

# Hearthwarming News

A Newsletter from the Masonry Heater Store  
By Fountainhead Natural Homes, LLC

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## Great Lakes Brewing Company goes Tulikivi!

Many people are already aware of the fantastic food, atmosphere, and hometown brews available at the Great Lakes Brewing Company on Market Avenue in Cleveland, Ohio. And if you have patronized their restaurant lately, you are probably aware that they are renovating and creating an all-new beer garden.

The space is innovative in many ways, not the least of which is a straw bale wall. Straw bale construction has been growing in popularity over the last 10 to 15 years as a "green" insulated wall system. Straw is an annually renewable agricultural waste product and has several attractive attributes for construction like low embodied energy, very high insulation values, and low cost. When plastered, a straw bale wall also is more fire resistant than most residential construction methods used today.

It's worth a trip to the Great Lakes Brewing Company's new beer garden just to see the straw wall through the "truth window". If you're there in warm weather, however, you will also be able to dine under

the stars because the canvas roofing material is designed to roll back to give you a unique outdoor dining experience. But Great Lakes Brewing Company plans to use the space year-round and part of the plan to keep you comfortable is a unique and beautiful Tulikivi soapstone masonry heater from the Masonry Heater Store.

The design (at left) has as its base the stock model TU2700. So although all the interior workings are a 2700, the outside looks very different than the typical Tulikivi model! This is a testament to the fact that we can customize any Tulikivi to suit virtually any desire.

Here, massive rockfaced soapstone chunks replace the usual honed, straight, and true exterior stones. The huge, almost boulder-like appearance is accompanied by two thick slab mantels and equally thick capping stones. The heater looks and is massive, weighing in at about 7,500 lbs.

Normally, we would expect a heater like this to heat the main living areas of residence, perhaps 1600 square feet or more depending on insulation levels. In this application in a beer garden with a roof having virtually no insulation, there has been a lot of debate about how well the fireplace will perform – even though the area is only about 750 square feet. Since radiant heat depends less on air temperature, we're betting this soapstone fireplace will contribute a lot to the patrons' comfort.

We urge you to visit the Great Lakes Brewing Company and decide for yourself! See this one-of-a-kind installation – to our knowledge only the second commercial use of a wood-fired masonry heater in Ohio. (The first was our own Masonry Heater Store.)

The Masonry Heater Store is located at 7416 Airport Highway, Holland, Ohio. It is 2 miles west of exit 8 off I-475/23 and 5 miles east of Ohio Turnpike exit 52. Please call 419-825-3031 or e-mail [Tulikivi@masonryheaterstore.com](mailto:Tulikivi@masonryheaterstore.com) for more detailed directions. **Open 10 a.m.- 4 p.m. on Saturdays only or by appointment.**

# Regulating A Masonry Heater and Bakeoven

In these modern times, we enjoy a great many conveniences. Some of these conveniences now are even considered necessities. Flip a switch for light or turn a knob and you get hot water. You can press a button and maintain a particular speed in your car, set an alarm to be awakened at a particular time, and set a dial to get your clothes washed or dried.

We also have thermostats and timers for our furnaces and conventional ovens. Again, set a dial or push a button and have instant climate control or satisfactory cooking. So this recipe says you need 350 degrees and that one says 400 and the next says 325. No problem here, just turn the dial to the magic number and a-bakin' we will go!

With all this technological control available, it is no wonder that many people come to the Masonry Heater Store and ask, "How do you regulate the temperature?" or, "How do you know when it's time to take the food out of the oven?" These are, of course, very valid and serious questions. If one is going to heat his home or cook his food with a wood-fired masonry heater, these questions must be addressed at some time.



One of the aspects of living in a technological age is that sometimes we expect things to be more complicated than they really are. This is certainly true of the masonry heater and bakeoven. Yet every human being on Earth is born with and uses everyday the most sophisticated "computer"-the human intellect.

We deceive ourselves if we believe

that a timer, thermostat, or computer chip is necessary to make good bread or to make us comfortably warm. When it comes to using wood for our cooking and heating, the only true necessities are our intellect and experience.

Maybe you've been tooling along on average winter days using, say, fifty pounds of firewood per day. Then you hear word that temperatures are going to drop into the single digits over the next couple nights. You might say to yourself, "Hang on, last month when it dropped into single digits, I added ten pounds of wood and that wasn't quite enough right away, but twenty pounds more was perfect." And so you use twenty more pounds and everyone is comfortable.

Likewise maybe on your first use of the bakeoven, you stuffed the firebox full of wood and burned it hot and fast. Then as soon as the fire was out and coals removed you tossed in a batch of dough and went to the other room to talk to your best friend on the phone. No doubt an hour later as you removed the black mass of carbon, shaped like a loaf of bread, you said to yourself, "Next time I need to use less wood or wait a while longer before putting the dough in the oven."

In truth, the regulation of heat using wood is very common sense and becomes second nature with time and experience. Masonry heaters are actually very forgiving and to some degree are self-regulating. If the weather has warmed but you still used a quantity of wood for colder weather, the heater will simply stay warmer longer. Because the surrounding things aren't soaking up heat as fast as they do on a colder day, more of the heat stays in storage in the mass of the heater.

As to the oven, your cookbook may say that the bread needs 375 degrees for 45 minutes. But the truth is that the flour, water, salt, and other ingredients don't wear a watch or carry a thermometer. They will not know if you begin using time as an approximation, temperature based on experience, and your eyes, nose and other senses as indicators of when the bread is really done.

We encourage you to take the time to learn, feel, and experience. For that is real living.

# Healthy Hearth

Did you know that the radiant heat from a masonry heater is the healthiest way to heat your home?

When I completed my study for certification in Bau-biologie (Building-biology – the study of how our built living environment affects our health and well-being.) 15 years ago, I had learned that one of the most common causes of illness in the typical home is the presence of mold.

Mold alone can often account for many typical symptoms we might normally consider to be hay fever or just the common cold. Breathing problems, runny noses, coughing, and congestion are some typical complaints that sometimes are a result of the presence and growth of mold. Mold spores, like dust, can float in the air throughout your home.

There are actually very common places where mold often grows even in the homes of folks who take great pride in keeping their houses spic and span. One location is in the drip or evaporation tray at the base of the refrigerator. Another spot is the underside of the water tank portion of a flush toilet. The good news about these locations is that the average person can access these spots and clean up the problem.

## Did You Know?

**The Masonry Heater Store has on display custom built furniture from “Woods of Wisdom”, the studio of local craftsman Lindsay Graham.**

**In addition, we often bake bread in our Tulikivi TTU2700 bakeoven on Saturday afternoon. In the future, we will be scheduling regular bakeoven demonstrations. Stay tuned!**

**The Masonry Heater Store is now open on Saturdays from 10a.m. until 4p.m. If this is not a convenient time for you to come, we are still happy to meet with you any weekday. Just give us a call and let us know when you would like to come!**

But there are potential mold growth areas that are inaccessible. What’s worse is that sometimes the mold growth is encouraged by a forced air or other convection-type heating system. Specifically, mold can be encouraged to flourish in the dark, insulated stud wall cavities of the outside structure of the house.

Convection heat from normal woodstoves or forced air systems does not warm things directly. Instead, it heats air while objects, like the walls of the house, stay colder than the air. At the same time, the excessively warmed air is very low in moisture. But moisture has to go somewhere when it is not in the air. Some of it goes into the walls.

In addition, in most homes heated with a convection system, the outside air is more humid than the inside air. Thus we have moisture in the walls and moist air outside the walls and cold wall surfaces. And what often happens when moist air contacts a cold surface? If you answered “condensation”, go to the head of the class.

The cold, moist conditions created can be a superb environment for cultivating fungi of all sorts. Moist and dark areas like this also are very attractive to insects. The results of moisture in the walls can be as mild as some off odors or irritation and as severe as complete rotting of the wooden structure of the home and serious breathing problems.

By contrast, a masonry heater is not primarily a convection heater. Instead, 80% of its heat energy goes directly via infrared radiation into things. It is heating you, your furniture, your floors, and your walls. The heated items dictate the air temperature. Air temperature and wall temperature tend to be virtually the same.

Since the masonry stove is not superheating air, moisture is not driven out of the room and into your walls. Rather interior humidity levels stay at a higher, healthier, more natural level. At the same time, since wall temperatures are higher, condensation is much less likely from the outside. The end result is a healthier, more comfortable, and more carefree living environment.

-Ken Matesz

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