

Alcohol

There are two major kinds of alcohol used as fuel. Methanol is the most common. This is sometimes called Wood Alcohol or Fully Denatured Alcohol.

Ethanol is less common as a fuel, mostly due to legal and tax issues, even though it is a better stove fuel and less toxic. Methanol causes severe health problems if you consume it or absorb or inhale too much of

it. This includes blindness and deafness. Just don't soak your hands in it for a long time or breath it recreationally, OK. In my opinion, ethanol should be the fuel of choice, not methanol as it is today.

The use of alcohol as stove fuel is common on sailboats. Fires can be extinguished with water and the fumes rise out of the boat (unlike gasoline vapors which accumulate in the bilge until the boat can explode.

I have a very elegant alcohol stove with no moving parts that is great, except for being slow to heat and very poor in the wind. This is a function of the nonpressurized design of that particular stove rather than the fuel. My sailboat stove was fast and hot, being of the pressurized design.

One major advantage of alcohol as a stove fuel is that you can use it by just pouring it into a metal pan and lighting it. You don't really need a stove, per se, but one does help regulate things and increase heat output. In a pinch, pouring alcohol into an empty Sterno can and using a Sterno stove is a good expedient. Be very careful not to spill it when trying to put it out!