

The Ultimate Ethanol Fireplace Buyers Guide



Everything you need to know about buying an ethanol fireplace

Everyone loves the cozy warmth a fireplace can bring to their homes. Whether curled up by the fire during a wintery day, or enjoying the ambiance and warmth it can bring to a dinner party, romantic evening, or lounge in the tub, more and more homeowners are building or retrofitting their homes to include an ethanol fireplace.

Unlike traditional fireplaces, ethanol fireplaces do not require a chimney, vent, or flue, nor do they require a gas line. In fact, [tabletop](#) or [freestanding](#) ethanol fireplaces are actually portable – some can even be used indoors and [outside](#). This means easier installation, with plenty of choices to suit your space, including [wall-mounted](#), [two-sided](#), and even [hanging](#) ethanol fireplaces.

There's also the option to convert an existing fireplace or hole in the wall into an ethanol fireplace by [installing an ethanol fireplace insert](#).

Ethanol fireplaces are revered for being an eco-friendly choice. Ethanol fuel is a clean-burning, biodegradable, renewable resource that is comparable in cost to – or even cheaper than – buying wood. With today's forests a more precious resource than ever, it's no wonder that many homeowners are turning to the hassle-free, low-maintenance benefits of ethanol fireplaces. No more chopping wood, soot marks, or cleaning up ashes!

If you're looking for an easy-to-install fireplace to brighten up your space, you probably have some questions about buying an ethanol fireplace. Here are some of the top considerations when shopping for your ethanol fireplace.



What is ethanol?

Ethanol is a renewable alcohol biofuel produced from naturally fermented sugar, corn, or other plants or manufacturing waste. It is an extremely flammable yet clean-burning fuel, making it an ideal choice for starting contained fires. Ethanol also goes by the names bioethanol or denatured alcohol.

Bioethanol is 100% pure alcohol. As a result, fireplace fuel manufacturers add odorless, unpleasant flavors to the ethanol to ensure it's not consumed by humans.



How do ethanol fireplaces work?

As you might expect from the name, ethanol fireplaces are fueled by ethanol. All you have to do is add ethanol to the fireplace burner and ignite it with a long lighter. Once you're ready to shut things down, simply put a lid over the fire.

One strong benefit of ethanol fireplaces over wood-burning is the lack of dangerous fumes. In fact, that's why ethanol fireplaces do not require a chimney – only nominal amounts of water and carbon dioxide are released. This also means no soot on your walls or ceilings. The only place you should see any soot at all – and even then it will be a miniscule amount – is where the flame touches the fireplace.

There are various types of ethanol fireplaces that work in different settings, making them completely adaptable to your space. [Wall-mounted](#), [recessed](#), or [hanging](#) ethanol fireplaces are most similar to the profile of a traditional wood-burning or gas fireplace. [Two-sided ethanol fireplaces](#) provide an elegant room divider between two spaces, such as a master bedroom and bathroom or living and dining room, allowing you to join the ambience in multiple areas. [Table top](#) and [freestanding](#) ethanol fireplaces are among the most flexible in terms of relocation. There

are even specially designed [outdoor ethanol fireplaces](#) for when you want to warm things up outside.

No matter what model you choose, all ethanol fireplaces generally work in the same way – add fuel, light your fireplace, and enjoy instant flames.



Can ethanol fireplaces heat an entire room? How much heat do ethanol fireplaces produce?

Ethanol fireplaces generally produce 2-6 kW of heat per hour, which is enough to heat a space of 20 to 40 square meters or 215 to 430 square feet. It takes about 10-15 minutes for ethanol fireplaces to warm up to their full heating potential. Keep in mind, ethanol fireplaces aren't typically used as a primary heating source for a space.

If your room is smaller than 20 meters / 215 square feet, you may need to open a window after some time to ventilate the space.



How long can an ethanol fireplace burn for?

The burn time of an ethanol fireplace depends on the flame size and fuel capacity of your fireplace. Most ethanol fireplaces can burn for 1-10 hours when fully fueled, although you can generally expect about 4-5 hours of burn time from a standard ethanol fireplace. The cost of using an ethanol fireplace is only about \$1-3 per hour, depending on how much fuel you're using and the overall size of your fireplace.

Once fuel runs out, your ethanol fireplace will shut down fast. If you want to keep the flames going, just add more ethanol in about 5-15 minutes once the burner has cooled down.



Where can I buy ethanol fuel and how long will it last?

[Ethanol fuel is available online](#) and at hardware stores. When shopping for ethanol fuel, ensure it is designed specifically for fireplaces. Bioethanol fuel comes in premeasured, safe containers that are easy to store and won't expire.



How do you refill an ethanol fireplace?

Refilling your ethanol fireplace is as simple as adding the manufacturer-recommended amount of fuel to your fireplace burner, ideally via a funnel to help prevent spills. In the event you do spill some ethanol fuel, clean it up and ensure you do not have any ethanol on your hands before lighting your fireplace.

Are ethanol fireplaces safe?

Like all fireplaces, safety is an important factor for bringing open flame into your home. There are certain factors to look out for when assessing the safety of an ethanol fireplace.

First, look for ethanol fireplaces that are certified by organizations such as Swedcert, SP Sitac, TUV, UL, or C-UL. These certifications are not required by law, and manufacturers that invest in this costly annual testing are clearly more concerned about the safety of their products. If you're wondering what type of testing your fireplace has undergone, typically certification involves testing the durability of the fireplace by striking it with a heavy object, as well as the safety of the burner, by tipping the fireplace to a certain angle.

Price is also a good indicator of an ethanol fireplace's safety. Higher priced ethanol fireplaces use sturdier materials that will withstand high heat. The weight of a fireplace will give you an idea of whether it's made with thicker and heavier stainless steel. A more expensive ethanol fireplace also generally has a better quality burner, weighing between 2-5 kg. Other safety features to look out for include a lid, which allows you to regulate flame size or easily turn flames off, and a spill tray in case you spill fuel.

Note that in some ways, ethanol fireplaces are safer than wood-burning or gas fireplaces. Their only byproduct is water and minimal amounts of CO₂ (about the same amount as lighting two candles).



Are ethanol fireplaces legal? What building regulations or code do I need to follow for my ethanol fireplace?

The [U.S. Fire Administration](#) and the [National Fire Protection Association](#) both approve ethanol fireplaces as safe for home use. There are no government bodies or laws that regulate the use of decorative ethanol fireplaces. As long as they are installed properly and not used as a primary source of heat, you should be fine using an ethanol fireplace.

There are two things to keep in mind however. First, you may need to consult with your building manager on the building's codes if you live in a multi-unit residential building, such as an

apartment or condo. Second, you may need to contact your insurance company when installing an ethanol fireplace. Some insurance firms will require you to have a certified fireplace.



How do you install an ethanol fireplace?

Ethanol fireplaces have no flues, vents, chimneys, gas lines, or pipes, which makes installation a breeze. Wall-mounted or hanging ethanol fireplaces are simply affixed to the wall, much in the same way you'd install a flat screen TV. Of course, keep in mind safety precautions, like ensure your wall-mounted ethanol fireplace is kept at least 1 meter / 3 feet away from curtains, furniture, and other fixtures.

Freestanding models are even simpler. After you've put the fireplace together, you simply put the burner inside, add fuel, and place the fireplace where you'd like to use it. Again, you'll want to keep a safe distance of 1 meter / 3 feet from other items. Note that you do not need to put anything underneath your freestanding ethanol fireplace either – it will not damage your floors.

For safety reasons, many ethanol fireplaces require minimal assembly. All you'll typically need is a screwdriver and a few minutes of your time to slide in the ethanol burner and attach any safety glass panels.



What is an ethanol fireplace insert?

If you already have a space for a fireplace but want to upgrade to the eco-friendly, clean-burning benefits of an ethanol fireplace, a ventless fireplace insert is the perfect solution. Ethanol fireplace inserts can be placed into an existing closed-off fireplace with minimal installation, giving new life to old wood-burning fireplaces. Unlike costly gas fireplace installations, you won't need to take on any major reconstruction – simply add a fireplace insert and you're that much closer to warmth and comfort.

Alternatively you can also use fireplace inserts to create your own ethanol fireplace showpiece into a single or double-sided feature wall. This style of ethanol fireplace is also known as a 'hole in the wall' ethanol fireplace.



What is the best ethanol fireplace?

The best ethanol fireplace is dependent on what you're looking for as a consumer, based on your budget and desired aesthetic. However, there are a few guidelines to help ensure you're getting the best quality ethanol fireplace available.

First, look for ethanol fireplaces with safety certifications. There are no laws requiring fireplace manufacturers to get these certifications, so brands that invest in them are generally more concerned about your safety, bringing you peace of mind.

Second, pay attention to the materials your ethanol fireplace is made from. Heavier weight, lower gauge stainless steel generally means you'll have a better quality burner. This means brighter flames and better safety, as cheap burners can be harder to turn off, posing a major safety risk.

Finally, don't forget about the look of your ethanol fireplace. There are a wide range of decorative finishes and materials for your ethanol fireplace, from minimalist glass to striking natural stone or rock.

Ultimately the best ethanol fireplace is one that delivers top notch safety, good quality manufacturing, and plenty of eye-catching style.