

homestyle weekly

simple solutions for everyday living

Thursday, July 25, 2013



Al Fresco Kitchens

The outdoor kitchen, still a luxury for most, has been scaled down in size, scope and design to blend in to its natural surroundings

By **DAWN KLINGENSMITH** | CTW Features

Outdoor kitchens have evolved. A generation ago, an outdoor “kitchen” consisted of a gas or charcoal grill and some seating on the back deck.

Before the economy tanked in 2007, the snazziest outdoor kitchens contained all the same elements found indoors, including sinks, stovetops, ovens, warming drawers and various appliances. Made of stainless steel to withstand the elements, these units often looked as imposing and foreign in their environments as alien spacecraft.

More recently, outdoor kitchens are built to blend in with their surroundings, emphasizing heavy-duty construction over extraneous add-ons.

The result: scaled-down, built-to-last outdoor kitchens with durable, natural-looking materials and finishes that tie in with the home’s landscaping and architecture.

“The goal is to make the outdoor kitchen look integrated – like it belongs and has always been there,” says Bob Hursthouse, founder, Hursthouse Landscape Architects and Contractors, Bolingbrook, Ill.

Lay the Foundation

After you have a budget and wish list, there are several design stages and elements to consider that differ from indoor kitchen design. The first is the foundation.

An existing patio made of level concrete or stone may provide adequate support for all the appliances without any structural changes. A deck, on the other hand, may need additional support for a safe installation.

Consider location and climate to determine your foundation and construction technique. A local builder or contractor should have a better idea of how much supported is needed. For instance, in the Chicago area, Tim Rourke of EdgeBrick Outdoor Kitchens uses sturdy brick-and-mortar construction, with footings to the frost line. “In some climates, you can just build a frame and attach brick laminate,” he says.

Materials and Layout

Some manufacturers are putting faux-wood grains on stainless steel cabinets, while others, like NatureKast, make cabinets out of high-density resin that

has “the rich look of real wood without all the maintenance,” says Jean Ehmke, founder, JeanE Kitchen and Bath Design, Raleigh, N.C.

A polished countertop will reveal every water spot, “so go for a flat or weathered finish,” Ehmke advises.

Hursthouse advises against black countertops, which will get too hot in the sun.

Pared-down appliances, seating near the chef and shaded areas for hot days are among top recommended features for outdoor kitchens.

The heat is a factor for grills, too. Incorporate shade trees or shade structures as well as “creature comforts” like overhead fans and misters, he says.

“Design the space so people can interact with the person cooking or grilling,” Hursthouse says, keeping in mind that grills generate heat and smoke.

Appliance Applications

When designing an outdoor kitchen, the first steps are determining your budget and which appliances fit in with your lifestyle.

“Any appliances short of a microwave that you have inside, we can put outside,” Hursthouse says. “They make pizza ovens and kegerators and even outdoor deep fryers. But choose appropriately. Don’t put a double oven outside if you don’t use the one inside.”

The required seasonal maintenance on certain outdoor appliances may make you think twice about including them. While many come with guarantees, expect to replace corroded or worn-out parts every few years. In colder climates, appliances hooked to waterlines, such as sinks and dishwashers, must be winterized.

Indoor-Outdoor Flow

While an outdoor kitchen can feel like a getaway, don’t forget how the space interacts with the indoors. For instance, “You don’t want to look out the window and see this big grill obstructing your great garden space,” Hursthouse says.

Access is important, too, considering how much prep work is done inside. Hursthouse recommends a French door and a landing, if the door leads to steps. “If you’re not careful, you might fall and end up with your face in a platter of ribs,” he says.

© CTW Features



Photos by Hursthouse Landscape Architects & Contractors

Quick Lighting Fixes

Get that beautiful, layered quality of light in your home – without installing pricey new fixtures



By **RACHEL STARK** | CTW Features

There’s no over-exaggerating the importance of good lighting in a home. Boston-area lighting design expert Lucy Dearborn says, “We pay attention to the furniture we buy and the home décor, but if you shut the lights off, you don’t see any of it.”

But not everyone has the money or electrical skills to install brand-new fixtures in their homes.

Instead, a few experts offer some bright ideas to improve the quality of light – no electrician required.

• **Change your lampshades.** “The most obvious quick fix is one people forget,” says Dearborn, owner of Lucia Lighting and Design. Over time, shades get dark and dingy. Spruce up a lamp by putting in a new shade that complements the season, such as one with a flower pattern for summer or a warm, gold-colored shade for winter.

• **Layer your lights.** “A combination of tabletop and floor lamps of various sizes can really highlight different things in the room beautifully,” says Cincinnati interior designer Amy Schuermann. She recommends

people avoid matching lamp sets and aim for variety.

• **Pop in a funky light bulb.** “There are all kinds of fun, sparkly bulbs out there and people don’t take advantage of what they can be,” Dearborn says. Nostalgic Edison light bulbs, fluorescent plumen bulbs and bulbs with a crystal finish can add a spark—the good kind—to a fixture.

• **Install a dimmer.** Adding a dimmer switch enables people to easily adjust the lighting to meet their mood, Schuermann says. It’s not a difficult DIY project, but make sure to read and follow instructions carefully.

• **Hang a pendant light.** Samantha Gore, a Manhattan-based interior designer, suggests suspending a fabric drum shade by a decorative colored or covered cord from the ceiling. To avoid pulling a new fixture, some products can be plugged into the wall and hung from the ceiling with a hook. “The most important thing is that it looks deliberate,” Gore says. “Lighting defines your space.”

© CTW Features

AD / SPONSORSHIP

10.25" X 2.5"