



Great Outdoors *by Sarab A. Blank*

HOW TO CREATE A PRACTICAL AND FUN OUTDOOR KITCHEN



“I’m thinking of designing an outdoor kitchen, but don’t know where to start. What do I need to consider?”



Cool Cooking | An outdoor kitchen should stand up to the elements and look good while doing it. When paired with natural stone, this LYNX outdoor stainless steel kitchen, which includes a professional grill, cocktail station, refrigerator and more, looks seamless. See Resources.

A: Outdoor entertaining is one of the greatest things about summer. An outdoor kitchen is essential, as it allows the host to spend more time with guests. The challenge is to create a space with sharp design that has all of the necessary features, but that blends in with the surroundings.

Hire a good landscape architect who considers water run-off, sun and wind exposure, how the overall look affects your plantings and views of the yard, and can also design lighting when needed. Gregory Maroun of Steck’s Nursery and Landscaping in Bethel takes a classical approach, but his creativity always delivers something special.

An outdoor work area should be covered to protect from the elements while remaining unobtrusive on the landscape. A loggia, or an open-air room, can stand alone or be attached to a pool house or main house and allows enough exposure to the outdoors while providing ample shelter and creating a controlled area for entertaining.

As far as products for outfitting the space, start with the necessary appliances—almost all of the major manufacturers make outdoor versions of their most popular products. The grill could be built into an architectural element of a loggia so that it is only seen from the working side. Considering the expense and heavy use, one should consider commercial

grills from Viking or the highest-level LYNX Professional Grill with its generous 54-inch grill area. Sub-Zero’s ice-maker is another must, as well as their under-counter outdoor refrigerator, the UC-24RO.

Depending on the use of the space, consider additional amenities like a wine storage unit, a dishwasher and entertaining elements. SunBrite offers all-weather HDTVs in 23-, 32- and 46-inch versions. Wireless stereo speakers come disguised as stones from a couple of manufacturers; otherwise consider models from Polk or Acoustic Research.

Look for all-weather materials that blend into outdoor areas: rustic stone walls and stone surfaces, and granite, limestone and stainless steel for countertops.

Manipulating and being inventive with the landscape resources is also key. For an outdoor kitchen project in Florida, where the season is longer and outdoor entertaining is de rigueur, we once designed a small refrigerator to fit snugly into the shrubs. To extend the season in Connecticut, use space heaters like the Sunglo’s freestanding patio heaters that cast a circle of sun-like radiant warmth.

The bottom line is to create a subtle look. Your outdoor kitchen should blend into the natural surroundings, yet have everything you will need in close proximity. ●

Sarab A. Blank, CKD, founder of Darien-based SBD Kitchens, has designed over 400 projects in Westchester and Fairfield counties.

Have a question about kitchen or bath design or appliances? E-mail it to Kitchen&BathIQ@CandGpublications.com. Each month select questions will be answered in this space by design professionals.