

Important Considerations When Researching Wood Stoves

Reviews are mostly unreliable. Here's why:

Virtually no-one knows the magnitude of benefit when smoke burns, let alone know how fleeting it is with most models when new stoves lose their vacuum, with virtually no repair remedy. The only knowledge base they have are old gen air tight stoves. Any modern stove works just fine initially. And they all perform virtually the same, with slight variations in efficiencies. Therefore, anyone who is going from an old gen stove, to a new gen stove, is going to be pleased, even they chose the worst new generation stove on the market. Therefore, they leave a misleading/premature review, not knowing the performance is short lived. Furthermore, even when it stops burning smoke, plummeting in efficiency, burn time, with much more wood handling and dirty chimney, they do not even know to complain because it is still like their old airtight. Add to this the fact that most people leave reviews soon after getting the stove, before it gets inefficient and needing frequent maintenance.

BTU ratings are wildly arbitrary, due to a large list of reasons. It is common to read the BTUs of a small stove nearly the same as a extra-large stove with twice the rated heating capacity. To date, no one has provided a good reason for this discrepancy.

Furthermore, any stove's max BTU output is more dependent on wood dryness level, and air intake rate, than the stove size. A stove air intake is dependent on the chimneys air pulling power. It could vary 4-fold, by being tall with a metal liner, verses short with no liner. Add in wood moisture content variations. External factors have much more to do with BTU output, than the size or model of the stove. This is not the case with anything else you purchased with a btu rating, whether it be a furnace, or AC unit. How could anyone evaluate a stove's btu's without first evaluating the underlying factors that dominate how it performs.

Then there are varying negative pressure issues that reduce draft measurably. then there are different home insulation factors, And wild swings and outdoor temperatures. These external factors have nothing to do with this woodstove but dominate what the woodstove BTU output is. Reviews are extremely unreliable.

As far as max burn time is concerned, it's a function of wood dryness and density, and how much air feeds the fire when it's on low. But with chimney draft powers (Air intake) varying four-fold from chimney to chimney, how could you evaluate any one stove not knowing first all the variables that create huge margins of error in the burn time?

To best get a feel for comparative burn time, simply compare the cubic volume of each stove's fire box, and factor in the small differences in efficiency. Add some time for a stove that has a heat exchanger, such as 'thermal fin', as it will be a flatter curve at the high end.

Efficiency should be measured on a graph to see who has the largest area under the curve. That is not done, so efficiency ratings are unreliable. Most important thing to judge a stove by, are by quality materials they used to build it, and design engineering that makes it last a lifetime. By this I especially mean the ability to maintain a vacuum. Without ability to maintain a vacuum after some punishing use, efficiencies will revert from the promised 80%+-, to the 40-52% of old gen air-tights.

Also, beware, online stoves, as well as many locally sold stoves, are cheap quality, in need of a lot of costly repairs. The difference being online stoves will never be able to honor warranty service, despite what they say, which is someone from a local store will repair. That is not true.

A local dealer always grumbles about home service calls to fix stoves. It is a headache, and much less profitable than the abundance of other work they have. That's why I sell the highest quality stoves money can buy. Quality to stay high efficiency (maintain a vacuum, and not revert to 50% efficiency), is the most important criteria for selecting a stove brand, and not disclosed in brochures or the web! It is shown in a 'show and tell demo., like I provide, listing the 5 major benefits of smoke ignition. Seeing quality components that lend to lasting performance, allows you to compare elsewhere, and see lesser quality, that sooner negates promised efficiency. Non-metal seamed stoves are a throw away when they leak. Cheaper to buy new than fix, and the warranty does not cover 'over firing'.