

## BUILDING A FIRE Á LA MAISON

*We try to keep firewood available along the side of the house for early spring and late fall guests. But you may need to buy firewood at one of the hardware stores (like Weldom, Bricorama, M. Bricolage). Same with kindling. Building fires with the scrub oak in France requires some skill and patience, as the wood catches slowly and often needs a fair amount of kindling to get burning well.*

*Before you do anything, please locate the hook on the inside-right of the fireplace. Also notice that the flue chain has two lower rings together, and another single ring further up the chain. This is important. The default flue position is open when the chain hangs free, but fasten the lower double-ring to the hook to keep it from getting hot when the fire is going. You pull down gently and hook the upper ring when you want the flue closed (see instructions below).*

*For a simple radiant fire, you can build a fire on top of the closed grates, using the method described below or any method if you're a skilled fire-builder. Always tend this fire, keep the screen in front, and put it out when leaving.*

*For a longer-lasting fire, and one which, after an hour, will activate fans blowing heat into the living room and two bed rooms directly above, here are the directions:*

*1) Using the long iron tool with two prongs, insert the prongs fully in the holes on the front grate, and pull it open, so you have plenty of room to build a fire in the box below. (Be careful not to bend the tool, but you can also use it later to push around the burning logs.) The flue should be open to start (the lower rings on the hook). **Watch your head!***

*2) Now build your fire: set up a long platform of two layers of kindling (15-20 pieces), with a few pieces of firestarter interspersed between pieces. Lay two or three of the smaller logs on top of the platform about half an inch apart. Start the fire. Be patient, use plenty of kindling.*

*3) Once most of the wood has caught, lay two more small to medium sized logs crosswise on the others. It may take another 15-20 minutes before all the wood has started to blaze. Add kindling to keep it roaring. If the fire is going strong, lay a larger log cross-wise on the flames. If the logs roll apart, move them so they lie near and/or on top of each other and about  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch apart.*

**4) When the fire is going well, push the grate almost closed, leaving it open about an inch. And also quickly unhook the flue chain and pull it down carefully, a foot or so, and hook the upper single ring onto the hook. *Pull the chain down gently just far enough to hook the ring, no more or you could break it off the flue door.* Now the upper flue is closed and the smoke will exit out of a flue hole in the fire box.**

**5) Once the fire is really going strong, you can close the grate fully. Open the grate quickly to add additional logs. Since the upper flue is closed, smoke will start to billow out if you don't load the wood and close the grate quickly.**

**Alternatively, you can open the flue while you work on the fire (hook the lower double rings), then pull the flue closed when you are ready to close the grate.**

**6) In about a half hour (more or less), a thermostat will activate fans that blow some heat into the living area, more heat into the master bedroom, and even more heat into the very top bedroom (in that bedroom we often keep the vent grate closed because of the heat).**

**Once going, the wood usually burns well and quickly, so add large extra logs regularly.**