

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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The Home Designer with Brandon Neff

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Cozy Fireplaces Bring Warmth to Chilly Winter Nights

Oh, the weather outside is frightful, but these fireplaces are so delightful ...

By Cathy Tyson



Copper fireplace at the Kangeter home.

Photos Cathy Tyson



Kiva style, Kangeter family.

From a senior apartment to stately hillside estate to an historic ranch home, and beyond, it's not unusual to own a fireplace – or two – in this neck of the woods. In a completely random sampling of fireplace styles, Lamorinda residents opened their doors to share their unique fireplaces from kiva style, to a pellet stove, to a see-through model that truly brings the outdoors in.

About six years ago, Ed and Amie Kangeter purchased an historic 1930s home in Orinda. Kangeter was smitten when she saw the home's massive fireplace with its distinctive copper hood. Bringing back the shine was a major workout after years of oxidation; the copper had been seen better days, sporting a weathered patina when they bought the house. Rolls of paper towels and some elbow grease brought back the original youthful, but now 80-year-old sheen. The new owners replaced the terra cotta tile mantel and brick along the sides with opalescent tile, giving it a more contemporary look.

"It's kind of ironic, since we are in the scrap metal business, we know how valuable copper is," says Kangeter. "We tried to respect the continuity of the home, but have done some major updates."

Along with the copper fireplace, there's a kiva or "bee hive" round fireplace in a corner of what they call the Spanish room. This one gets a fair amount of use, since that room can be a little chilly. Son Louie Kangeter, 13, proudly reports, "I'm the official fire guy. My parents trust me." Regardless of who lights it, Louie, his little brother and sister, mom, dad and especially the dog really enjoy a warm fire on winter evenings.

Moraga homeowners Curtis and Shannon Hamm are thrilled with the Whitfield pellet stove in their family room, installed as part of a remodel in 1993. Standing in front of it is like being near a hair dryer blowing out warm air. They estimate they use up to 1.25 tons of pellets per year, the equivalent of burning one 40-pound bag every two days. The pellets are made of leftover wood residue from furniture manufacturing and sawdust from lumber production that is dried and compressed into small pellet-sized bits.

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