

## **ORIGINS OF A MASONRY STOVE**

From the tenth century onward, homes throughout Europe were predominantly heated with wood. Wood was also in widespread demand as a building material during this era.

By the 15th century, wood shortages had begun to develop and European governments of the day realized an energy crisis was upon them. In the following two hundred years, efforts were made to conserve wood, with little success. However, as the energy crisis worsened into the 17th and 18th centuries, kings in Prussia, Sweden, Norway & Denmark ordered their craftsmen and architects to produce better wood stove designs. This concerted effort produced radically new heat-storing masonry stove designs, which showed enormous improvement in efficiency and corresponding wood conservation.

Many of these designs survived and are still in use today in countries such as Sweden, Austria, Finland and Germany. Masonry fireplaces closely follow original Scandinavian designs, which were later refined and used extensively in Finland.

Masonry stoves are still in widespread use throughout northern Europe and are highly regarded for their excellent heating abilities, safety features and environmentally positive aspects. Notably, the Finnish government encourages the use of masonry heaters through tax incentives, to reduce the use of natural gas, oil and electricity. The result is that 90% of the new homes built each year in Finland are heated with a masonry stove.

An equally long tradition of masonry heating has evolved in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, with the "kachelofen" or tile stove as the predominant style.

In North America, the heating traditions unfolded differently, where an abundance of fossil fuels led to their widespread use in heating. As a result, gas, oil and electricity still have the lion's share of the residential heating market. During the North American energy crisis of the '70s, many people turned to metal stoves to cut their heating bills. Environmental and economic concerns of the last decade have forced a critical look at better wood-heating devices.