

## Chiminea Care & Maintenance Guide

Chimineas act by drawing in air through the front and venting it up through a smoke stack. This design allows the fire to burn out completely after a period of time, making it a safe option for a backyard fire feature. And like all relationships, this one is give and take. Your chiminea will take care of you, and you have to take care of it.

The amount of care and maintenance required depends upon the materials that comprise your chiminea. It will be made of either cast iron or clay. A clay chiminea is prone to cracking. We have provided information on caring for clay models.

### Cure Your Chiminea First

Before you use the chiminea, you will have to cure it, whether it's iron or clay. Curing a chiminea essentially means that you are slowly preparing it to endure high heat. Curing a clay chiminea will render it stronger, making it less prone to cracking or breaking down. Curing an iron chiminea will cure the paint and help prevent rust. To cure a chiminea, iron or clay, follow these steps:

1. Set balls of paper inside, and ignite them. Let this small fire burn out naturally, and allow the chiminea to cool thoroughly.
2. Line the interior base with sand. This will provide protection, and you will keep sand in the chiminea from now on. Using kindling, light a second fire, slightly larger than the first one. Then allow it to burn out naturally, and allow the chiminea to cool thoroughly.
3. Repeat this two or three more times, increasing the size of the fire each time. Ensure that you allow each fire to burn out naturally. The heating and cooling cycle is the key to preparing the chiminea for enduring high heat and larger fires.

### CLAY CHIMINEAS

A clay chiminea is prone to cracking. However, you can take precautions against this by keeping the interior lined with sand, by only using kindling and firewood (as opposed to charcoal, due to temperature), and by sealing the exterior. This will prevent moisture from getting in.

This may seem like common sense, but common sense really isn't so common these days. Your clay chiminea, though thick and solidified, is fragile. It will crack or break if it is dropped. The easiest way to avoid this is to decide on a location for the chiminea and then leave it in one place.

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Some people like to rearrange their patios each year, and if you are one of these people, then move your chiminea using a cart. Clay chimineas are constructed of two pieces: the base and the stack. They are bonded while the clay is drying. This creates a weak point – where they are joined – so it is important to remember to never lift the chiminea by the stack. Always lift it by the base, and have a friend help you.

#### **More Chiminea Cleaning Tips**

Along with these tips, there are everyday things you can do to maintain the longevity of your chiminea. It is important to clean the chiminea regularly, by removing the sand, cleaning the grill and interior, and allowing it to dry fully before adding new sand. You should also purchase a cover for your chiminea to protect it from the elements and prevent creatures from crawling inside when it's not in use. Make sure you only use the cover once the chiminea is fully cooled.

Remember that these fireplaces are not meant to host large fires, only smaller fires. Also, never use water to put out the flames: allow the fire to burn out naturally. The instant change in temperature could cause damage to the chiminea. This is easy to forget, but very important as many a chiminea has broken in this way.

## **How to Winterize a Chiminea**

Chimineas are prone to weather-related damage, and so with this article we will describe how to properly prepare your chiminea for the freezing temperatures.

Chimineas are wonderful additions to any backyard entertainment area like a patio. The addition of live fire brings a sense of comfort and warmth. Maintaining your chiminea is an important part in ensuring its longevity so you can get years and years of use. Chimineas don't require much summer maintenance other than the removal of ash and the occasional wash. Winterizing is a big part of chiminea maintenance.

So how exactly can we prepare our chiminea for winter? Since the chiminea burns fire, doesn't that mean we can leave it out year round for convenient use? The answer is no, sadly. They can go into shock from sudden extreme temperature change such as the frozen winter condition to a burning fire.

Clay chimineas in particular are vulnerable to weather-related damage, so it is vitally important to store it properly. Winterizing can be as simple as bringing the chiminea inside for the season. Ideally you will put the chiminea in the shed or basement over the winter, but this may not be possible due to space issues.

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If you are keeping it outside, you will have to get a chiminea cover to keep out any moisture.

With a clay chiminea, use a padded cover. The padded cover will keep out frost. You can use a regular waterproof cover during the warmer months. A cover will also prevent UV rays from getting in and damaging the chiminea.

Clay is porous, and this means it will absorb moisture. When the chiminea is left outside in freezing temperatures, the moisture absorbed will freeze and expand inside the pores, thereby causing cracks in the surface of the clay. These cracks will weaken the integrity of the chiminea, shortening its lifespan.

Most chimineas will come with a rain lid that covers the smoke stack, in order to prevent rain getting in. Water will pool in the belly, so make sure none gets in! You will also want to stop animals getting in. In the winter months they will be looking for cozy and convenient holes to burrow in. You will have to keep them out so they do not nest or leave feces in your chiminea.

Note: if your chiminea does get wet, and you want to use it, let it dry as much as possible. You will then light a small fire, and very gradually grow the fire so the chiminea dries in a fashion that is not too fast.

If you don't want to put out a lot of money for a real cover, you can use a tarp. Tarps are waterproof and will serve the purpose of a cover, but you won't have the custom fit and shape of a chiminea cover. This will involve a bit more work as you have to wrap the tarp in such a way to ensure it is properly sealed.

Your best bet is to bring the chiminea inside over the winter. Exposure to extreme temperatures will damage it. As mentioned, the moisture will be absorbed by the porous clay. In the daytime when the sun is on the chiminea, this might not seem like a problem but by nightfall, the water will freeze and expand inside the clay, forcing it to crack. Once they are cracked, the damage is irreversible and only gets worse.

Clay chimineas are extremely heavy and prone to breakage should you drop them during transport. They should be moved on a dolly or moving cart and with the help of two people. Chimineas are made in two parts: the smoke stack and the belly, and then sealed together. For this reason you should always lift by the body, never the neck.

Note: do not use the chiminea once it's inside the house. You will get carbon monoxide poisoning or burn your house down.

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You may find it easier to leave the chiminea outside and wrap it properly. Your chiminea should always be raised from the ground. Make sure it is raised during winter too so as to avoid water-related damage, on a wooden base or brick platform.

Clean the chiminea thoroughly of ash and soot before storing it for winter, whether you leave it outside or bring it in.