



This traditional outdoor living space is complete with outdoor dining room table, grill station and outdoor television – perfect for maximizing golf course view.

CREATING AN OUTDOOR LIVING SPACE

Summertime is the best time to bring your home – and your life outdoors by creating living spaces that extend beyond the interiors of your home. Your porch, patio, deck or backyard nook can easily extend your “living” space and become a welcomed, comfortable retreat for you to enjoy with friends, families and neighbors.

Homebuilders and remodelers say home design in recent years has dramatically changed— families want to make the most of their living space. Today, outdoor living spaces are the best way to create livable space outdoors.

“Customers today want to be more innovative and wise when spending their dollars. In other words, they don’t want to waste space,” says Victor Farina, president of *Farina & Sons, Inc.* – Custom Homebuilders and Remodelers in Orlando, Florida. “Outdoor living areas make a home more useful, spacious and fun. And, these space are great for entertaining.” Whether it’s for a stay-at-home date night or you are entertaining friends and family, outdoor living spaces make a home more inviting for guests.



An outdoor living oasis was created from an empty backyard in need of privacy. Working with a 50-foot lot, this addition was cleverly designed to tie in with the existing Mediterranean style home. Every bit of available space was maximized. This home now boasts an expanded covered porch, a hand-crafted pergola that leads to the summer kitchen and bar. A water feature adds to the ambience as it cascades down into the luxurious spa and raised pool. Golden travertine tile and stone pathways along with lush landscaping combine to transform this backyard into a truly one-of-a-kind retreat.

Outdoor living spaces can not only be a draw for entertaining, but they can expand the size of your "living" space as well. Whether you have a backyard with a view, outdoor living spaces are the perfect way to create a view. Many outdoor space design ideas and plans can even help when you need to block an undesirable view.

Architecturally, when planning an outdoor space, it's advantageous to tie in your outdoor living area with elements that suit your existing home's architectural elements. For starters, think about how you can extend the feel of your home with ceiling treatments such as wood paneling or old-style brick.

You can also "decorate" your outdoor living space just as you would an indoor family room. The more intimate the space, the more likely you will draw in the fun! You can keep seating simple with a swing or Adirondack chairs or go for a Mediterranean approach to keep things ultra-chic and stylish. Depending on the style of your home, it's best to keep your outdoor color palette clean, simple and in earthy tones that blend with the outdoors. You can easily incorporate outdoor elements such as twigs, shells or rocks and add pops of colors with hues to brighten the space!

For porches and patios, it's easy to simply push all of the furniture up against the house so that guests

are facing away from the house when sitting down. Of course, that may give you a good view, but it doesn't create a social opportunity for you or your guests. It's better to center your furniture to establish a focal point and build your seating from there. If you add an extra couch or set of chairs that face the house as well, suddenly all of your guests have a chance to talk to each other, play games or enjoy dinner in an outdoor space that has the comfortable, intimate feeling of a living room. Focal points don't have to just include lawn furniture, though. You can organize your outdoor space around anything from a water feature to an outdoor kitchen.

A detached summer kitchen architecturally mirrors elements of the home using distressed Chicago-style brick, reclaimed wood and stone.

If you are able to design and build your own outdoor space, then consider creating an outdoor family room that includes a "summer kitchen." You can equip your second kitchen area with all of the same indoor amenities and save yourself from having to make trips back and forth between the grill and indoor stove or refrigerator. Even more than saving time, it's the ultimate way for those who like to entertain! Traditionally, outdoor kitchens have been masonry based, but outdoor cabinetry is growing



This outdoor living room showcases an expansive travertine patio, outdoor fireplace and spa while taking advantage of the beautiful lake view. Seating is arranged to create opportunity for conversation, games and entertaining.

Water and fire features add ambience and style to summer kitchen and outdoor living spaces. This summer kitchen includes a beautifully designed, wall-mounted fireplace.

This lakefront home adds outdoor living space with a pool and water feature and outdoor gas fire pit as its focal point—and fully enclosed by screen. Equipped with NanoWall door systems (folding glass paneled walls) help extend indoor living space to the outdoor living areas.

in popularity. Resin, wood and stainless steel are also becoming very popular in outdoor designs.

Whether you live in the city or the suburbs, outdoor kitchens are extremely popular and create a perfect patio party! The grill

is typically at the center of any outdoor kitchen, but with the right setup, you can do much more than cook-out in this space. In addition, you can build your open-air kitchen around a refrigerator, bar, food prep areas, or even a wood-fired oven—

perfect for homemade pizza night. Another key ingredient to any outdoor kitchen is seating, which can range from standard picnic tables to traditional dining tables—or a full, swanky bar.

Fire pits are another popular way to invite conversation and intimacy in any backyard living space. Adding an element of fire can instantly transform an otherwise ordinary space into one that is warm and inviting. A backyard fire is just the thing to keep you outside on cool summer nights, and it can be a nice winter feature in more mild climates. Water features can be great focal points, too. They can take all different forms, from small fountains to cascading waterfalls — it all depends how much of a focal point you want this feature to be. For a less expensive (and labor-intensive) water feature, many hardware stores and nurseries sell small to medium-sized

fountains that can be mounted on a wall or perched on a pedestal. Water features are not only great for your focal view, but can also set a romantic tone for background ambience.

Lighting can also be one of the most dramatic ways to set the mood in your outdoor living area. Whether you string paper lanterns, holiday white lights, garden torches or candles, you can create ambience and transform your area into an inviting place to spend time after the sun goes down. As a general rule, lighting around the outside of a house that is pointed upward can dramatically accent the architecture of the home

or structure, while light pointed downward will create a softer, cozier glow.

And, if you want to lounge on the porch and catch up on your favorite TV programs, finding an outdoor television that provides good contrast and anti-glare against outdoor lighting is the best way to go. "We have seen a big increase in customers wanting to incorporate outdoor electronics to their homes, too," says Farina.



"More and more people are entertaining at home—it's just a sign of the times. And speakers, flat screen televisions and music systems are in demand now." Another ingenious outdoor design feature that has gained in popularity is an electronic screen for windows or structures. These

are used to maximize security and protection (even from bugs), yet allow for open air when desired.

The key is to effectively use the space you have in order to get the most out of it. And that's what outdoor living is all about—using it!

This custom-built home was designed with oversized windows to create an "open air" feel. On the second floor, the bedrooms lead to a balcony with retractable screens that overlooks the custom pool and spa below. Special features on this elevated travertine pool deck include two handcrafted cypress pergolas, iron railings, fountains and a lovely summer kitchen.



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