

Outdoor Eating Adventures

Joanne M. Stage, CMKBD, CID

Exploding demand for outdoor kitchens.

Do you dream about planning your own outdoor kitchen and creating a place for family and friends to gather while you cook? Since the discovery of fire when cooking on the open hearth became the heart of the cave dwellers home, the alluring aroma of grilling has continued to captivate our senses. According to an industry survey, the latest trend is an exploding demand for outdoor kitchens! And, while a fire pit may have been suitable for our cave dwellers, today's savvy consumer has the benefit of modern technological advances in appliances and finishes.

Here are some ideas to help you get started.

First start out by reviewing your local building codes and requirements for an outdoor kitchen.

Second, create a plan and your needs and wish list. The basic essentials are a grill, sink and some type of refrigeration or cooler.

Third, review the features available in outdoor appliances and what you need. Consider that a Hybrid Grill can incorporate a selection of gas, charcoal and wood fire grilling with a 32,000 BTU side burner, wok or lobster pot ready. Customized grills are available for fish, meat and vegetables or teppanyaki-style cooking. Other outdoor appliances can include a countertop pizza oven, smoker, dishwasher, freezer, refrigerator, wine chiller, keg tapper, warming drawers, ventilator, sink, pantry storage and trash and recycling center. Enough selections to make your head spin!

And lastly, your other considerations should include your lifestyle, privacy, view, prevailing winds, landscaping and the flow of traffic. In addition consider task and mood lighting, a sound system, internet, television, low-maintenance materials such as stainless steel for cabinets, stone or concrete for countertops and whether you require shelter for a cooking and clean up area. And, although California has great weather year around, think about possibly adding natural gas patio heaters.

Most importantly, there are a lot of decisions to make when investing in your outdoor kitchen. Consider working with a professional who is familiar with codes, products and the planning of outdoor kitchens. Contact a Certified Interior Designer (CID) to work with you. Certified Interior Designers in the State of California are qualified by education, experience and examination. Your Certified Interior Designer can plan your space, help you make proper selections, and oversee the installation.

Joanne M. Stage, CMKBD, CID is the National Kitchen and Bath Association's representative to the California Council for Interior Design Certification board. For a list of Certified Interior Designers in your area or to view the CID pages, visit www.ccidc.org/cidpages.

