

KITCHENS *alfresco*

THERE'S
smoke rising from the
neighbor's back yard, and it's not
from the old rolling Weber kettle. There's
an entire kitchen right on the patio – a mega-
BTU grill, outdoor pizza oven, under-counter
fridge and wine cooler, all set in solid-wood cabi-
netry with granite countertops. Pretty soon they'll
put a fire pit or something out there. Better start
designing your own outdoor kitchen now.
Look over these neighbors' fences to
stoke the fire.

By Elizabeth Rahe





Developer/
builder Ford
Robinette knows
a thing or two
about outdoor
kitchens. In

upscale homes, it's kind of expected, he says. So when he designed the open-air, poolside kitchen and dining area in his own Hawk's Landing home in Plantation, he knew exactly what he and his wife, Susan, wanted. The result is a gracious Mediterranean-style patio kitchen and living space that accommodates intimate gatherings or large celebrations with comfort and style.

With high pecky cypress ceilings overhead and coral-inlay Mexican stone underfoot, the expansive outdoor kitchen/dining room is defined by elegant archways and pillars guarded by wood-framed glass sidelights. The gas grill and hood are set in hearthlike surroundings, with coral-stone chimney, a marble mosaic border, pecky cypress cabinets and red Empadora granite backsplash. Countertops around the sink and prep area also feature the deep-red granite. Ceiling fans and cross-ventilation keep the breezes flowing as guests mill around the patio or settle into cushioned teak and metal furnishings. Canvas awnings provide some protection from the elements, but if stronger weather threatens, drop-down drapes keep it from dampening the party.

"It's a great addition to the house if you like to socialize. We use it every week," Ford says. "Sometimes we do really nice events...like an engagement party for our daughter with 60 people. Sometimes it's just a small dinner with family or friends."

Designer: Ford Robinette, Robinette Homes

Appliances: 53-inch Viking gas grill and stainless steel hood, Sub-Zero under-counter refrigerator and wine unit, 60-inch Fujitsu flat-screen plasma television

Planning tips: "Think about the things you like to do first, and plan around that. Be practical and consider the elements. Provide sufficient protection for the appliances. If it starts raining, you want to be able to stay out there."



1 line here for the Olde Native Trading Company shot. 1 line here for the Olde Native Trading Company shot.

Joyce and Ron Wilson's outdoor kitchen can stop play on the Ironhorse Country Club course – or at least pause it. "People on the golf course never fail to stop and ask about it," Joyce says.

It's no wonder. The gleaming granite and mosaic-like marble bar in their West Palm Beach home catches the eye. Autumn-colored marble pavers continue throughout the patio, contrasting with the black-bottom pool/Jacuzzi with its twin waterfalls. The L-shaped design of the kitchen bar keeps food preparation out of sight. Stainless steel appliances, sink, cabinets and drawers are set below and behind the granite bar top so the chefs can work and chat.

"My husband grills, and I do everything else. We use it five nights a week if we're home," says Joyce, a retired court reporter. Ron is a financial broker. They are both avid football and golf fans. A television mounted above the bar assures they won't miss a favorite sporting event during a gathering. The couple often hosts their five grown children and two grandchildren for the holidays or friends for cocktails or sit-down dinners in their outdoor living area.

"It's like a great room added to your house on the outside," Joyce says.

Designer: Chris Jarski, president Olde Native Trading Company,

and Joyce Wilson

Appliances: DCS 36-inch grill and burners, Sub-Zero under-counter refrigerator

Planning tips: "People should think about how they will use their kitchen. Mine is L-shaped so if we have a bartender, he is out of the way. It took up walkable space, but you don't see the mess of any preparation."

After renovating every room in their Woodfield Hunt Club home in Boca Raton, Debby and Mark Bernhardt have finally reached the edge: the back patio and pool deck. Interiors key off the couple's extensive collection of South American and Mexican folk pieces, and that arty feel extends outdoors. Natural mahogany cabinets, stainless steel appliances and granite countertops blend with the outdoor stucco for a rustic-yet-sophisticated look. Stamped terra cotta tiles interspersed with lines of miniature stainless steel tiles create a captivating backsplash.

It's not a show kitchen, though, says Mark, a dermatologist. He grills nearly every day, but not always by choice. "It's my wife who wants me to cook out there," he says, laughing. "You think I want to be



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out there in the heat?"

Although Debby, Jonathon, 20, and Lindsey, 17, all enjoy cooking, Mark is the main grill guy. "I love to entertain, but I'm not the barbecue girl," says Debby, who assists in her husband's medical practice and in grilling prep work. "It has to be a partnership, right?"

On the opposite side of the patio, the Bernhardts are building a woodworking area with stainless steel-topped mahogany cabinets where Mark can craft his animal-shaped benches. Old pool screens are coming down, opening up a lake view, and stone flooring is replacing tired pavers. Soon the family will be able to settle into cushy brown wicker furniture and dig into Mark's primo steaks...or not.

"Debby has me doing all kinds of grilled vegetables, fish," Mark says. "She would have me grill the lettuce if it wasn't in the salad."

Designer: Louis Shuster, Shuster Design Associates; cabinetry and appliances by Susan and Armand Rocco, The Kitchenworks

Appliances: Viking 41-inch grill with rotisserie, grill/smoker and infrared burner, Viking hood and under-counter Viking Beverage Center

Planning tips: "Spend the money and do it right once," Mark says. "We tried to save money on this or that and ended up having to replace it and spend more money."

Grilling up a plan

Outdoor kitchens are a growing phenomenon in South Florida, says Bill Feinberg, president of Allied Kitchen & Bath in Fort Lauderdale. Often called to speak on the topic, Feinberg offers these tips for planning an outdoor kitchen:

Expertise – Certified kitchen designers can help plan an outdoor room that fits with your lifestyle.

Location, location, location – Set the outdoor kitchen near the indoor kitchen and make sure it is protected from wind and rain. Think about water supply and drainage, electrical and gas supply (natural or liquid propane) and lighting. Consider the wind flow when planning grill position.

Construction – Use quality, weather-conscious construction methods, and check for building codes, zoning permits, fire safety and ventilation requirements.

Get a design in mind – Incorporate the colors and style of the home or choose a theme, such as island,

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The Forers' outdoor kitchen is an inviting, tropical retreat. One secret: Dimmer-controlled, under-counter light strips produce a warm glow. Photograph by Dan Forer

Dan and Loretta Forer's tropical-garden kitchen was somewhat of a curiosity when they created it for their South Miami home in 1994. All these years later, it is still an essential part of their lives. "I never cook in the house. We designed it so we could cook outside, near the water," Loretta says. Dan is a professional photographer, and Loretta runs the pet apparel and accessory company, HotCoolDogCat.com. Previously, she worked as an interior designer, which is apparent in the patio kitchen's economic marriage of form and function.

Based on a galley concept, her design places the grill, burners, refrigerator, icemaker and cabinets within a step or two. Guests are seated around the 15-foot bar so they can watch the chef. The Forers have even held cooking classes here, she says, mentioning a particularly memorable lesson with the noted Norman Van Aiken presiding.

"It's very theatrical," Loretta says. "I need an audience."

Set amid tropical vegetation with a pool, Jacuzzi and rainbow-shaped waterfall, the outdoor living space resembles an island getaway. "It's easy to get caught up in the waterfall and forget about the fish cooking on the grill," she says.

Brazilian hardwood decking is mirrored in the bi-level bar design, which features inlaid Saltillo tile on the countertop and stools. The decking is trimmed out in one hallowed spot, where the couple's beloved cat, Bogey, is laid to rest. They dubbed their outdoor kitchen Bogey's Bar & Grill in his memory, and Loretta plucks a fresh hibiscus for him each day.

Designer: Loretta Forer

Appliances: DCS 48-inch stainless steel grill, Scotsman under-counter stainless steel icemaker and refrigerator

Planning tips: "Think about how close you can make everything for comfort. You have to be available to tend to the grill without running all over the place. Don't think small with countertops, though."

It's rather a simple, controlled design: a half-circle within a half-circle, mirrored on the opposite side. Nothing to compete with that unrestrained Atlantic view. It's the perfect deck kitchen setup, however, for Catherine and David Ellerman of Jupiter, and their large family. "The Ellermans wanted to feel like the surface was



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encompassing them," says Dawn Maggio, chief designer for Broward Custom Kitchens. They also wanted the prep area large enough so that they wouldn't bump into each other – a remedy for a too-many-chefs problem, Maggio adds.

Thus, the expansive marine-polymer cabinets are topped with a wide, bi-level quartz countertop. An under-counter refrigerator, wine cooler and ice maker keep beverages cool and at hand. The grill is set to the side, keeping smoke away from the Jacuzzi and circular bar. A square-shaped seating area continues the geometric theme. For desert, a nearby fire pit encourages late-night marshmallow toasting.

Designer: Dawn Maggio for Broward Custom Kitchens

Appliances: 54-inch Dacor gas grill, U-Line under-counter refrigerator/freezer and wine cooler, Scotsman icemaker. The custom marine-polymer cabinets feature a lifetime warranty and come in 10 colors.

Planning tips: "Don't just do what the neighbors did. Think about what you're trying to accomplish," Maggio says. The Ellermans wanted an easy-care, family-friendly setting with distinct areas for cooking, dining and mingling.

Resources

Allied Kitchen & Bath, 616 W. Oakland Park Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, 954-564-1611, alliedkitchens.com.
Broward Custom Kitchens Inc., 1721 N. Powerline Road, Pompano Beach, 954-960-0550, browardcustomkitchens.com.
The Kitchenworks Inc., 1808 E. Sunrise Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, 954-764-1482, thekitchenworks.com.
Olde Native Trading Company, 5407 Haverhill Road N., Suite 336, West Palm Beach, 561-296-9620, oldnative.com.
Outdoor Living Concepts, 1000 Stinson Way, Suite 105, West Palm Beach, 561-615-1325, out-doorconcepts.com.
Shuster Design Associates Inc., 1401 NE 26th St., Wilton Manors, 954-462-6400, shusterdesign.com.

Outdoor kitchen insiders share their thoughts on trends

- Multiple sinks for multiple cooks, wine coolers, ice makers, separate outdoor refrigerators and freezers, mister systems for cooling – *Dawn Maggio, Broward Custom Kitchens, Pompano Beach*

- Stained mahogany cabinetry with a water-based sealer; mixing of materials, such as pebble borders with flat stone floors; granite countertops with inventive backsplashes; greater variety in outdoor-use stainless steel appliances; a layout that's good for the cook and inviting to guests. – *Susan Rocco, The Kitchenworks, Fort Lauderdale*

- Outdoor fireplaces and large, integrated seating areas; decorative elements, such as wood trellises and ornate backsplashes. Look for built-in fryers and more appliances, such as dishwashers, made for outdoor use. – *Chris Jarski, Olde Native Trading Company, West Palm Beach*

- Pizza ovens and fire pits. "A lot of transplants miss the smell of wood. It dips down to 60 and people are cold." – *Kevin Keene, Outdoor Living Concepts, West Palm Beach*