

# Hot spot

by Michael Bannon  
for Saratoga TODAY

Stroll down Broadway any summer evening and it becomes clear that the hot spots are on restaurant patios. Some establishments go all out with wood decks, water fountains, outdoor refrigerators and grills to complete the gourmet experience. While it's nice to have this outdoor alternative while out and about, it's even better to have an al fresco alternative at home.

One way to extend your entertainment area beyond the tradition-

al grill on the patio is to consider an outdoor kitchen. With families using their homes for entertaining more than ever before, a second kitchen designed as an outdoor room essentially increases the square footage of a home.

Gourmet outdoor kitchens have been a popular home feature in warmer regions, such as California and Florida, for many years. An outdoor kitchen in California uses materials that are resistant to salt water and perhaps two specific weather seasons. The materials used in an outdoor kitchen in



Photo by Randall Perry

*Entertain outdoors with an outdoor kitchen.*



Photo by Randall Perry

*Extend your living area outdoors*

upstate New York must be resistant to four different seasons, and be prepared for heat, cold, rain, snow, wind and decay. By combining both synthetic and natural materials the opportunity to explore an outdoor kitchen in the Northeast is possible. The following are some material options.

Outdoor cabinetry can be made of certain woods or stainless steel. Stainless steel can withstand temperature extremes, sunlight and high humidity. Stainless steel does not need to be repainted or refinished and resists mildew, fungus, rotting, warping and cracking.

In an outdoor setting, the best wood choices are teak, mahogany and cypress varieties. Teak is perhaps the most decay resistant wood in the world. With a rough oily feel, this hard wood is straight grained,

coarse, strong and easily worked. Mahogany is hard, strong, decay resistant and seasons well. Cypress has a natural oil preservative which protects the wood, making it extremely durable and resistant to harsh weather conditions, insects and fungus.

By installing full-size appliances such as built-in grills, freezers, refrigerators, wine coolers and woks, the outdoor kitchen moves beyond basic grill-on-the-patio entertainment. Plumbing for sinks, pot-filler faucets and ice machines create endless opportunity for food and drink preparation and storage.

Tile and countertop selections should consider color palates and designs that complement the outdoor setting, yet appear clean when being exposed to outdoor elements. Accessory pieces such as fire-

places, wood stoves, chimeneas, landscaping and water fountains further personalize and enhance an outdoor kitchen experience.

Invite your friends to the new hot spot - your backyard. Whether a pool party or a weekend brunch, an outdoor kitchen can turn your entertaining venue into the party not to be missed.

**Michael Bannon is the owner and principal designer of Signature Kitchens of Saratoga, whose design work was recently featured in the July/August 2007 issue of Kitchen and Bath Ideas by Better Homes and Gardens. For more information please visit [www.signaturekitchens.com](http://www.signaturekitchens.com). The design studio is located at 4285 Route 50, Saratoga Springs, NY. Please call for your initial studio appointment 580-4546.**