

Official or bush cord but what's the moisture content?

Last month I led a short discussion of how firewood is sold based on quantity. Just for fun I called a few wood dealers to find out what they're selling. All dealers used the term cord but were actually selling part of a cord or face cord. One dealer didn't know what length the pieces were cut, one said it was 13 to 14 inches, and one was quite adamant that the official cord was 32 cubic feet and a bush cord was 128 cubic feet. At least he was clear that you would be getting 32 cubic feet for the price quoted.

Just to be clear on this, Weights and Measures Canada has only one legal definition of a cord, 128 cubic feet. Legally a dealer must disclose a fraction or percentage of a legal cord or the amount in cubic ft or meters. In case you're wondering, the price for 32 cubic feet is about \$90.

There wasn't space in the last issue to discuss quality so we'll take a stab, or should I say a "chop" at that now. Wood is like no other fuel. Not only is the method of measuring obscure with air spaces between the pieces, but there are no legal defined measures for energy content, or moisture content and really there shouldn't be.

Every other fuel we buy are defined such as by "octane ratings". Gasoline, oil, propane and natural gas all have known energy content per liter.

Not only does energy content vary between different species of trees, moisture content has a huge effect on available energy and performance of an appliance. Moisture content isn't that difficult to measure with the right measuring device but there is quite a range of acceptable moisture content.

We have seen many new stove owners purchase a load of unseasoned wood that wouldn't burn. I'm not blaming the dealer, wood-burning takes some planning, and it's not a bad idea to purchase wood well in advance.

Sometimes buyers are misled when they are told that the wood was cut last year when the tree was cut down, but then left out the part that the tree was left lying in the bush until cut into blocks and split just before delivery. A log lying in the bush would actually rot before drying out.

This reminds me of a run in I had with a lawyer from the city that bought a stove from me for his cottage. He gave me a key and I did the complete installation, stove, chimney- the works. Shortly after I

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Rooftops



received a legal letter informing me that he would not be paying me as the stove would not burn. When I called him, he

accused me of running an oxygen line into the one we had on display. When I went over to his place, I discovered a pile of old firewood that was going rotten.

He finally agreed to pay but arranged for me to come there when he was at the cottage to prove it worked. The day I showed up, armed with some nice dry maple, it was a very hot day. In a short time, I had a good fire burning and he was satisfied. Just to be sure he got the message I had filled the firebox completely with hard maple. You can imagine how hot that cottage got later that day.



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