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A Sense of Cozy

By Mark Ray

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It's Saturday evening, and the kids are in bed. You and your husband are snuggling cozily on the couch as an old Jackie Gleason jazz CD plays softly on the stereo and snow drifts gently past the bay window. A crackling fire warms your face, and a snifter of brandy warms your heart.

The Gleason recording ends, so you get up to change it. While you're gone, your husband stokes the fire, accidentally flicking a burning ember onto the rug. As he stamps out the smoldering fire, the smoke alarm goes off, waking the children. You rush to pull the battery, trip over the dog, and crash unceremoniously to the floor.

A cozy tragedy, to be sure—and one that could easily have been prevented if you'd had a multi-disc CD changer.

Okay, this example may be farfetched, but the fact remains that establishing a cozy environment can be a challenge. A smoky fireplace, a too-short CD, an unobstructed view of unwashed dinner dishes—all can distract from the coziest of moods.

So how can you create a cozy atmosphere in your home? The best way is to use your senses—all five of them. Make sure that everything you can see, hear, smell, taste or feel contributes to the sense of coziness instead of distracting from it. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

See. To eliminate visual distractions, reposition your furniture. Group chairs around the fireplace or cluster furniture in intimate circles. Move piles of mail and magazines to another room. Cost: \$0 (rearranging furniture) to \$2,295 (Mendota Monterey Bay gas fireplace).

Hear. Music is a must, and the best bets are probably soft jazz, traditional Celtic, and classical music from the Romantic period. If you're not sure what you want, check out a collection like "Jazz for a Rainy Afternoon" (32 Jazz Records) or "Romantic Moments: Classical Music For Lovers" (LaserLight). Cost: \$9.97 (bargain CD) to \$1,795 (Denon 100-disc CD changer).

Smell. Fragrances can come from many sources: freshly baked bread, potpourri, and mulled cider, to name a few. Consider scented candles and potpourri to accent your sense of coziness. Cost: \$10 (Crabtree & Evelyn scented votive candles) to \$54.00 (Williams-Sonoma herb wreath).

Taste. There's nothing like a warm drink on a cold night to make you feel cozy. From coffee to tea, mulled cider to gourmet hot chocolate, wine to cognac, you can find dozens of beverages to complement your cozy atmosphere. Cost: \$2.49 (Bigelow Sweet Dreams herb tea) to \$1359 (Rémy Martin Louis XIII cognac).

Feel. Complete your coziness by wrapping yourself in comfort. Fleece loungeware, plush slippers, and a sinfully cushy sofa can make any environment more inviting. Cost: \$19.95 (Hush Puppies Cozy Clog slippers) to \$1,199 (Pottery Barn Charleston Collection sofa).

Cozy comes to mind when you think of a ski lodge in Aspen, a bed-and-breakfast in the hills of Virginia or a lakeside cottage on Nolin Lake. But you can create a sense of cozy at home as well. With a little effort, you can turn your home into a place that looks, sounds, smells, tastes and feels cozy. All you have to do is use your common senses!