construction, but many charming older homes have beautiful masonry chimneys that have hosted

naturally drafting wood-burned fires over the decades. Although aesthetically pleasing, these hand-built chimneys are inefficient at heating a home and can be dangerous if they have been damaged over the years or if they weren't built properly. We recommend consulting with a professional fireplace company to assess the condition of a masonry chimney before use. The best solution to renovate an older chimney for safe, regular use and home heating will likely be to install a prefabricated wood or gas-burning insert. This will allow you to utilize state-of-the-art fireplace technology while maintaining the charm of an existing masonry fireplace, hearth, and chimney.

When building a custom home or remodeling, you have a blank slate for the design and material selection of your fireplace surround, hearth, and mantel. Painted brick or natural stone surrounds and hearths are very popular, with a stone or timber mantel to accentuate design elements from other areas in the home. A design less utilized is a slate veneer or limestone block surround, which can provide more clean-lines for a contemporary look. ArcusStone is a product we've used to achieve the look of custom carved limestone for a fraction of the cost and weight. It's a plaster that can be applied to a polystyrene mold and achieves the look of stone when dry. Our 2017 Parade of Homes Silver winner included a custom designed ArcusStone fireplace hearth that anchors one of our favorite views in the home.

We'd love to hear from you! Send your fireplace designs, ideas, or questions to us at info@bosthomes.com. ♦

Evan Bost is director of marketing and Green Initiatives at Bost Custom Homes, an award-winning custom building firm serving the Triangle. With thirty years of proven expertise, Bost Custom Homes designs and constructs custom residences with superior craftsmanship, a focus on health and sustainability, architectural authenticity, and structural integrity. To begin the conversation of your forever home, call 919-460-1983 or email info@bosthomes.com. Learn more at www.bosthomes.com or www.facebook.com/bostcustomhomes.

