

STEPS TO CLEANING OUR WOOD STOVE

From Theresa

OurTinyHomestead.com

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1. GATHER OR BUY SUPPLIES

If you still need to buy chimney cleaning supplies, check your local hardware stores. Here's what we need:



- **Chimney cleaning brush** (left and the box it came in is below):
 - We need a 6" round poly brush for our metal chimney pipe.
 - Stiffer, metal brushes can damage metal pipes, so they are used for square masonry chimneys.



- **Flexible rods:**
 - The brush attaches to these.
 - You need enough rods to reach the top of your chimney- we need about 22'.
 - The rods come in sections that can be screwed together.
 - The rods need to be flexible so they can go through the 45° bends we have in our chimney. Flexible rods are brown, and the 6 ft. sections are more flexible than the 4' sections.
 - Put the rods together before you take the chimney apart (that's what Bear is doing to the left), to make sure they all still attach to each other. We had one that was rusted and didn't work anymore.



- **Stiff brush or paint brush and an ash pail:**
 - To clean out the ash from inside of the stove
 - We have this orange brush to the left that is like a giant size paint brush (with a couple inches of thick bristles) that works well.
 - Professionals have an "L" shaped brush that makes it easy to reach everywhere, but we haven't yet found one for sale anywhere.

- **Screw drivers, pliers, wrenches, and/or socket wrenches** to remove the screws holding the pipe together, depending on what type of screw you have. Professionals have a cordless power drill with a hexagonal bit.
- **Garbage bag(s) and painters or masking tape** to attach the bag to the chimney. It will catch the soot.
- **Vacuum.** This is optional, but the professionals use one. Note that soot is abrasive and it will eat up a regular vacuum or shop vac. Top Hat in Madison, who installed our woodstove, sells a small household size vacuum that is for use with wood stoves, but it's around \$200. We use a broom instead.

2. PREPARE THE ROOM

- Move everything off the hearth.
- Put old sheets or drop clothes on and around the hearth.
- It doesn't make as much of a mess as you might think, so you don't need to cover all the furniture, etc., although we did that the first time just in case.
- We do try to remove the cats from the room. Who knows what they'd get into.

3. REMOVE THE CHIMNEY PIPE

- Remove screws where indicated by the red & yellow arrows:
 - Some of the screws are very long, so keep turning.
 - Some screws could be partially removed with a straight screwdriver.
 - Theresa got the screws off behind the stove (yellow arrow) by using a pair of pliers. A wrench also worked.
 - Bear removed the screws higher up the chimney (red arrow) with a socket wrench.
- Remove the pipe where it attaches at the back of the woodstove (yellow arrow and green arrow below).
 - There are two side screws at the collar that are very long (green arrow below).
 - Remove the metal chimney where it goes over the cast iron collar that is part of the back of the stove.



4. TAKE THE DETACHED PIPE OUTSIDE AND CLEAN IT

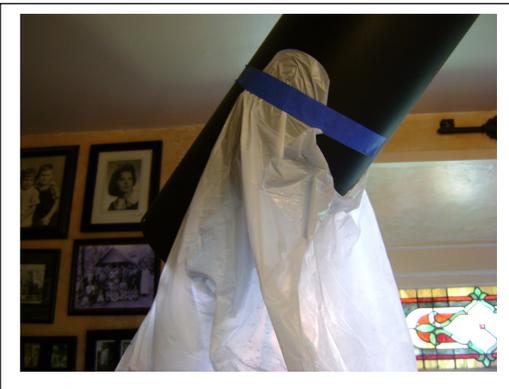
- Use the brush to push out the accumulated soot.
- Do this part first because it gives you good practice in how to use the brush before you do the harder part inside.



5. CLEAN THE CHIMNEY INSIDE THE HOUSE



- Soot in the chimney looks grey and bumpy. The photo to the left is our pipe before it is cleaned.
- Creosote, which is the dangerous substance that causes chimney fires, looks black and shiny, so fortunately, we only have soot.



- Tape a trash bag to the bottom of the open pipe to catch the soot that will fall down as you clean.



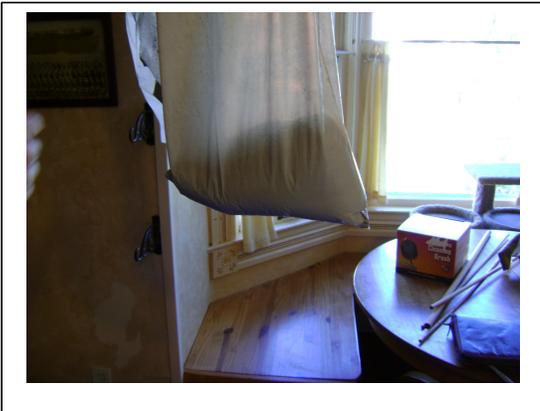
- Insert the first rod, with the brush attached, into the chimney pipe. Hold the trash bag closed around the brush rods as much as possible, to catch the soot as it falls. Push the rod in slowly in about one foot increments, then wait for all the soot to fall before pushing again, so you have a better chance of catching it all in the bag.
- Don't try to spin the brush, because you could detach it from the pole.



- Push the brush up the chimney, screwing on more rods as needed, until you feel a slight resistance that indicates you have reached the top (we marked our last rod where this happened for future reference).
- Then pull the brush slowly back down. If you can reach, like Bear who is very tall, he suggests lightly tapping the pipe every couple of feet to get the soot that might be still caught in the pipe.



- The first time we cleaned our chimney, the brush got stuck at the top and we thought we'd have to call the professionals to come help us remove it. How embarrassing would that be?
- If this happens to you, be patient! Walk away for a bit if you need to. (Bear also suggests having a beer, but Theresa is against becoming dependent on alcohol.) Then *gently* lift, turn, and pull the brush until it gets unstuck. Ours stopped several times as we pulled it back down. I assume it was stuck on screws.



- Here's the amount of soot we had in the trash bag when we were done cleaning the chimney.



- The after shot of the cleaned chimney pipe.

6. CLEAN INSIDE THE BACK OF THE WOODSTOVE

- Use a brush or vacuum (if you have the appropriate kind) to clean out the soot you can reach from where you removed the pipe at the back of the woodstove.
- Professionals will also take parts of the firebox apart to clean out the ash- the bottom of ours is removable, and there is a plate at the top that comes out. However, they eventually warp with heat, so the professional who cleaned our stove the last time recommended we don't try to remove these plates ourselves in case we can't get them back in. In fact, he didn't get the top plate back in right either, and the stove couldn't get enough air to keep the fire going unless the door was opened. Bear fixed this by resetting the plate.



7. REATTACH THE CHIMNEY

- Put the pipe back in place on both top and bottom, then screw it back on.
- The top of the pipe goes back inside the pipe above it.
- The bottom of the pipe goes back around the cast iron collar.
- It's hard to line up the screw holes, so it's best to do the easiest one at the top, then the easiest one at the bottom, to make sure everything is in the right place, before doing them all.
- The different parts of the pipe may have twisted around a bit during handling. Just twist them gently back.



8. CHECK THE SEAL ON THE DOOR

- Our owner's manual says to check the seal on the front door by closing and latching the door on a dollar bill. Slowly try to pull it out. You should feel a slight resistance as you pull. If it can be easily removed, the seal is too loose.
- You can buy kits to replace the gasket in hardware stores or anywhere you can buy supplies for wood stoves. It should come with the adhesive cement you need to attach the gasket to the door.
- Our manual says remove the old gasket with pliers and a putty knife.
- Your owner's manual should specify the size and length of gasket you need. Ours says we need five feet of 5/15" LD. We haven't had to do this yet.



9. CLEAN UP

- Use an old towel to wipe the soot off the flexible rods.
- To protect the ends of our rods from rust and dirt, we wrapped both ends in ziplock bags and taped the bags around the rod.
- We also used a permanent marker to number each rod in the order that we used them (#0-5, attaching the brush to 0), in hopes that they will work the same way in the future.
- We also marked the location on the last rod when we reached the top of the chimney to help us know when to stop pushing in future years.

