

# eat play and live

## Using Your Outdoor Space

A buzzword surrounding home construction, “outdoor living” is a trend that is here to stay. For many homeowners the opportunity to have a backyard paradise is too good to pass up. However, thoughts of swimming pools, gardens, outdoor televisions, fireplaces, gorgeous stonework, kitchen centers, fabrics and furniture swirl through the mind, creating overwhelming confusion. Sure, outdoor living space is great, but beyond the grill, where do you even start? How extensive is this project?

The first thing to remember about outdoor living is that it can be made as simple or as grand as desired. Starting with a set budget will help determine what outdoor living components can become a reality. The second task is to evaluate the space. A small patio can be ideal for hosting dinner parties with friends and family, but the dream of a swimming pool and private garden is likely out of scope. Will it be better to have one multi-purpose area or designated zones for dining, resting, and play? Take note of the space available and determine which amenities are most important to your lifestyle.



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## Outdoor Kitchens

By far, the most popular component of outdoor living spaces is the outdoor kitchen. People tend to gather naturally in the kitchen, combining the work of hosting with the pleasure of visiting guests. To ensure a truly functional space, it is important to look at how the outdoor kitchen will be used in your life. The basic outdoor kitchen is an extension of the home and great for family use. It typically contains a small prep sink, grill, and limited counter space for small tasks. Close proximity to the indoor kitchen allows easy transport of ingredients, dishes, and drinks not accessible in the outdoor kitchen. On the other end of the spectrum, an outdoor kitchen can be fully independent from the home, complete with dishwasher, refrigerator, cook top, and ample storage. These elaborate kitchens are typically L-shaped or U-shaped with an island, creating a work atmosphere with distinct zones for food preparation and cooking. These outdoor kitchens are ideal for hosting large groups.



Outdoor kitchens of any size can be fully built-in with massive grills and impressive hardware or can comprise of rolling cart stations that move when necessary. The option of permanent versus flexible is often determined by budget and local climate.



## Outdoor Social Spaces

Though the outdoor kitchen is incredibly popular, the need for a place to retreat cannot be ignored. The options are endless when it comes to creating a space that is perfect for private or social use. Again determined by budget and need, outdoor living rooms can be sprawling extensions of the indoors, full of cozy couches and chairs, fireplaces, and even outdoor media centers. There can be separate dining and resting spaces or these can be combined into one multi-purpose space with a few well-chosen pieces of furniture. The choice is up to you, but either option can be a haven of comfort.

## Outdoor Play

While outdoor living is ideal for creating paradise close to home, the outdoors is still a place of fun. While designating space for dining and resting, keep in mind the need for play space. Some outdoor living spaces use hedges and landscaping to create play areas in the yard. Not only are these dividers decorative, they keep errant balls and other toys from interrupting the flow of conversation on the patio. In addition to separate play space, outdoor living areas are perfect for designing dedicated meditation or yoga nooks. Playing outside is once again for the young and the young at heart.

Whether dividing the outdoors into “rooms” or sharing the space for activities, it is important to be aware of how the outdoor living space will be used. Specialty landscaping and outdoor storage can be used to keep various activities from interrupting one another. However you choose to use the space, remember to take advantage of every corner for a retreat not so far from home.

