

ISSUE 10 • 2025

# CurbAppeal

TORONTO WEST

magazine.ca

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# UNDERSTANDING BTUs:

## HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT FIREPLACE FOR COMFORT AND STYLE

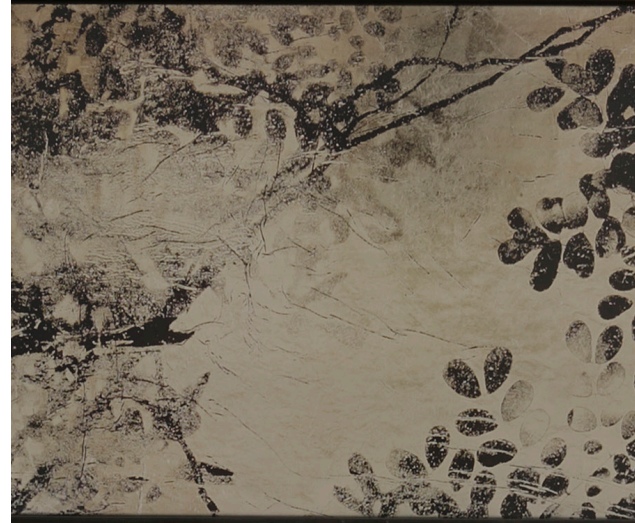
By Jessica Cinnamon | [jessicacinnamondesign.com](http://jessicacinnamondesign.com)  
Photography by Stephani Buchman

LEARN HOW BTUs AFFECT WARMTH AND COMFORT  
IN YOUR HOME WITH DESIGNER **JESSICA CINNAMON**  
AND FIREPLACE EXPERT **SONIA PRESOTTO**



When selecting a fireplace, it is easy to be drawn to its visual appeal—the elegance of the flame, the materials, and how the unit complements your overall design scheme. Yet, one of the most critical factors that determines comfort is often hidden in the technical details. If you are browsing fireplace specifications, you will see the term BTU everywhere. Understanding what it means and how it affects your living space is essential for choosing a fireplace that is both beautiful and functional.

BTU stands for British Thermal Unit. It is the standard measurement of how much heat a fireplace can produce. “Think of BTUs as a way to measure comfort,” says Sonia Presotto fireplace expert at Concord Fireplaces. “The right amount of heat makes a room feel inviting and cozy. Too much can make a space uncomfortable, and too little leaves it chilly.” Knowing your BTU requirements is as important as choosing the finish or style because it directly impacts how your room will feel throughout the year.





Gas fireplaces are typically rated between 15,000 and 40,000 BTUs. A higher number means more heat, but that does not automatically translate to a better choice. “A fireplace with 40,000 BTUs can be perfect in a large, open living room with high ceilings,” Sonia explains. “But in a smaller room, it could easily overwhelm the space. That is why understanding the size of the room, the insulation, and how the space will be used is so important.” Many high-BTU gas fireplaces also offer flexibility in how heat is distributed. Some allow warmth to be transferred to another room, while others can vent excess heat outdoors. This ensures you can enjoy the visual beauty of the flames without creating an uncomfortably hot environment.

Electric fireplaces operate differently and typically max out around 5,000 BTUs. While they do not generate as much heat as gas units, they are ideal for supplemental warmth and ambiance. “Electric fireplaces are perfect for smaller rooms or for creating a cozy zone within a larger home,” Sonia says. “They are not intended to replace your furnace, but they offer an intimate heat source where you need it most, making them excellent for bedrooms, offices, or reading nooks.” ▶



Inception Electric Fireplace - SimpliFire



How the heat is distributed in the room is just as important as the BTU rating itself. Fans and blowers help circulate warmth evenly, ensuring that every corner of the room feels comfortable. Heat transfer kits allow you to direct warmth to adjacent areas or vent it outside when a room becomes too warm. Modern fireplaces often feature smart controls, letting you adjust flame intensity independently from the heat output. This gives homeowners both functional control and design freedom, allowing the fireplace to be a centerpiece without compromising comfort.

Sonia offers a designer's tip that I find invaluable when planning a fireplace: "Always start with the experience you want to create. Think about how people will gather, where they will sit, and how the heat will flow through the space. A fireplace should feel like it was designed for the room, not just added to it." This perspective aligns



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## Expert Fireplace Tips

### Know Your Room Size

Measure your space and consider ceiling height. More square footage and open layouts require higher BTUs, but smaller rooms need less heat to remain comfortable.

### Consider Heat Flexibility

Some gas fireplaces allow you to redistribute warmth to another room or vent excess heat outdoors. This helps maintain comfort without compromising ambiance.

### Electric Fireplaces for Zone Heating

Ideal for bedrooms, offices, or reading nooks, electric units provide cozy warmth without heating the entire home.

### Use Fans, Blowers, and Smart Controls

Circulate heat evenly and adjust flame and warmth independently to create both functional and aesthetic balance.

perfectly with the design approach I take in my work, where aesthetics and function go hand in hand.

Ultimately, selecting the right BTU is about balancing form and function. A well-chosen fireplace enhances the visual appeal of a room while creating warmth and atmosphere that draws people together. By understanding BTUs, considering how heat is delivered, and working with experts who can calculate your specific needs, you can ensure your fireplace is not only a statement piece but also a source of comfort all year round. The BTU is more than a number; it is a tool to craft spaces that feel welcoming, cozy, and perfectly complements to the way you live. ■



**Jessica Cinnamon** is the award winning Principal Designer and founder of Toronto based Jessica Cinnamon Design Inc. The firm is a multi-disciplinary design company that has become known for creating stylish and well curated interiors. They provide complete bespoke residential design services throughout Toronto Ontario, the GTA, Cottage Country, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

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