

A NEW ROOM IN THE GARDEN

It's not a great surprise that the most popular room in the house – the kitchen - is moving to the great outdoors. I am seeing a new trend in stylish outdoor kitchens, fireplaces and patio heaters in our urban gardens. The warmth and light of an outdoor fireplace brings families and friends together.

The backyard is now receiving the attention and traffic it so rightly deserves, even in the winter. One can now chase away the cold and darkness with sleek and stylish outdoor fireplaces that can heat up your food or your guests all year long. What a great way to extend the season in your garden!

Our love for the great outdoors can be satisfied without a two hour drive every weekend to cottage country. Combine all the sensory appeal of a garden with a steamy romantic fire and the aromas from cooking – well this is garden bliss.

Materials seen in modern day kitchens such as stainless steel, copper and wrought iron provide durable, weather resistant materials for the outdoor kitchen. Make sure to place the heat source away from strong prevailing winter winds and any other combustible materials in your landscape. Other ways to keep warm are with patio heaters fuelled by propane; they are a less expensive alternative but provide the same light, warmth and comfort. Now the whole family can sit outside late into the evening in the shoulder seasons. The new outdoor fireplaces burn natural gas or propane and are covered to prevent smoke from blowing into your eyes. It's a good idea to check with your local fire department to ensure your outdoor fireplace

agrees with city fire codes before you purchase one. Two specific models of outdoor fireplaces by a company called Heat & Glo (www.heatnglo.com) are now permitted by the City of Toronto Fire Department.

The outdoor kitchen saves time with less running back and forth from the kitchen to the outdoor area where your guests are seated. Indoor accessories are making a statement outside: pillows, iron chandeliers that hold candles or oil lamps and fancy fibreglass planters. All of these accessories provide comfort in the garden and make the space feel like an outdoor room. Gardening and cooking are pastimes that complement one another. The harvested crops from the garden may be used directly in the meal. All sorts of vegetables grown in the garden can be served fresh, boiled, steamed, grilled or barbequed. The garden is starting to take over some of the functional aspects of the kitchen and dining room. This novelty presents fabulous options for families and their guests to entertain larger gatherings all year round. Modern outdoor kitchens with their accessories are improving our lifestyle and our family time.

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