

What's hot outdoors

Whether you're a pizzaiolo, a grill king or just love eating alfresco, *Jayne Dowle* has the outdoor kitchen for you



An outdoor kitchen is the third most-viewed garden trend on TikTok this year
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Interest in outdoor kitchens is reaching boiling point. After a fire pit and a pergola, an outdoor kitchen is now the third most-viewed garden trend on TikTok this year, with more than 204 million views so far, according to research by Atlas Ceramics.

Even though we're free to fly where we like now and enjoy endless alfresco adventures, it seems we're keener than ever to go beyond the basic barbecue at home, bringing a bit of the Mediterranean to less-than-balmy Britain.

"You probably feel like you are heading through uncharted waters and need to do your research thoroughly

before making a decision," says Dougal Donald, of Grillo, a UK company.

"You might be confused about costs of different brands, comparisons of bespoke versus modular, and guides on which appliances and features to include."

So what's the need-to-know when it comes to planning an outdoor kitchen? Is a wood-fired pizza oven too last year? Would an electric teppanyaki grill transform your BBQ skills? And can you create space for an outdoor kitchen in a backyard not much bigger than an ice cube tray? Here's the lowdown on planning the perfect outdoor kitchen.

What's hot in the outdoor kitchen this year?

The ceramic [Big Green Egg](#), £1,295 for the large size, is still the star of the outdoor kitchen show. Its curvaceous lines make it a natural centrepiece, and it's space-saving and multifunctional, being a pizza oven, smoker and slow-roasting machine in one.

Joanne Bull, marketing manager at KönigOutdoor, says that one thing no sociable outdoor kitchen should be without this summer is an icemaker. "They're fast becoming the must-have feature, averting disaster when forgetting to fill up the ice tray."

The first outdoor kitchens were steely and industrial in look but another trend that's taking off is bright contrasting colours — see the [Vlaze](#) enamelled range, with freestanding [Adapt 120](#) units in [Nori](#) (a deep teal) or [Ochre](#) (mustard) porcelain enamel, priced at £4,200 each.

Alternatively, Atlas Ceramics says the company is experiencing interest in micro-cement — the material smooths work surfaces and cabinetry and makes them look seamless. Also, there's a trend for traditional tiling, especially Moroccan-style bright colours and graphic designs.

What kind of outdoor kitchen would you like?

The first question to ask yourself is, do you want a fully



functional outdoor kitchen that mirrors an indoor version, or a simple set-up with basic cooking, prep space and storage?

“One or more built-in barbecues is ultimately the thing that separates an outdoor kitchen from a stand-alone grill,” Donald says.

Much will depend on your budget and the outdoor space available. What to include?

“It really depends what your priorities are,” Bull says.

“If your main focus is on entertaining, specify plenty of suitable refrigeration and consider integrating seating areas for your guests. If you really want to express your culinary skills outdoors, and have the budget, think about more than one type of cooking appliance.” She suggests pairing a traditional grill with a charcoal/wood-fuelled Kamado or pizza oven to give you plenty of scope to experiment.

Consider your cooking style

When it comes to what you’re going to cook on, the choice can seem intimidating. An outdoor kitchen might include a gas, propane, electric or charcoal grill, pizza oven, stoves, smokers, griddles . . . the list keeps growing.

Donald says you should be honest with yourself about how you like to cook:

“Whether it’s a gas barbecue for convenience, a charcoal barbecue for those succulent and smoky results, or a pizza



Adept enamelled kitchen units come in vivid colours

oven for a bit of theatre.”

Also, decide if you’re happy to do the prep work inside before bringing items out to cook, or if you want to do the whole thing outdoors. If it’s the latter, you’re going to need enough work surface area to prepare and serve, cupboard space and shelves for storage and plenty of hooks to keep tools handy.

As a starting point, consider a barbecue with a side burner, a sink and fridge, plus preparation space and storage, as required.

Also, while it’s exciting to plan, you’re in Farnborough or Falkirk, not Florida. “For the great British weather, it is worth considering kitchens that have a modular or portable element so they can then be moved from outside to under cover if necessary,” Ced Wells, creative director of Vlaze, a vitreous enamel specialist, says. “For instance,

Vlaze cabinetry comes with the option of free-moving castors.”

How much will it cost?

From £75 for Ikea’s affordable [Grillskar outdoor kitchen island](#) — this range is a good option if you want to experiment with the idea of an outdoor kitchen before committing to a permanent set-up, and includes a [gas barbecue with side burner](#), £765, and a [sink with splashback and storage](#), £230 — to about £75,000 for a super-cool [WildKitchen](#).

Developed by the film director [Guy Ritchie](#) from his passion for outdoor entertaining, a WildKitchen — a luxury canvas-tented all-weather fire grill, including lighting, serving dishes and seating for 12 people — costs as much as a terraced house in some parts of the country, with a chopping board and log



store thrown in.

However, for a basic back garden set-up, you're looking at about £2,000 upwards if you ask a specialist outdoor kitchen company to do the design and fit-out. Jade Dunleavy, spokesperson for outdoor kitchen specialist [Yorkshire Garden Rooms](#), says the company's prices start from £1,800 plus VAT including a barbecue, sink and work surface, to £5,000 plus VAT for a mid-range outdoor kitchen (larger, with more storage and features), and up to £10,000 plus VAT for top of the range, including installing a gas connection, water connection and electricity for external sockets.

"We do totally bespoke designs tailored to each customer," Dunleavy says. "We have the option to include a full beer pump system, pizza ovens and more."

Location and layout

Most outdoor kitchen experts agree that the best location is close to the house, although if you have staff (or willing helpers), hiding away in a secluded corner of the garden is tempting.

Unless you're a huge show-off, privacy is an important consideration. If you can site your outdoor kitchen in an area with surrounding walls, or plant sheltering shrubs and climbers, you and your guests will feel far more comfortable away from the prying gaze of neighbours miffed that they're not invited to the hoedown.



The WildKitchen, developed by the film director — and outdoor enthusiast — Guy Ritchie

"Another important consideration is thinking about the flow from indoors to out," says Mitch Slater, founder and chief executive of [Danver Stainless Outdoor Kitchens](#), manufacturer of [Trex Outdoor Kitchens](#). "It's good to take advantage of styles and colours to create an outdoor kitchen space that seamlessly integrates the aesthetic of your interior, or creates a unique outdoor experience by leaning into a distinct design statement."

In terms of layout, there are three basic shapes; single wall, L-shaped and U-shaped. A single wall outdoor kitchen is ideal in a smaller garden, yard or balcony. L-shaped is good if you're going to be doing a lot of entertaining, as you can chop, sear and serve while talking to your guests. Donald says the L and U configuration are "blockbuster social spaces", but you'll need plenty of outdoor space for the latter.

Wells adds that the most popular layout *Vlaze* comes across is the L-shaped kitchen, incorporating a central island for people to gather around: "This is a good mix combining

food preparation and cooking with entertaining," she says.

Don't forget the base. "The level of the floor can be a challenge, so fitting paving with minimal falls is the best way to go," Bull says. Choose flooring in a slip-resistant, non-porous material, such as exterior floor tiles — easy to clean and difficult to stain.

Gimme shelter — or not

Donald says that although covering your outdoor kitchen allows year-round use, it's a big decision that can significantly affect the cost, look and time frame of your project. "There are some obvious advantages to doing so, and a number of reasons not to. In our experience, 75 per cent of our outdoor kitchens don't end up underneath shelter because of the extra costs," he says.

A typical metal louvred 3m x 5m pergola will cost roughly £5,000 to £25,000, depending on the brand, he adds, with the price increasing if you require side walls and other features: "You can quickly end up spending more on the cover than you do on the kitchen."

To save money, Donald suggests, if you really want a cover but can't justify the outlay, consider a large garden parasol.

A parasol can be easily retrofitted should you decide one is needed. And remember, if last summer's scorching temperatures return, it might not be the rain you need shelter from. ■

