

Outdoor kitchens are hot, hot, hot

DEBBIE TRAVIS
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

The last decade has seen an unprecedented focus on home design and decoration.

Whether living in a rental, a condo, a fixer-upper or a new house, people everywhere are enthusiastically putting their own stamp on their surroundings. There's been a boom in television shows, home shows and books on the topic.

Manufacturers of everything from paint to flooring and furnishings have expanded product lines to meet the demand. And I am heartened by the recent drive toward eco-friendly design. We all, as educated consumers, can make a tangible difference in the marketplace by living the green life to the best of our abilities.

Our homes are very important to us. It's where we spend our down time with family and friends, taking a breather after a busy day, week or month. If entertaining is important to you, then you will want to have a special space that works hard so you don't have to. Moving outdoors is one of the best parts of the season. It is what makes summer so grand. With some careful planning, your backyard can become a vacation destination!

Eating al fresco is a treat. Food tastes better when eaten out of doors . . . perhaps all our senses are more alive, maybe it's the freedom, or the inspiration of a natural setting. However, there is some additional work required, lots of extra steps and loaded trays to get the snacks, drinks and meals from kitchen to backyard picnic table. But what if you had the luxury of a



Designer Todd Senft's award-winning outdoor kitchen has a permanent roof with four skylights, features durable materials such as stone, cedar and a poured concrete countertop, and indoor/outdoor appliances.

fully equipped outdoor kitchen?

The award-winning kitchen shown here was designed by Todd Senft (revisionrenovations.com). This kitchen is an extension of the home, connected by matching building materials of stone and cedar. A permanent roof protects the kitchen so that it's accessible rain or shine, while the four skylights keep the atmosphere open and airy. Poured concrete countertops and bar area connect to the pool deck, and are durable year-round. Steel appliances include an under counter refrigerator and six-burner gas barbecue. Look for appliances that

are designed for outdoor use. For example, Dacor's Epicure indoor/outdoor refrigerator withstands outdoor temperatures from 10C to 43C.

Proper storage solutions are another key element for a kitchen inside or out. Have shelves or a cabinet to hold dishes, glasses, large serving bowls and trays, cookware, and candle holders. It's not wise to store food or herbs that will attract wildlife, but canned goods and bottles can be tucked away close to hand.

Outdoor heaters prolong the time you can comfortably sit outdoors.

Check out the models that are available in your area. Gas heaters have been installed under the roof of this kitchen. There are also freestanding designs suitable for decks, patios and other open areas.

Outdoor speakers should be located so that music can be enjoyed at a low level. Always be cognizant of neighbours and their right to enjoy outdoor living peacefully.

Please email your questions to house2home@debbietravis.com.

House to Home is produced by Debbie Travis and Barbara Dingle and appears Saturdays in New in Homes

