

kitchen garden design

THE GOURMET CHEF'S GARDEN

How to design an outdoor kitchen and complement it with gorgeous edible plantings

DESIGNS AND TEXT BY SENGA LINDSAY



Not so long ago, outdoor cooking meant a tiny backyard grill and harried trips to and from the kitchen, with dinner served on a wobbly plastic table.

Today, people are increasingly seeing gardens as extensions of their indoor spaces. Manufacturers have responded by providing an array of outdoor kitchen appliances ranging from the simple barbecue to large-capacity grills. And for the gourmet there are sinks, cabinetry and wine fridges for the ultimate in convenience and climate control. Outdoor furniture has also taken a giant leap from the rickety picnic table to high-end dining and living-room sets. Combine all this with an

edible landscape and you have the makings of the ultimate chef's gourmet garden.

LOCATION, LOCATION

The first decision is where to position your outdoor gourmet kitchen – against the house or farther afield in the yard? Setting up closer to the house may enable you to use existing overhead protection or add inexpensive awnings. Installation of electrical, gas and water lines will be easier and less expensive. And there is a convenience factor if food prep is to take place in the indoor kitchen. On the downside, though, cooking smells and smoke may drift indoors, and grills and cooking appliances close to the house may pose a fire hazard. Lastly, kitchens and eating areas located away from the house can become an enchanting retreat.

CONSIDER YOUR VISION

The next step is to envision how you want to cook, entertain and live in your outdoor space. Begin by considering the number of people you typically entertain, at what times of day and in what seasons. This will help to define whether you want an enclosure such as an overhead canopy or comfort systems such as heaters. Also think about what kind of entertaining you like to do – is it casual or formal? This will define the furniture you

may need. In terms of cooking amenities, are you happy with a simple grill or do you need it all, including the kitchen sink?

DESIGN ELEMENTS

APPLIANCES AND COUNTER SPACE. Outdoor kitchen layout follows the same work-triangle principal as an indoor version. The space connecting the stove, sink and refrigerator should be between 120 to 240 cm (4 to 8 ft.) long.

KITCHEN LAYOUTS. A modest outdoor kitchen consists of a built-in propane or charcoal grill set into a 1.8-m (6-ft.) counter with a couple of storage cabinets. If you are unsure or if your budget is restrictive, consider planning in stages. Start out with a built-in barbecue in a 1.8-m (6-ft.) counter. This allows enough space to prep and cook, with the flexibility to add additional counter space later on. Kitchen working surfaces can double as dining tables and should be durable and easy to clean. Materials such as glazed ceramic tile, granite, stone tile, decorative concrete and even flagstone are ideal.

Tip: Integrate planters into your counters and fill with fast-growing herbs or cut-and-come-again lettuces, a staple of every chef's culinary repertoire. Purple-leaved lettuces with 'Neon Lights' Swiss chard are another beautiful edible duo. Trailing plants such as 'Tumbling Tom' tomatoes look gorgeous cascading over the side of the counter.

structure can provide protection as well as opportunity for growing large edible vines such as grapes or kiwis.

COMFORT AND SEATING. While you don't want to make the outdoors just like the inside, you do want to feel comfortable, so for cold evenings look to propane patio heaters. Energy-efficient overhead heaters such as infrared quartz units add instantaneous heat with modest electrical output.

And as outdoor cooking is often communal, you should allocate enough space. In my household, having a chef husband guarantees that the party always ends up in the kitchen, therefore adjacent casual sitting areas are a must. Integrated built-in counters with high stools can also provide places for eating. 🌱

FOR MORE ON GARDEN DESIGN BY SENGA, go to www.gardenwiseonline.ca
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WALLS AND CEILINGS. Outdoor rooms should have a feeling of enclosure to provide a sense of comfort. This translates into walls, floors and ceilings. Lattice structures are an easy way to create walls plus provide support for a variety of striking edibles such as purple beans or red-stemmed malabar spinach. Mix with colourful climbing nasturtium for a festive party space. Permanent enclosures can be created using prefabricated living walls. These vertical structures are packed with soil and automatically irrigated, perfect for growing colourful lettuces and herbs. Overhead