

Bringing the Indoors Out

Outdoor kitchens propose a new venue for cooking and entertaining

Despite threats of ants or rain, little has ever dampened the magic of a modern picnic, and food simply tastes better outside.

"One of the great things about being outdoors is that the distractions are gone," said Andrew Shead, marketing manager at True Refrigeration. "You can step away from your desk, emails, honey-do list and just enjoy each other's company."

According to a study presented at KBIS 2015 and done by Dave Brown, a partner with Chicago-based ad firm HY Connect, 13.6 percent of households are planning to add an outdoor kitchen in 2015, compared with the four percent of affluent households with outdoor kitchens last year. The rebounding economy has a hand in this influx; people are again hoping to raise the value of their homes and increase enjoyment of their own property.

"Outdoor spaces are important for many reasons," said designer Shane Inman of the Inman Company. "First, they allow you to entertain larger groups of friends and family that your interior footprint may not allow, and second – when the weather is beautiful – many individuals prefer to be in the natural light rather than cooped up with air conditioning."

Understanding the Differences

When built outside, kitchens come with an entirely new set of design rules.

"It's a new category for kitchen designers," said Matt Thomas, director of marketing at NanaWall Systems, which has introduced a seamless transition from indoors-to-out with its sliding glass walls. "In the past, kitchen designers didn't move past the indoors – now those lines are blurred."

In designing an outdoor kitchen, designers must consider new angles of familiar questions: What times of year will the space be used? Will the food be cooked outside but taken inside at times? Do any kitchen components need to be movable? Despite many familiarities, the purpose of an outdoor kitchen contrasts significantly from a conventional one.

"The key difference is that these aren't about preparing routine meals but are about entertaining – even if it's just your own family," said Shead, adding that people are escaping more often outdoors in urban environments where outdoor space runs short. "The goal of an outdoor kitchen is to be self sufficient for an event or an evening."

For a functional, standalone kitchen, appliances typical to the indoor space are minimized and built for more specific uses. Refrigerator drawers hold marinating meats and prepared vegetables for easy transportation to a grill, and beverage centers allow guests to find drinks without going inside. Along with serving pieces like wet bars, outdoor kitchens worldwide



2.



3.



1.

1. Controlled by a digital touch pad, **U-Line's** Outdoor Series 24" Solid Door Refrigerator (1224RSOD) holds up to 123 bottles or 185 cans. The white interior, which contains three removable, tempered-glass shelves, is lit with LED lighting. Along with an ENERGY STAR certification, the unit boasts a full stainless steel cabinet and door suitable for outdoor use. **Circle No. 200 or visit kbbonline.com/freeinfo**

2. Available in 48-in. single-sided and see-through models, the Palazzo series of outdoor fireplaces from **Heat & Glo** resists the elements with marine-grade premium stainless steel. The outdoor-rated multi-colored LED lights are shielded by crushed crystal and can be used when the fireplace is off. With an estimated MSRP of \$4,999, the Palazzo also features an industry-first remote control-powered screen. **Circle No. 201 or visit kbbonline.com/freeinfo**

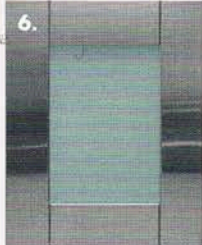
3. The **Ply Gem Stone** True Stack of stone veneer, shown here in the flint color, provides a stack-style look with a simple installation. Available in rectangular pieces with three different lengths, the face textures vary from stone to stone. **Circle No. 202 or visit kbbonline.com/freeinfo**

4. **Crossville, Inc.** has introduced Garden, a porcelain tile collection created specifically for outdoor applications. The collection replicates the appearance of natural stone by converging three colors, all inspired by Italian volcanic stone, and shading them with textured surfaces. **Circle No. 203 or visit kbbonline.com/freeinfo**

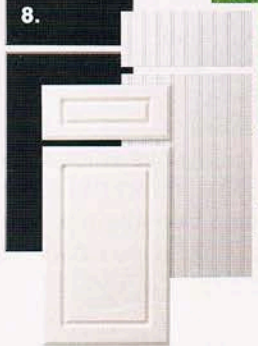


5

6.



8.



7

5. Eldorado Stone's oyster shell-honed Soho boutique fireplace surround, shown here with the Dry Creek stacked stone veneer, is hand-finished and sanded during a four-step process for a look made of limestone aggregate and minerals. The surrounds come in 11 profiles, each of which is available in a smooth, honed finish or a more rustic, travertine finish. **Circle No. 204 or visit kbbonline.com/freeinfo**

6. Designed exclusively for the **Brown Jordan** Outdoor Kitchens Collection, the faux Sea Glass insert is made specifically for the Shaker-style, Key West door. The frame can be powdercoated in any of the company's colors, as well as faux wood grains or the original stainless look with a protective finish. **Circle No. 205 or visit kbbonline.com/freeinfo**

7. The Glastender Home Cocktail Cart from **Danver** includes a main ice bin with a sliding stainless steel cover, three condiment cups, a bottle well for iced bottle storage, handle/towel bar, a bottle opener and heavy-duty casters. **Circle No. 206 or visit kbbonline.com/freeinfo**

8. Conestoga Wood Specialties introduces the Starboard polyethylene door and drawer front for exterior use. Made of marine-grade polymer, the four classic colors of doors stand up against the sun and rain without yellowing, fading or staining. **Circle No. 207 or visit kbbonline.com/freeinfo**

often hold everything from wine cabinets and beer dispensers to fire pits, pizza ovens and barbecues.

"In America, you make extensive use of outdoor spaces since you grill and barbecue meat and other local products often," said Luca Mattoni of Rome-based Laboratorio Mattoni, who went on to say that European cultures are also embracing outdoor kitchens but on a smaller scale. "Wherever the space, what is important is to be in an open area and be able to do what you do at home but in a more casual way."

Designing for Nature's Harshness

From a design standpoint, an outdoor kitchen involves more stringent planning to achieve that laid-back appeal. Durable materials – from stainless steel to teak and concrete – are required for a long-lasting, waterproof design and therefore create an entirely different look than the indoor kitchen but with the same end goal.

Even with the benefits of natural lighting, illuminating the outdoors still involves task and ambient lights. Traditional landscape lighting luminaires are often being used in non-traditional applications, according to Zachary Ingalls, product manager at Eaton's Cooper Lighting business. For instance, a standard-issue pathway luminaire can work as a counter-mounted task light, while a step light creates interest on a bar-height wall or backsplash. Low-maintenance and low-energy green solutions – like LED luminaires – have unsurprisingly grown in popularity, along with color-changing lighting effects.

There is also a move toward more color in the outdoor kitchen, with consumers more often choosing to incorporate a colored cabinet face on appliances like refrigerators and ice makers for a more integrated look. With all of these industrial-grade appliances, designs are leaning more toward a clean look.

"There are still rustic or traditional outdoor kitchen styles being designed, but I think more and more people are moving to a modern, yet comfortable style," said Russ Faulk, vice president of design at Kalamazoo Outdoor Gourmet.

Build in the Budget

With more product choices for the outdoors coming to the market – ranging from affordable to luxurious – consumers are finding better ways to achieve that comfortable yet modern look outside.

"The number one item I am always asked to incorporate into an outdoor kitchen or living design is a fire pit or built-in fireplace – both are great for a heat source after the sun sets or even to roast marshmallows," said Inman. "The second item is a 42-in.-high bar. Many people love to entertain, so having all your friends and family members around you while you are grilling is all the fun – just like in an indoor kitchen."

Inman also explained that automation has entered the scene when it comes to the outdoors. Automatic doors can cover appliances, televisions and even whole sections of the kitchen with a touch of a button. An automatic traversing canopy overhead is also very popular since the canopy can be rolled out in inclement weather and back in for sunny days.

When given a smaller budget, Inman advises other designers to start with undercounter refrigerators – like those used in dorm rooms – and mobile carts for their countertop surfaces and storage. "Oh, and do not forget the [oil-burning torches] for lighting," he added.

According to Faulk, people can embrace outdoor living at any end of the spectrum. An old tub filled with ice can serve as a party bucket, and a brightly painted, wooden picnic table can make a design statement. Along with glazed ceramic fire pots for ambiance, bring out some pillows when the weather is conducive. If the client wants to change out a plain, concrete slab, stain it another color or cover it with wooden decking tiles to cut costs.

"Homeowners with a smaller budget really have to be careful," advised Shead. "They should reduce the scale of their project while ensuring they purchase high-quality outdoor products. The last thing someone wants when they go outdoors is to fix a problem caused by low-quality products that can't hold up to the elements."

It's All about the Result

The main product that should hold up and deliver is the grill. Most of the cooking will be done here, so like a baker splurging on a great oven, the outdoor cook's main investment will often be the grill.

"The biggest trends in outdoor kitchens are performance, performance and performance," said Faulk. "People want to cook amazing food like they see on *Top Chef* or *Iron Chef*, and they want to do it outdoors as much as they do indoors."

Adding that the demand for restaurant-quality performance is getting even stronger this year, Faulk explained that people want equipment with specialty capabilities, like Argentinian-style grilling or slow barbecuing. And according to Jim Ginocchi, president of Coyote Outdoor Living, infrared burner cooking is also coming into outdoor kitchens.

"These burners (sear or rear rotisserie burners) offer intense heat output for searing meat or fish like the professionals," said Ginocchi. "High-output burners for more diverse cooking give outdoor chefs the flexibility to create culinary dishes once reserved for indoor kitchens."

Along with a stronger demand for infrared burners, hybrid appliances that mix gas and charcoal are growing in popularity. Charcoal grills traditionally offer more flavor and a live-fire experience. Gas grills boast convenience and consistent temperatures, so these unique blends come from the best of both worlds. Artisan-style pizza ovens and massive barbecues are additionally taking center stage in outdoor kitchens.

"I think that in the outdoor kitchen, artisan-style cooking is a strong a trend as internet-enabled cooking is in the indoor kitchen," said Faulk. "We have seen some new explorations into Bluetooth-connected and app-enabled grills, but these are not yet changing how people cook outdoors."

Perhaps because people are more likely to cook leisurely outdoors and have less need of time-saving apps, outdoor technology focuses instead on performance and quality cooking. Many grills allow consumers to smoke, roast and slow cook items such as chicken or pork. Consumers can also use the grill to make pancakes, eggs, cookies, pies and more with the use of a griddle attachment, making cooking any dish conducive for the outdoors.

"Cooking in an outdoor kitchen creates a sense of occasion around every meal in a way that is difficult to match indoors," said Faulk. "Overall, outdoor living spaces quite simply and directly add to your quality of life." ■

— By Erinn Waldo



9. NanaWall Systems has unveiled the thinnest profile and most energy-efficient opening glass wall on the market – the SL80181 Folding Series. Framed in aluminum, the system with a thermal break allows for expansive glass walls and broad vistas when opened. **Circle No. 208 or visit kbbonline.com/freeinfo**

10. From Laboratorio Mattoni, the Fantasca system for cooking and storage works outdoors or indoors with a sliding and lifting mechanism and an electrically operated rotating TV. **Circle No. 209 or visit kbbonline.com/freeinfo**

11. With a thin, 3/4-in. profile, Lumière Eon LED luminaires from Eaton for the outdoors or indoors offer three beam patterns and are designed to last 50,000 hours. **Circle No. 210 or visit kbbonline.com/freeinfo**

12. The Coyote CCX4 36-in. Grill from Coyote Outdoor Living offers 80,000 BTUs of power, combined with stainless Heat Control Grids for a total of 875 square inches of cooking space. The grill starts at \$1,599 MSRP. **Circle No. 211 or visit kbbonline.com/freeinfo**

