

Your guide to creating an outdoor kitchen

Enjoy dining alfresco? Take your BBQ area one step further by setting up a fully equipped cooking space in your garden

Words: Yvette Murrell



It's a concept that has proven popular in many warmer climates, from Australia to San Francisco, and now it's a growing trend in gardens across the UK too. But when we talk about outdoor cooking, it's not only about sizzling a few sausages over a kettle barbecue – it's a far more impressive affair. Grills, ovens, storage cabinets, sinks, taps, and even fridges come into the equation when planning a fully decked out space to impress your guests. And while British summers don't *always* allow for many sun-drenched barbecue parties, with a few added patio heaters and some atmospheric lighting you could enjoy an outdoor kitchen all year round. Tempted to create one? Follow this guide to get your project started.

Ozone is the latest collection from Hub Kitchens. Its contemporary style would suit any modern home, with practical stainless steel cabinetry suitable for outdoor use. Prices start from £40,000 for a complete kitchen.



The Monolith Classic is a ceramic barbecue with two cooking levels, ideal for smoking, baking, searing, and even roasting several different foods at once. Priced £900.



If you're hosting, make the most of having the kitchen outside by placing the cooking station near enough to the dining table so you can interact with guests and serve food fresh off the grill. Ox Grills are hand-built from 316-grade stainless steel, from £2388.

Lay it out

Before any kitchen build can begin, establish how much room you have to work with. Ask yourself whether you're able to recreate a kitchen as large as the one indoors, complete with a cover and seating, or if your space is more limited. "I would recommend an L-shaped layout where possible," advises Michael Warriner of Outdoor Kitchens & Design. "Having a corner helps you keep everything close to hand." Indeed, with the possibility of hot utensils, open flames, and large amounts of food, it is a good idea to make sure you can move around the kitchen with ease. "It is also common to have a galley-style kitchen in a UK garden," explains Lauren Ollenrenshaw of Ox Grills. "A line which has a sink, prep surface, and barbecue then resting area works well where space may be limited. Also think about placing seating near to the barbecue so the cook doesn't feel isolated." Similarly, Daniele Brutto of Hub Kitchens recommends planning the layout in staged zones. "Incorporate areas for guests to congregate. Using multi-level worktops works well, with one level functioning as a prep area, a higher one for a serving or bar area, and a lower area acting as a table for guests who want to sit." Importantly, consider the location of the kitchen, ensuring it isn't too close to trees or foliage to minimise the risk of fire.

3 of the best...

Compact cookers

If room is limited or you're looking to add an extra function to your outdoor kitchen, try one of these space-saving designs.



Jumbuck Rondo charcoal spit roaster, £65, Homebase. homebase.co.uk



Red Devil table-top ceramic barbecue, £519, Bridgman. bridgman.co.uk



Uuni Pro outdoor wood-fired oven, £499, Uuni. uk.uuni.net



Dedicate a section of your garden to an outdoor kitchen by creating a pergola and matching dining area, like in this design by South Hams Fencing & Landscaping.



Outdoor Kitchens & Design offers a bespoke design and build service, creating custom kitchens to suit the size, style, and function of your outdoor space. Price on application.



Neolith's 12mm highly durable Basalt Grey Silk worktop has been used in this large outdoor kitchen. Price on application.

Think about features

An outdoor kitchen has the potential of having as many components as an indoor one, including wine coolers, warming drawers, and gas-burning ovens. But to be practical, look at what functions you do not have in your current set-up – such as a grill, rotisserie, or wood-fired pizza oven – as the addition of these will enhance your offering when cooking for family and friends year-round. A fridge-freezer might not be necessary outdoors, although a small drinks fridge could be handy. Likewise, a grill is an essential element – but do you also need a hob? Weatherproof storage for outdoor crockery and cooking utensils is also helpful, and depending on the type of barbecue you have, you may need to think about where fuel bottles are stored or whether you want to have logs for burners on display. “The one thing often forgotten is a bin,” adds Lauren Ollenrenshaw of Ox Grills. “You don’t want to have to keep going back and forth into the house to throw stuff away and if you don’t have one nearby, things can start to look messy.”

Make it weatherproof

“The outdoor kitchen is a permanent structure, so the materials must be durable and protected from the weather – especially given the unpredictable British climate,” recommends Matt West of Furniture@No7. “It is a good idea to choose marine-grade stainless steel cabinets, specifically designed for use outdoors with magnetic seals that are waterproof and impervious to dust, insects, and bugs,” says Heather McCann, creative director at outdoor furniture brand Indian Ocean. Other materials can be used around the kitchen, such as ceramic tiles and timber surrounds, as long as they have a protective lacquer. In order to withstand the outdoors, worktops should be extremely durable and resistant to UV rays, flames, and frost. Impervious materials such as granite or Dekton are ideal as they can handle the heat of the grill as well as the dropping temperatures winter brings. “You can’t get away with lower-quality materials outside,” says Lauren Ollenrenshaw of Ox Grills. “So choose woods that are good for outdoor use, such as sustainably-sourced teak or iroko. You can achieve a stylish cost-effective rustic look from whitewashed brickwork too.”

Keep it safe

Gas and electricity connections, open flames, and weathered surfaces are all potential hazards that must be addressed early when planning an outdoor kitchen. “The same rules apply as inside the home – so any connection to a gas system must be fitted by a certified installer,” says Michael Warriner of Outdoor Kitchens & Design. Electrical wiring running from the house to the outdoors can be done yourself, but must be sealed with a protective covering. Any lighting will need to be a minimum rating of IP43, to be protected against rainfall, or IP65 if it is likely to be exposed to a jet-cleaner, such as lights illuminating the patio floor. A plumbing link to your water mains will be needed if you plan to have running water for a sink and tap outside too. Hot water isn’t a necessity, but having a supply line pipe suitable for outdoor use is a worthy investment – to avoid discovering you have frozen or burst pipes after a cold winter. And if you are adding a pergola or other form of cover, ensure there is adequate ventilation. Daniele Brutto of Hub Kitchens adds: “It is also worth checking with your local authority what their regulations are on permanent cooking areas outdoors, particularly if you live in a conservation area.”

This outdoor kitchen in Oxshott, Surrey was created and installed by the architectural team of heating specialist brand Chesney’s. The custom design features a wood-fired pizza oven, barbecue grill, drinks cooler and open log wood store. Price on application.



Wolf’s barbecue series comes in a choice of four widths – 76 cm, 91cm, 107cm and 137cm – which can be either built in or freestanding. Features include a sprung hood, rotisserie, illuminated controls and a smoker box. Priced from £4,998.



SOURCE BOOK

- Chesney’s** 020 7627 1410 or chesneys.co.uk
- Dekton** 01256 761229 or dekton.co.uk
- Furniture@No7** 02392 177171 or furnitureatno7.co.uk
- Hub Kitchens** 020 7924 2285 or hubkitchens.com
- Indian Ocean** 020 8675 4808 or indian-ocean.co.uk
- John Lewis** 0345 604 9049 or johnlewis.com
- Monolith** +49 5405807660 or monolith-grills.eu/en
- Neolith** neolith.com
- Outdoor Kitchens & Design** 01285 860088 or outdoorkitchensanddesign.com
- Ox Grills** 01789 263799 or oxgrills.co.uk
- Palazzetti** palazzetti.it
- South Hams Fencing & Landscaping** 01803 732841 or fencingandlandscaping.com
- Wolf** 0845 250 0010 or subzero-wolf.co.uk

KBB

Safety first: Weber’s heatproof gloves are an essential accessory to keep near your outdoor grill. Available from John Lewis, £35.



Palazzetti modular outdoor kitchens are lightweight and easy to install, yet highly weather resistant. Shown is the Saint Vincent collection, price on application.



Build your own outdoor kitchen island with Indian Ocean’s wide range of hermetically (air-tight) sealed stainless steel cabinetry. Prices start from £675 for a single-drawer unit.