



# ROB LICHT CUSTOM SAUNAS

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## Using and maintaining your electric sauna

### **Starting the sauna:**

Your heater will either have controls on the outside wall or on the unit itself. The controls have a one hour timer and a heat setting knob. Generally you should let it heat up for one-half hour, using the highest setting at first then turning it down as you see how hot it gets. The upper vent should be opened at least half way initially to circulate the hot air but can be closed as it heats up to help the sauna reach a higher temperature. The unique wall construction provides some breathability and ventilation. In addition, opening and closing of the door allows some air to exchange. The sauna should never feel airless and stuffy- the controlled circulation of air is essential to the true sauna feeling.

The back of the heater has a trough which is for water. When you start it you should fill this with clean water- this will add just the right amount of moisture to the room. Normally the sauna is fairly dry but not uncomfortably so (public electric units are notorious for being too dry). The trough may be re-filled as many times as needed.

You will want a bucket of water for the sauna, to splash on yourself or pour on the rocks. Make sure it and the ladle are wooden or at least have wooden handles: any metal will get very hot in the sauna (including jewelry, eyeglasses, etc.). Do not put oils or scents on the rocks. You should not use candles in the sauna- they will melt without evn lighting them!

### **Taking the sauna:**

If you are expecting a lot of people, let the rocks get really hot before getting in the sauna. You'll want this reserve of heat to maintain the temperature as people come and go. Think of the people as the ice cubes in a drink—the bodies are actually absorbing the heat and taking it away.

How hot is hot enough? 180° F. (82°C.) is a good starting point, 212° (100° C.) is pretty darn hot and some go even hotter. Usually the sauna is done in rounds: two or three ten to twenty minute sessions with a cool down in between. Be sure to drink plenty of fluids in between. Listen to your body and don't overdo it!

The high point of the sauna is the löyly- pouring water over the rocks to make steam. Start with a ladle—or *kipper*—full (about one cup). Be careful of the hot steam as you pour!

Be careful to not get water all over the unit- pour the water directly on the rocks. The elements are stainless steel and are meant to take the water. If you have a drain in the floor, feel free to splash water on yourself or the benches if they are too hot.



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## **Bathing**

Traditionally, the last phase to the sauna experience is washing up. You can scrub your skin really clean with a loofah or brush as you sit on the lowest bench or bathing stool. You will never feel cleaner because your pores are fully open when you are hot. If you are lucky enough to have a birch tree nearby you can make a *vitah* from the branches and gently thrash yourself with them to really stimulate your skin. You can rinse off with a bucketful of warm or cool water in the sauna (if you have a drain) or outside.

## **Cleanup:**

The sauna is really a bathhouse; it is important to keep it clean. After every sauna you should scrub and rinse off the benches with water, open the windows and door to let it air out, hang up all the towels and leave the buckets to drain. Every couple of saunas you should sweep out the sauna (removing the duck boards), and clean out the floor drain (the cover lifts off. The benches may lift out or slide back for easier cleaning. The floor drain has a bell trap- which can withstand freezing. If it is frozen and not draining, pour some hot water down it or pry the cover off and pull the ice out. If your sauna does not have a floor drain, avoid using excess water to clean although small amounts should evaporate quickly.

## **Yearly maintenance:**

With the exception of the floor, door pull and thresholds, none of the surfaces are treated. I recommend yearly cleaning of the wood with warm water and mild soap—or a light sanding —but in no case should you ever use any chemicals. Every year or two you may want to re-treat the floors. I use water-based *Valspar* or *Thompson's* concrete and wood sealer.

The electric unit should require no maintenance. Do not fire it with the rocks removed, which would cause it to over-heat. If for any reason the unit does overheat there are one or two thermal shut-off switches on the side bottom of the unit, which can be reset by pushing it in (after determining what the problem was).

The electric light should be replaced with no larger than a 60 watt bulb; the water tight cover should be securely replaced.