



Landscape Design | Outdoor Kitchens | Patios

Where to Spend and Where to Save on an Outdoor Kitchen

Learn how to make practical choices while still getting an outdoor kitchen you'll love



Marianne Lipanovich yesterday

Houzz Contributor. I'm a California-based writer and editor. While most of my projects ... More

Save

Comment | 1

Like | 6

Share

An outdoor kitchen can take your backyard entertaining game to the next level. Just as with an indoor kitchen, you'll find a dizzying range of choices for everything from appliances to finishes. But finding what will work best for you while staying within your budget can be a challenge. To help you get started, we asked outdoor kitchen pros for their advice on where you might want to invest in your outdoor kitchen and where you have options to save — all while getting a great result.



Interior Solutions

Before You Build

First, put some thought into how you would use an outdoor kitchen on a regular basis. "Build for the majority of the life you live," says Bob Hursthause of Hursthause Landscape Architects and Contractors in Chicago. He says you can always adapt for large parties by adding temporary flooring, folding tables and chairs — even extra grills. Katherine Douglass of TCP Custom Outdoor Living in Houston agrees. "It's hard to distinguish between needs and wants, so you should decide what you really will be doing in the space first," she says.

Plan for your needs. Planning for what you need will help you make the right choices to fit your budget. Initial questions to ask include:

<https://www.houzz.com/magazine/where-to-spend-and-where-to-save-on-an-outdoor-kitchen-stsetivw-vs~160224946>

Shop Related Categories



Watering & Irrigation



Gardening Tools



Outdoor Decor



Outdoor Pots & Planters



Garden Statues & Yard Art



Outdoor Power Equipment

People who liked this story also liked



The Most Popular Outdoor Photos From Around the World [Full Story >](#)



10 Questions to Ask Before Starting a Front Yard Redesign [Full Story >](#)



Yard of the Week: Home and Landscape Go Hand in Hand [Full Story >](#)



10 Questions to Ask a Landscape Designer [Full Story >](#)

10 Things to Consider for a Sustainable Landscape Design [Full Story >](#)

- Do you plan to grill for family and maybe a few friends once or twice a week in summer, or are you a year-round griller who often hosts gatherings?
- Do you want easy access to drinks and a place where you can chill food, or is an indoor refrigerator just steps away?
- Does your cooking style include smoked or slow-cook meats? How about side dishes or baked goods?

Choose a location. Think about where you want the kitchen located and how it will fit in with the rest of your yard. Should it be right off the house or elsewhere? Do you want to be a part of the action when cooking, or do you prefer a little separation, whether for safety reasons or your own peace of mind? Will you want to incorporate other elements, such as a lounging area, a bar or dining spot, or a fire feature? This will help you decide on the size and the layout of the kitchen itself.

Find a landscape designer or landscape contractor near you



Select a style. Another thing to consider is style and creating a look that's cohesive with the rest of your home. Grills and other appliances come in a fairly limited range of looks and colors, but counters, cabinetry and other features can vary widely when it comes to style.

Douglass and Hursthause both recommend choosing a look that blends well with both your landscape and your home's exterior. "We recommend that the kitchen looks original to your home," Douglass says. "Look at your exterior and your landscape, and incorporate landscape and structural elements such as clapboard, cedar, brick and stone into the design," Hursthause says.

What to Know About Adding an Outdoor Kitchen



Need a pro for your landscape design project?
Let Houzz find the best pros for you

[Find Pros](#)



Porch of the Week: Covered Deck Becomes a Glassed-In Retreat [Full Story >](#)



Fire-Wise Landscapes Can Help Keep Your Home and Property Safe [Full Story >](#)



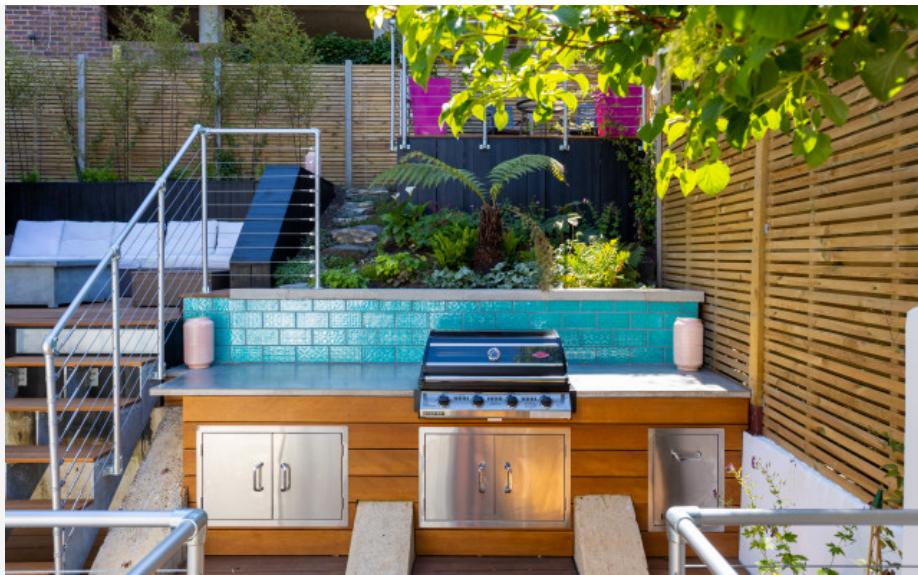
10 Projects to Give Your Yard and Garden New Life This Spring [Full Story >](#)



Yard of the Week: City Garden With a Calm, Private Feel [Full Story >](#)



Before and After: 3 Ways to Add Bold Color to Your Yard [Full Story >](#)



Grill Basics

A grill is the centerpiece of an outdoor kitchen. Grills range in size and power from small, portable charcoal or electric grills designed for a couple of hamburgers or hot dogs to elaborate appliances with all the extras that can handle a crowd.

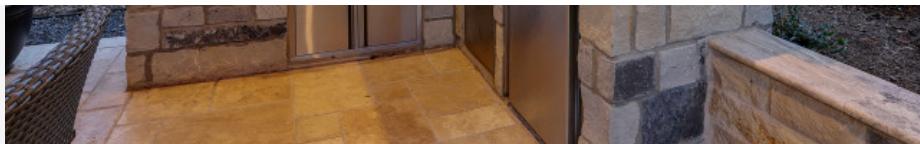
For most people, a basic medium-size grill is sufficient. "A couple that grills only a couple of times a week probably doesn't need a 36-inch grill," Hursthause says. Instead, he recommends putting the money you would have spent on a bigger grill towards countertops and cabinets.

If your grilling approach is more elaborate, then it makes sense to go larger. "If you do mixed grills, beef brisket or a rotisserie chicken every Sunday, you might need more space," Hursthause says. Douglass adds that if you have big gatherings often, then a larger grill and a side burner along with plenty of space for prepping is the way to go. If you often smoke or slow-cook foods, you might want to budget for both a grill and a smoker.

Also consider the longevity of the grill you choose. "It's not a forever appliance," Hursthause says. He says if you're looking for something that will last longer, it's worth the added expense to get a sturdy stainless steel model that can be serviced and has replacement parts available.

What to Know About Choosing a Built-In Grill





Grill Add-Ons

You can incorporate a number of accessory appliances into your grill. While these might seem like an unnecessary expense at first, it's worth considering whether you can make good use of them.

- Side burners would let you have multiple temperatures and cooking times for different dishes, making cooking a bigger meal easier.
- A deep fryer would let you cook your food by submerging it in hot oil, so it becomes crisp on the outside and juicy on the inside.
- A warming drawer would let you keep things hot while juggling grilling space.
- A pizza oven can double as a standard oven.
- A griddle would allow you to cook bacon, eggs and pancakes over an open fire.

Douglass also recommends considering a vent hood to keep smoke away from the patio, especially if the grill is semi-enclosed by an overhead structure. "Some cities require vent hoods over a grill," she says.

Pro tip: Choose appliances from a single manufacturer if possible, so the finishes and handles match.

Shop for outdoor cooking products on Houzz



Cabinets

Cabinets help define an outdoor kitchen's shape and style. Choosing custom cabinetry would allow you to design specifically for your space (at a higher cost), while less expensive pre-made cabinetry generally can be easily adapted to fit where you want it. Both Hursthouse and Douglass say it's worth the investment to get what you want, as you'll be using it for a long time.

Choose cabinetry that is sturdy and rated for outdoor use. Also consider the amount of

storage you want, including for fuels such as propane tanks, charcoal and pellets. Additional cabinetry might be helpful for storing grilling tools and accessories, refrigeration units and outdoor tableware, eliminating multiple trips inside.

Stone finishes range in price from moderate to expensive and add a sense of

permanence. Sustainably harvested woods also are available at a range of prices and blend well with a number of home and landscape styles. Other popular choices, most of which are moderately priced, include stucco, brick and metals.



Countertops

Countertops are the finishing touch of an outdoor kitchen. They're also workhorses, taking on meal prep and serving, as well as spending day and night exposed to the elements.

Natural stone, whether granite, bluestone or another type, is more expensive than some other options but can handle all kinds of conditions and look good while doing it. "If you're trying to do it on a budget, there are certainly very nice less expensive pieces that can be installed and still be very functional," Douglass says. If you do choose stone, Hursthouse recommends going with a thicker slab, which would be in scale with an outdoor location. He also recommends a honed or leathered finish. "Otherwise you'll have to buy stock in window cleansers, because you'll be out there touching things up every time it rains," he says.

Take a look at tile, wood, metal and concrete options; plenty of them can handle the outdoor exposure. What you choose will depend on the finished look you're going for as well as your budget. Whatever you choose, check on installation costs and maintenance requirements as well as durability.

What to Know About Adding an Outdoor Bar or Counter



Refrigerators and Sinks

No indoor kitchen is complete without a refrigerator, but you might not need or want one in your outdoor kitchen if the indoor one is nearby.

Weigh the cost of adding one against the convenience of being able to store drinks and



Where to Spend and Where to Save on an Outdoor Kitchen food right by the grill. If you do decide to add one, make sure it is rated for outdoor use. And Hursthouse suggests that if you'll be storing drinks in it even when you're not entertaining, get one with a lock for when you aren't around.

Installing a sink with hot and cold running water is a more expensive proposition. "You'll

need to run water supply lines and connect with the sewer system," Douglass says. A less expensive option is a dry sink, which you can fill with ice and water to hold beverages and cold food, then drain into the garden.



Lights and Power

The odds are good that you'll be using your outdoor kitchen into the evenings. Give some thought to your electrical needs. You'll want task lighting for cooking as well as ambient light so you can enjoy lingering outdoors. "There may be middle to high lights inside the grill itself, but you'll also want supplemental lights and soft illumination," Hursthouse says. Downlights, including those built into a backsplash on the countertop, are a good choice for lighting a countertop without creating glare.

Hursthouse also adds outlets around the grill area. "You'll want one on the back and one on each side for things like refrigerator units, rotisseries, slow cookers, blenders and warming trays," he says. He adds that you also might want to add an outlet inside a cabinet. Just make sure all the outlets are rated for outdoor use.

If you'll be adding electrical lines, think about if you want the added expense of running a plumbing line. A plumbing line has its pluses and minuses but is necessary if you're planning to add a sink. For fuel, "running a gas line to the outdoor kitchen is ideal and much less of a hassle than propane tanks," Douglass says.



Weather Protection

Cold weather, especially when accompanied by rain and snow, can make you lose your enthusiasm for grilling very quickly. On the other extreme, too much sun also can be an issue. If you live in an area where weather can thwart your outdoor entertaining plans, adding a cover to part or all of your outdoor kitchen might be beneficial. A solid roof would protect you from the elements but might not give you the outdoors vibe you want. A pergola with a slatted roof would have a more open feel and still provide some protection from rain or sun.

A roof or pergola feels like overkill? Consider a patio umbrella, which you can move to where it's needed. You also can hang sail cloth overhead to provide protection without breaking the budget.

What to Know About Adding a Pergola

More on Houzz

[Read more outdoor kitchen guides](#)

[Browse thousands of outdoor kitchen photos](#)

[Work with a landscape contractor in your area](#)

[Shop for outdoor products](#)

 [Save](#) [Comment | 1](#) [Like | 6](#) [Share](#)[See one comment ▾](#)

Explore Related Topics

[Landscape Design](#) [Outdoor Kitchens](#) [Patios](#)

Read Related Stories