

this is the year you're gonna WIN WINTER

Hacks and how-tos to keep you warm and toasty.



BUILD A LONGER-LASTING FIRE

What you need

SEASONED WOOD. “Most firewood you find at hardware or grocery stores is hard wood, such as cherry or almond, which burns longer than soft varieties like pine and cedar,” says Amie Ryan, owner of Ryan Bros. Chimney Sweeping Inc. in Roseville, CA. Fresh-cut logs take six months to two years to dry out enough to become “seasoned” firewood. When chopping it, go for a mix of smaller logs (best for getting fires started) and larger ones.

KINDLING. These bitty pieces of wood burn quickly, creating a base for a roaring flame. Buy sticks or chunks, or grab dry twigs from the yard.

NEWSPAPER. Only use black-and-white newsprint, as the color kind can release chemicals.

What to do

GET THE KINDLING GOING. Once a small pile of it is set on the fireplace grate, crumple in pieces of newspaper and light it to jump-start the fire.

STACK LOGS RIGHT. For maximum airflow, put them so they overlap one another in a crisscross pattern. Use smaller logs on the bottom, larger ones on top. Don't place logs in a tight, compact stack. Says Ryan, “Oxygen helps fuel the fire.” When the fire starts to dwindle, add logs one at a time.



HOT TIP
When temps dip below freezing, keep shades raised a few inches overnight to prevent condensation on windows.

DITCH PESKY DRAFTS FOR GOOD

You'll beat the chill and the bill. Heat gain and loss through windows accounts for up to 30% of a home's HVAC energy use, per the U.S. Department of Energy.

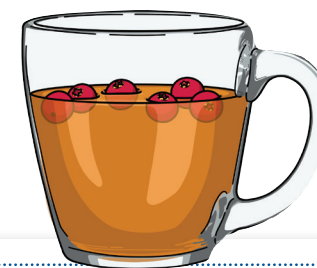
DRAFT-PROOF YOUR DOORS

Exterior ones need door sweeps along the bottom *and* weather stripping around the edges to fully block drafts, says Rachel Flint, vice president of Hubbell Homes in Des Moines, IA. Sweeps are metal strips with flaps that attach to the door bottom, on the inside. Weather stripping is made of slim lengths of rubber or foam that seal excess space between the door and frame. If either one is dried up, cracked, or has gaps, out with the old and in with the new.

DRAFT-PROOF YOUR WINDOWS

Check the weather stripping and the caulk inside your home, and replace if they're not in good shape. Experts recommend latex caulking. “Get paintable caulking so you can match it to your window trim,” says Flint. Also assess whether locks are keeping the windows tightly shut. And in older homes, make sure that the seal around each windowpane (which is called glazing) is OK—when it's crumbling or the glass looks foggy, it needs a pro repair.

[home + help]



BREW THE PERFECT CUP OF HOT CIDER

To make basic apple cider seriously delicious, just add heat and a handful of ingredients. Here's a cupful of comfort created by María del Mar Cuadra, author of *Winter Cocktails*.

- 1 small orange
- 3 cinnamon sticks
- 1 tablespoon whole allspice berries
- 5 cups apple cider

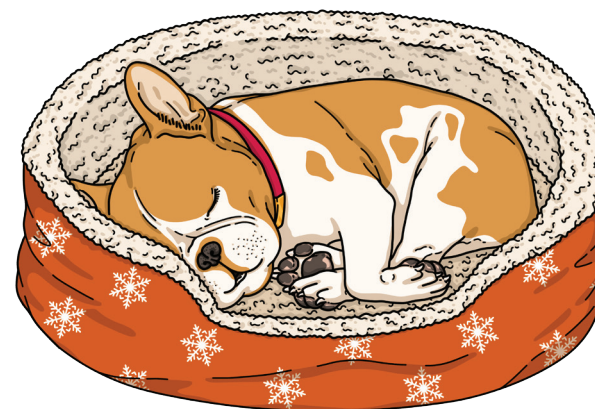
Fresh cranberries, for garnish

Optional: Sub in ½ cup applejack liquor for ½ cup cider.

1. Wash and peel the orange, put the peel aside, and squeeze the juice into a bowl.

2. Place the cinnamon sticks, allspice, and orange peel in a medium saucepan. Cook, stirring, over medium heat until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Stir in the apple cider (and applejack, if using) and juice from the orange and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Reduce heat to low and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

3. Strain the mixture through a sieve set over a bowl. Discard the spices and orange peel. Pour into cups and garnish with fresh cranberries.



WINTERIZE YOUR PET'S NEST

FOR YOUR CAT: Consider treating yours to a cat cave made of wool. It's a good insulator and kitties love to rest inside it, says Kristen Levine, the founder of Pet Living. For cheerful colored ones, check out Dharma Dog Karma Cat.

FOR YOUR DOG: Pick up a memory foam bed. It's particularly great for older dogs, since the cold can make joints stiffer and achier. “Foam mattresses tend to be warmer than other types, and being a bit warmer helps year-round,” says Levine. She likes the Brindle dog beds and the Orvis memory foam bolster dog bed. Keep a faux-fur throw on the end of your bed, if that's a preferred sleeping spot. “Just remember: Since your pets have a fur coat, don't put their bed or crate near a radiator or vent, as they may find it too warm,” she says.



GET THE WARMEST BED

“Bedding stays warm by trapping air in and around fibers, which insulates your body,” says Fran Kozen, a director in the fiber science and apparel design department at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY. And the winners are...

THE WARMEST DUVET: Ounce per ounce, down is warmer than synthetic fill, so it offers more warmth at a lighter weight than polyester and microfiber. How a duvet is constructed matters, since cool spots can result from shifting fill. Look for ones with “baffle box” stitching with plenty of pockets to keep the fill well-distributed.

THE WARMEST SHEETS: Cotton flannel sheets rank highest for warmth because their napped surface helps contain warm air. (And they score sky-high on cuddliness!) Cotton and bamboo-based sheets are about equal, though bamboo ones tend to be more absorbent—a good thing if you overheat.

THE WARMEST THROW: Merino wool is an MVP. It’s supercomfy, often less pricey than cashmere, and generally more washable. Also toss on a fuzzy or chunky knit pillow or two. “They make a bed ultimately cozy,” says designer Dan Vickery from *Frozen in Time* on the discovery+ app.



LEAKPROOF YOUR ROOF

A cheap cold-weather buy that could save you a bundle: an adjustable roof rake, to remove excess snow from the eaves. A pileup can be more weight than your roof could handle and lead to big-bucks damage. Dos and don’ts from Christopher Carrothers, president of Drip Edge Roofing in Charlotte, NC:

- DO** choose a rake with a blade made of polyethylene, a durable lightweight plastic. Skip ones with razor-blade edges, which can damage shingles.
- DON’T** use a ladder to do the job, to avoid a slip situation. “Only remove snow you can reach from the ground,” says Carrothers.
- DO** pay attention to icicles on the edge of the roof as you rake. A cluster of long ones can signal an ice dam, a frozen solid block that prevents melted snow from draining. Water may then seep under shingles and into the walls, so if you spot a bunch, call a roofer to check things out.
- DON’T** let snow sit on your roof for days. Get to it as soon as possible, before powdery snow turns to heavy ice.

try some easy furnace boosters

One of the simplest ways to get your furnace working at peak efficiency is to avoid letting it clog up with dust and debris, says Donna Kimble, president of AA-Air Company in Knoxville, TN. Filter for the win! Check the HVAC manual and the instructions that come with the filter to find out the recommended frequency for changing yours. (On average, every three months.) You also want to keep vents and registers throughout the house uncovered—if they’re blocked by furniture or piles of clothing left by kids, air can’t completely circulate. Another smart move: Set ceiling fan blades to spin clockwise at a low setting. This circulates warm air by the ceiling and draws cold air up. (In summer, blades spinning counterclockwise propel air down for a cooling effect.)

HOT TIP

Don’t forget to change the furnace filter. Add it to your calendar, or upgrade to a smart thermostat that will alert you when it’s time.

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