

New Homes And Condos / Homes

Bringing heart of the home to the great outdoors

Linda White • Special to Postmedia Network
Jun 21, 2021 • 1 week ago • 4 minute read • [Join the conversation](#)



Outdoor kitchen cabinets are engineered to withstand harsh Canadian winters. OUTERIORS

Get cooking this summer with an outdoor kitchen

If the return of summer means a return to al fresco dining, you’re in good company. Eating outdoors has a decidedly casual vibe so many of us love. But more and more homeowners are kicking things up a notch with outdoor kitchens that allow them to remain part of the action and perhaps even impress guests with their culinary skills.

“For the luxury homeowner, the days of a freestanding cart barbecue simply don’t cut it, as an outdoor kitchen has become the final frontier of any renovation project,” says Daniel Albo, president of Outeriors, Outdoor Kitchens & Cabinetry in Vaughan.

An outdoor kitchen extends a home’s entertaining space and as that space becomes increasingly valuable amid the pandemic, it’s no surprise COVID-19 has “dramatically increased” demand for outdoor kitchens. “It provides an entertaining environment for gathering which simply wasn’t available over the last year with indoor social gathering bans,” Albo says.

The most critical components of an outdoor kitchen include the proper size grill, a beverage fridge, trash disposal bin, ample countertop space for preparations and serving, and a sink when possible. Complex outdoor kitchens also feature side burners, which serve as an outdoor gas range, power burners to boil a large volume of water for cooking corn and lobster, and pizza ovens.

There is lots to consider when designing an outdoor kitchen and selecting finishes. Dark colours often are harder to maintain and keep clean because airborne contaminants like dust, pollen and hard water are visible on darker surfaces. “Darker surfaces also absorb more heat from the sun and can be hot to the touch if open to above,” Albo says. “Earth-tone colours are typically easier to keep looking great.”

He finds just as many clients use their outdoor kitchens year-round as those who fire them up seasonally. Outeriors has built large poolside kitchens poolside that are used only in the spring, summer and fall. It has also created simple kitchens with just a grill and a few side cabinets that are located closer to the home and used year-round.

“Many people have gone the smaller outdoor kitchen route as a freestanding grill alternative to increase the curb appeal for their backyard landscape (because) freestanding cart barbecues often look like a messy afterthought,” Albo says.

Outdoor kitchen products continue to evolve and are engineered for outdoor environments – no mean feat when you consider Canadian winters. “Traditionally, outdoor kitchens have been made from bulky stone or wooden structures that require multiple trades to construct,” he says.

“At Outeriors, we have moved away from these traditional building materials and developed a line of outdoor-rated cabinetry made from powder-coated marine grade aluminum, stainless steel and composite resin materials, which allow a user to have the same cooking experience outside as they do inside,” says Albo.

“Our cabinets not only provide the same utility and function as an interior kitchen, we also have many door styles, finishes and colours to complement any home architecture style, from traditional shaker style doors to more contemporary slab doors with recessed handle pulls.”

How much should you budget for an outdoor kitchen? That depends on the scope of your project and factors like size and quantity and quality of appliances selected. “In general, the starting price point for a complete kitchen can start at \$15,000 and go all the way up to \$95,000, with the average coming in at the \$20,000 to \$30,000 mark,” says Albo.

Baking on the barbecue

When the pandemic hit, Top Chef Canada season eight contestant Jo Notkin was forced to close Zoe Ford Catering, the Montreal-based catering company she named for her late grandmother. Like many Canadians, she found solace in baking, but sour dough bread wasn’t on the menu. Nor was an oven. The self-trained chef and food entrepreneur created Jo’s BBQ Baking Mixes, which are designed to be baked using a gas barbecue. “A lot of people don’t bake in the summer because they don’t want to turn their oven on because it’s too hot or they don’t want to be stuck in the kitchen. “I thought, ‘Why can’t we use the barbecue as an outdoor oven?’ It really is an amazing tool that isn’t used to its full potential. It’s about switching your thinking: a barbecue isn’t just for grilling,” Notkin says. Think cinnamon rolls, sea salt dinner rolls, graham crackers and savoury pancakes. Her tips for baking on the barbecue include wiping down the interior walls, scraping the cooking grate and emptying the drip pan because any lingering smells will affect the flavour of your baked items. Notkin also recommends elevating your baking pans because placing filled pans directly on the grill will results in burned bottoms. You can buy a kit she sells or create your own ‘elevator’ by placing a cake pan upside down on a clean uncoated baking tray.

