

## LIVE BETTER

# outdoor cooking

AN ALFRESCO KITCHEN WILL MEAN YOUR GARDEN IS THE PLACE TO BE COME SUMMER - DESIGN IT RIGHT AND YOU'LL GET HOLIDAY VIBES ALL YEAR

FEATURE Hugh Metcalf

Outdoor kitchens are the latest thing in garden design, but while you might think installing one is the answer to make cooking outdoors easier and more accessible, that all really depends on how well you locate and lay out your space. The best outdoor kitchens encourage you to use them because they're as simple and hassle-free as your indoor kitchen, with the added benefit of being able to enjoy your garden.

To begin with, it's worth considering the proximity of your outdoor kitchen to your house. An outdoor kitchen at the far end of a large garden might feel like a nice idea – a way to create your own dining getaway separate from the house – but you might find it's less than practical. 'I like to keep the outdoor kitchen close to the house because that way you can easily go in and out to get things,' explains designer Linda Hayslett of LH.Designs. 'Indoor kitchens tend to have more accessories. It can get exhausting going back and forth if the barbecue is far away.'

If you do want to have your outdoor kitchen further away, you may want to make some additions to the space to help with this limitation. 'An outdoor kitchen that's a distance from the main house may need to contain more utilities like a sink and a fridge so that the area can be self-contained,' says Magnus Nilsson, lead designer at Blakes London. 'This may be overcomplicating the requirement, especially if there's a trade off for space. An outdoor kitchen close to the main house can benefit from fewer utilities, compensated by a little more organisation prior to the food going onto the heat. It really comes down to how often the area will be used and budget.'

Weather should also play a role in deciding the position of your outdoor kitchen, whether you're looking to soak up some sun or avoid any inclement forecasts. 'It's worth thinking about the times of day that you're most likely to be using your outdoor kitchen and where the sun will be at that time,' adds Magnus. 'If you're cooking in bright sunshine or plan to use your space all year round, as many champions of the Egg barbecue tend to do, you may wish to place the kitchen under a pergola, which will

not only protect you from sun and rain, but also your units.' Being closer to the house creates the opportunity for shelter attached to the rear, where elsewhere in your garden you might need to build a freestanding structure to cover your kitchen.

When it comes to the layout of your kitchen, there are lessons to learn from your kitchen design indoors. 'Outdoor kitchens should be looked at similarly to indoor kitchens,' says Linda. If you want to create a layout that's practical to use, for example, you can choose a set-up that creates a 'working triangle' between the fridge, stove and barbecue. 'I say this as most outdoor kitchens are missing one large item that indoor kitchens have – a standard size refrigerator. Most outdoor kitchens can incorporate a small fridge or beverage fridge, but being close to the actual kitchen is important to get to food quicker.'

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You may also want to think about the sort of cooking you do outdoors versus indoors, and then adapt your layout to match, especially when it comes to making worktop space available. 'A central grill position is purely a practical consideration,' explains Dan Loe, an architect at Forsite Studio. 'Frequently, we're prepping larger quantities of food when using the outdoor kitchen, so a centrally located

grill allows plenty of counter space on each side.'

'The best layout for an outdoor kitchen is one that either has an island or a peninsula so the barbecue can be a part of the main action, like an indoor kitchen,' adds Linda.

For a small garden, this idea might be a big ask – but for a London home redesign by architect Yoko Kloeden, a clever solution revealed itself. 'The client hosts a supper club at her home, so the brief was to create an indoor/outdoor dining experience for 10-12 people,' Yoko explains. 'The idea of the moveable island came when we realised we would need to take the indoor dining table out to the garden – rather than having a permanent outdoor set – due to the limited size of the garden. The moveable island also works as a serving table outside.' ➤

PHOTOGRAPH LAUREN TAYLOR DESIGN LH.DESIGNS





Linda Hayslett of  
LH.Designs suggests  
keeping the outdoor  
kitchen close to  
the house for  
easy accessibility





This small outdoor kitchen was designed to supplement an entertaining area elsewhere in the garden



Yoko Kloeden's clever moveable island can be used in the indoor and outdoor kitchen

It's a clever solution, especially for a garden where you're not realistically going to be cooking outdoors all year round, but it did mean some wider considerations in the design. 'The indoor/outdoor threshold had to be flush,' Yoko explains. 'The bottom door frame is recessed between the internal micro concrete flooring and the external decking. We raised the garden level by installing decking so there are no level changes in the ground floor.'

If an island isn't a possibility, look at the pros and cons of other traditional kitchen layouts. 'Your choice should depend on what type of chef you are,' says Magnus. 'If you like to be the barbecue expert and wish to keep guests or children at bay while you create your masterpieces, an L- or U-shape with a counter works well. This helps to create a division between workspace and entertaining space.'

If you're more relaxed, a simpler layout will work fine. 'If you're keen for guests to get involved in the cooking, a straight run is

advantageous as it offers guests unfettered access to sidle up to the grill and get stuck in,' Magnus adds.

Outdoor kitchens, by nature, tend to be about creating areas to entertain, but if you're just looking for a way to upgrade your barbecue, that's possible too, especially if you want to keep the entertaining area in the best part of your garden. For Dan Loe, this was the idea behind a small set-up away from the main patio: 'a "servant space" to the "served space" of the courtyard,' he explains. 'This outdoor kitchen isn't intended to be a social gathering place; however, the peripheral location allows the user to not be sequestered to a remote location for food prep.'

It's an example of how one size doesn't fit all when it comes to an outdoor kitchen, despite it being a space that is often less constrained by proportions than our indoor areas – but whatever kind of alfresco cooking you're looking to do, there's definitely a layout to suit.

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PHOTOGRAPHS (ABOVE LEFT) RYAN BALDRIDGE DESIGN FORSITE STUDIO;  
(ABOVE RIGHT) CATHY PYLE DESIGN YOKO KLOEDEN