

Outdoor Kitchen Design Guide

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO DESIGNING AN OUTDOOR KITCHEN

Kalamazoo's outdoor kitchen experts have designed thousands of spaces, working within a variety of budgets, size constraints, lifestyle needs and cooking preferences. This helpful guide includes key planning considerations, top design tips and some common mistakes to avoid so that you can start planning the outdoor kitchen of your dreams today. Whether you're working with a professional designer or managing a project yourself, we recommend collaborating with our design studio every step of the way.

DESIGN SUPPORT

Getting Started 3

Planning an Outdoor Kitchen 5

How to Select the Right Cooking Products 10

Sample Kitchen Plans 13

Bringing It All Together: A Comprehensive Kitchen Design and Installation Checklist 15

Work with Our Design Studio 16

Reproduction, distribution, display and use of the document without written permission of Kalamazoo Outdoor Gourmet is prohibited.

©KALAMAZOO OUTDOOR GOURMET, 2023

Getting Started

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Asking these three key questions early in the planning process will help create a functional space that fulfills your outdoor cooking needs.

1. WHAT WILL THE OUTDOOR SPACE BE USED FOR?

Spend some time documenting all the ways in which you envision using the space. It may help to describe your needs by season or by type of gathering.

If there are traditional foods or celebrations that are important to you, note those as well. Family pizza nights, summer lobster boils, or other cooking events may require special equipment or space planning.

Determining how you intend to use the space will help inform the equipment sizes and the overall flow and size of your cooking area. You'll also discover how much dining space you need and where it should be located.

PRO TIP: If you or a family member will be the primary cook, locating your dining area off to the left or right of the grill at 90 degrees. This makes it possible for the cook to engage with guests while keeping on top of cooking tasks.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Will the outdoor kitchen be used for special occasions or as more of an everyday second kitchen?
- Will the outdoor kitchen space be used year-round?
- How many people will be cooking and dining in the space for each type of gathering?
- Will you or someone else in the house be the primary chef, or will you use caterers for most meals and events?





2. HOW SELF-SUFFICIENT DOES YOUR OUTDOOR KITCHEN NEED TO BE?

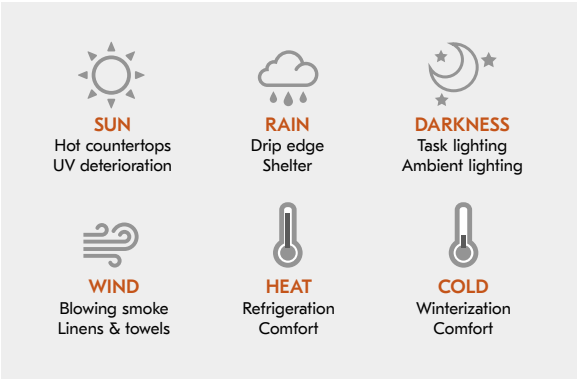
There are two types of outdoor kitchens: a satellite kitchen, and a fully-independent outdoor kitchen. Key considerations like available space, proximity to the indoor kitchen and your family's cooking needs will dictate which type of outdoor kitchen is best suited.

A satellite kitchen is a basic outdoor kitchen that is typically dependent upon the indoor kitchen. In general, we recommend a satellite outdoor kitchen include, at a minimum, all necessary cooking appliances, prep and landing spaces and a sink. Positioning the outdoor kitchen adjacent to the indoor kitchen makes it possible to use the indoor refrigeration, dry storage and prep spaces for outdoor cooking.

A fully-independent kitchen requires more space to incorporate all prep, cooking and storage capabilities, and can be a destination on the property if desired. If you plan to cook and prep outdoors often or if the outdoor kitchen will be located further away from the indoor kitchen, we recommend including refrigeration, plenty of prep space and a place to store dry goods, dishes and other utensils. If the outdoor kitchen needs to function completely independently from the indoor kitchen, we suggest including specialty items like beverage refrigeration and a dishwasher.

3. WHAT CHALLENGES DOES YOUR OUTDOOR AREA AND KITCHEN LOCATION POSE?

While the functional layout of an outdoor kitchen is pretty similar to that of an indoor kitchen, the elements add some additional factors that should be considered.



Key Factors to Consider When Assessing the Site

- Relationship to the indoor kitchen
- Relationship to other outdoor living spaces
- Privacy
- Utilities
- Local codes regarding placement and size
- Existing drainage patterns
- Shade and sun patterns
- Prevailing wind

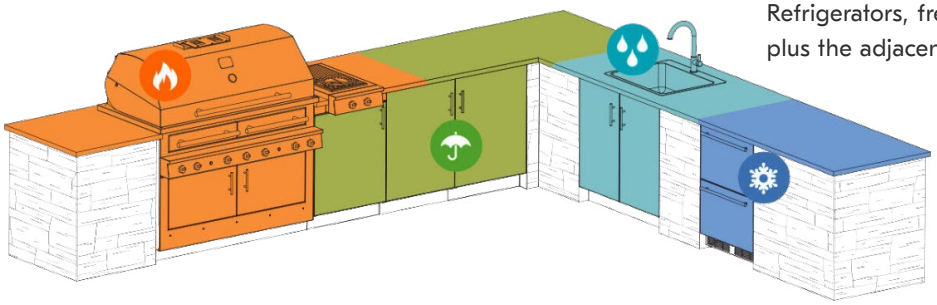
Planning An Outdoor Kitchen

OUR TOP DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS



1. APPLY BASIC INDOOR KITCHEN DESIGN PRACTICES TO CREATE FUNCTIONAL ZONES

If you are not a kitchen design professional, be sure you partner with one or at least understand good kitchen design principles. Cold areas (refrigeration), hot areas (grills and cooktops), wet areas (sinks) and dry areas (prep counters and storage) must all work together effectively in proper proximity, with each allocated enough space. The National Kitchen & Bath Association (NKBA) is a good resource for kitchen planning guidelines and to find a professional.



Hot Zones

Grills, cooktops, pizza ovens and other cooking appliances, plus the surrounding workspace.

Dry Zones

Counterspace used for food prep, plus cabinetry and storage space not dedicated to supporting any of the other three functional zones.

Wet Zones

The sink, surrounding countertop and any storage primarily used for sink-related activities.

Cold Zones

Refrigerators, freezers and other cold storage spaces, plus the adjacent countertop areas.

2. CONSIDER COUNTERTOP SPACE GUIDELINES AND LANDING AREAS FOR MAXIMUM KITCHEN FUNCTIONALITY

Frontage Minimum Recommendations For Prep Areas

- 36 inches: Small kitchens
- 48 inches: Essential kitchens
- 72 inches: Medium kitchens
- 158 inches: Large kitchens

*NKBA standard indoor recommendation

Frontage Minimums

- 21 inches: Small kitchens
- 36 inches: Essential kitchens
- 72 inches: Medium kitchens
- 96 to 120 inches: Large kitchens

PRO TIP: Countertop Rain Management

- A drip edge cut under the counter can help keep the cabinets and other equipment below stay cleaner and drier. This is nothing more than a continuous, small groove cut into the bottom of the counter along the edge.
- When using a backsplash, the counter can be angled slightly downward toward the front to prevent puddles from accumulating at the backsplash.
- An undermount sink will allow you to wipe rainwater into the sink instead of off the edge of the counter when you want to cook right after it rains.

Landing Areas

Each station in the outdoor kitchen needs clear counter top space to support it. We call this space a landing area. This concept works hand-in-hand with the concept of functional zones, and it is a key part of planning an outdoor kitchen. Kalamazoo has developed specific landing area recommendations for different parts of the kitchen.



Grill—24 inches to one side and 12 inches to the other for a total of 36 inches of clear countertop space adjacent to the grill

Sink—18 inches on each side

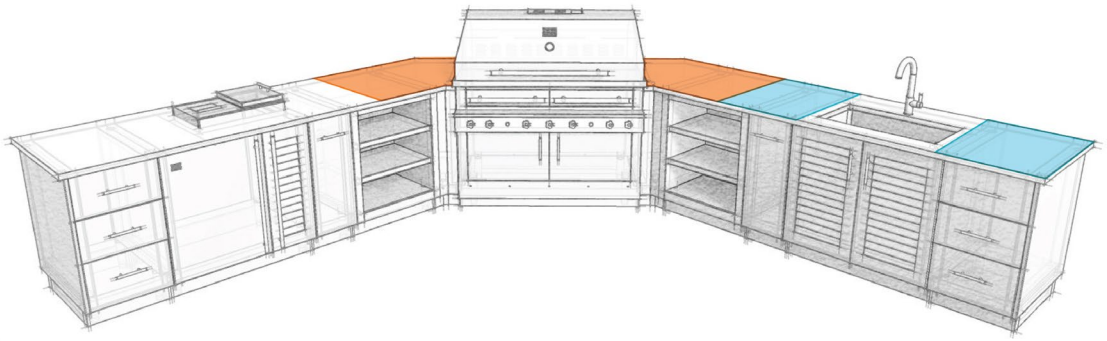
Refrigerators—15 inches next to or above each appliance

Cooktop—12 inches on each side

Pizza Oven—24 inches to one side and 12 inches to the other

PRO TIP: Use open shelves to increase usable counter space in small outdoor kitchens.

COMMON MISTAKE: The single most frequent design mistake we see that makes day-to-day use of the outdoor kitchen more difficult is a shortage of counter space. Whether the cook is laying out plates to transfer food from the grill to serve or juggling tools, platters and sauces, they often seem to run out of room to work. A good design will allow enough countertop space for prepping food, serving food and keeping cooking supplies handy.





3. SELECT LOW-MAINTENANCE MATERIALS DESIGNED TO WITHSTAND THE RIGORS OF AN OUTDOOR KITCHEN

- High-quality stainless steel provides a sanitary surface for grills, appliances and cabinetry, and is easily cleaned and offers corrosion- resistance in harsh environments.
- Natural stone counters work well, but some require sealing on a regular basis. The densest granites, such as "absolute black", are among the least porous stones but may not be ideal for your design aesthetic.
- Consider how hot counter materials may get under constant sunlight. Some materials stay naturally cooler than others, and it isn't always a light-versus-dark color issue. The best way to test is to leave a sample in the sun.
- When selecting countertops, stain resistance should be a primary concern. Check with the supplier to confirm which materials are sealed. Texture and feel is just as important as color. These materials are popular choices for outdoor spaces:
  - Soapstone, which is softer to the touch than other natural stones
  - Honed, flamed and antiqued granite
  - Textured or tinted concrete
- Counters and patio/decking material (especially near the grill and other cooking equipment) should be highly resistant to grease stains.

4. PLAN SEATING OPTIONS

Incorporating adequate seating is a crucial component when it comes to enjoying the outdoor space. It's important to account for more than just the width of each seat. Knee space requirements vary with the height of the seat, and the proper amount of clearance behind each seat should also be considered.

Seating widths

- Normal seating width is 24 inches wide per person.
- Accessible seating width is 36 inches wide per person.

Knee space

- Bar height seating (counters set at 42 inches high) needs a 12 inch counter overhang for comfortable knee space.
- Counter height seating (counters set at 36 inches high) should have a 15 inch overhang.
- Table height seating (counters or table 30 inches high) should have at least an 18 inch overhang for knee space.
- Accessible seating (counters or table 30 inches high) requires a 19 inch minimum overhang.

Traffic clearance

- If there is no traffic that needs to pass, leave at least 32 inches between the counter/table/bar edge and the nearest obstruction to make room for comfortable seating.
- To allow people to edge past behind seats, leave at least 36 inches.
- For unobstructed traffic, leave at least 48 inches.



5. COMPLEMENT THE DESIGN OF THE HOME AND LANDSCAPE

Consider the design of your home and its surroundings. Incorporate materials used inside your home to extend those elements outdoors to create a cohesive look.

6. PLAN THE ENTIRE OUTDOOR ENTERTAINING SPACE

Often the outdoor space consists of different areas for cooking, dining, lounging and even swimming. Think through the flow of traffic between the spaces as part of the overall design.

7. PLAN FOR UTILITIES

The location of your outdoor kitchen and the equipment within the kitchen can greatly affect the installation or placement of the necessary gas, water and electrical supply. Consider these key factors:

- Has the gas pressure been confirmed? Natural gas should be a 7-inch water column. Bulk propane should be regulated to an 11-inch water column. Make sure the plumber or gas technician has planned for the total BTU capacity of all equipment.
- Will the kitchen be plumbed for water supply?
  - Hot and cold, or just cold? Is an inline water heater installed below the sink less expensive than running hot water lines?
  - How will the plumbing be winterized? Have you provided a shutoff valve and a drain valve in the basement? Is the kitchen plumbing connected to the sprinkler system?
  - How are you handling waste water? Consider these options: a bucket under the sink, dry well or french drain, or connecting to your home's waste water lines.

8. EXTEND THE OUTDOOR ENTERTAINING SEASON WITH HEATERS, SHADE AND RAIN SHELTER

- Shade from pergolas and awnings in both the cooking and dining areas can make a big difference to the enjoyment of the space.
- Appropriate rain shelter for your outdoor kitchen can help keep the cook dry and comfortable even if the guests migrate indoors. Do not, however, put a combustible ceiling or awning above an outdoor grill. If necessary, use an outdoor-rated ventilation hood.
- Natural gas patio heaters can be used effectively under eaves and pergolas. Radiant heat under the patio and countertops has been used in outdoor kitchens with large budgets while portable propane patio heaters are a good solution for more modest budgets.
- Fireplaces and hearths are perhaps the most attractive option for adding heat to an outdoor entertaining area.

9. INCORPORATE MUSIC AND OTHER ENTERTAINMENT

- There are many options for high-quality outdoor speaker systems. Incorporate music into your design so you don't face the design challenge of adding it later.
- Video monitors and televisions can also be successfully incorporated into the outdoor entertaining areas if appropriately sheltered from the elements. In addition to shelter, not all equipment delivers a good picture in bright sunlight conditions.

10. INCORPORATE AMPLE LIGHTING

- Providing adequate task lighting in an outdoor kitchen can be quite a challenge, but it is necessary for prepping or cooking in the kitchen after dark.
- Ambient lighting and lighting for the dining area are also critical to the success of an outdoor living space design.
- Safety lighting is important especially for paths and stairs.

By addressing these considerations, you can design an aesthetically pleasing and functional outdoor cooking and entertaining area.



11. CONSIDER SAFETY

Safety is a vital part of outdoor kitchen design. We recommend keeping the following factors in mind:

- Make sure the patio material offers good traction. Slip resistance in an outdoor kitchen is as important as it is around a pool.
- Keep a buffer zone between hot grills, ovens or cooktops and any people. A minimum of 9 inches of countertop extension is recommended behind and to the sides of all hot appliances.
- Never install a grill below an overhead combustible surface. Follow all manufacturer guidelines for safe clearances for combustible surfaces to the sides and back of appliances.
- Make sure the gas shutoff valve is in an easily accessible location at least a few feet from any gas-burning appliance.
- Store a fire extinguisher nearby.
- Clip or round all outside corners of the countertop.
- Provide ample lighting throughout the kitchen and on all walkways and steps leading to the kitchen.

How to Select the Right Cooking Products

Product selection is one of the most important decisions to be made during the planning process, and is crucial to your overall enjoyment and functionality.

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- What types of outdoor cooking do you currently enjoy or would like to learn? Consider gas grilling, smoking, wood-fired rotisserie and charcoal grilling.
- What do you want to cook in your outdoor kitchen?
- Do you plan on cooking outdoors most days of the week?
- Do you want to add specialty items such as a cooktop for sauces and boiling water, a smoker cabinet or a pizza oven?
- How many people will you typically be cooking for and entertaining?
- Will anyone else be cooking in the outdoor kitchen? What do you enjoy cooking?
- Do you plan on cooking in the outdoor kitchen yourself, or will a personal chef be the primary cook?







Today's outdoor kitchens can include every feature, convenience and appliance you could imagine. The following are some highlights of the options that are available:

GRILLS: When it comes to grills the most popular solution in outdoor kitchens is the gas grill, in particular the stainless steel gas grill. Gas grills offer convenience of weeknight cooking, but can't always do everything or create as much flavor as the charcoal grill.

Wood-fired grills are specialty pieces of equipment—the best are going to raise and lower the grill grate above the fire—like an Argentinian-style grill—to control the intensity of the heat.

Charcoal grills offer flavors that you can't create with anything else. Kamado-style grills allow you to cook at "low-and-slow" temperatures or searing hot heat for incredible versatility. Pay attention to the overall size, shape of the cooking surface and insulation thickness for the most efficient grill.

A multi-fuel grill offers unprecedented versatility in cooking with the ability to cook in any combination with gas, wood and charcoal in only one unit. Some grills extend all the way to the ground for convection cooking similar to an oven, expanding your grilling capabilities.

SMOKER CABINETS: For the barbecue enthusiast—the pitmaster who takes pride in "low and slow" traditional American barbecue—a dedicated smoker is a must. Smokers come in many shapes and sizes, and use different technologies, including: offset "stick burners," vertical "water smokers," kamado-style vertical smokers, gravity-feed charcoal smokers, electric pellet smokers and more. Some features to evaluate are adjustable shelves to fit all your food like whole packer briskets, ribs or large turkeys. A computer-controlled blower system provides reliable, precise temperature control and efficiency so charcoal burns slow for hours.



PIZZA OVENS: Wood-fired pizza ovens embrace old world tradition and gas-fired ovens offer modern convenience. Gas-fired ovens give you complete control over the flame and how you cook your pizzas. They offer a quicker preheat time with flexibility in temperature changes to cook food beyond pizza like veggies, fish, roasts and more. Choose between built-in ovens surrounded by masonry, countertop ovens or pizza ovens on rolling carts.



REFRIGERATION: Choose from refrigerators and refrigerated drawers, freezers and freezer drawers, wine reserves, keg tappers, beverage centers and ice machines. Many refrigeration units match the look of the outdoor kitchen cabinets so there is a seamless finish for the entire space.

PRO TIP: You can tell a lot about the quality of an outdoor refrigeration unit by looking at the manufacturer's recommendations for summer heat and winter storage. If it is suggested that the unit should be turned off when temperatures exceed 90°F, it might not be the best choice for your kitchen. Forced-air cooling, variable-speed compressors and thick insulation are all important factors when you want to store anything from fish to ice cream at the proper temperature. Some units are designed to withstand extreme summer heat and still perform at a high level. Similarly, if the unit is designed to be left outside all winter long and simply switched off for the colder months, it is likely built better than a unit that needs to be brought indoors for the winter.



COOKTOPS: Outdoor cooktops have come a long way from the old notion of a "side burner" attached to a grill. Single, double and quadruple cooktops are available to rival the best indoor ranges. Powerful wok burners and lobster boilers are also an option. Available for masonry, or simply mounted into a convenient storage cabinet. Think through the type of materials for your burners. For example, brass burners won't corrode in the elements, and deliver a lot of heat.



VISUALIZE YOUR PROJECT. UNDERSTAND ITS DETAILS. DOWNLOAD THE OUTDOOR KITCHEN CATALOG.

Our Outdoor Kitchen Catalog is totally comprehensive—a resource with detailed highlights of our entire outdoor kitchen lineup. This is the best way to imagine the realities of your project, looking through inspirational photography and deciding on the best cooking products for your lifestyle.

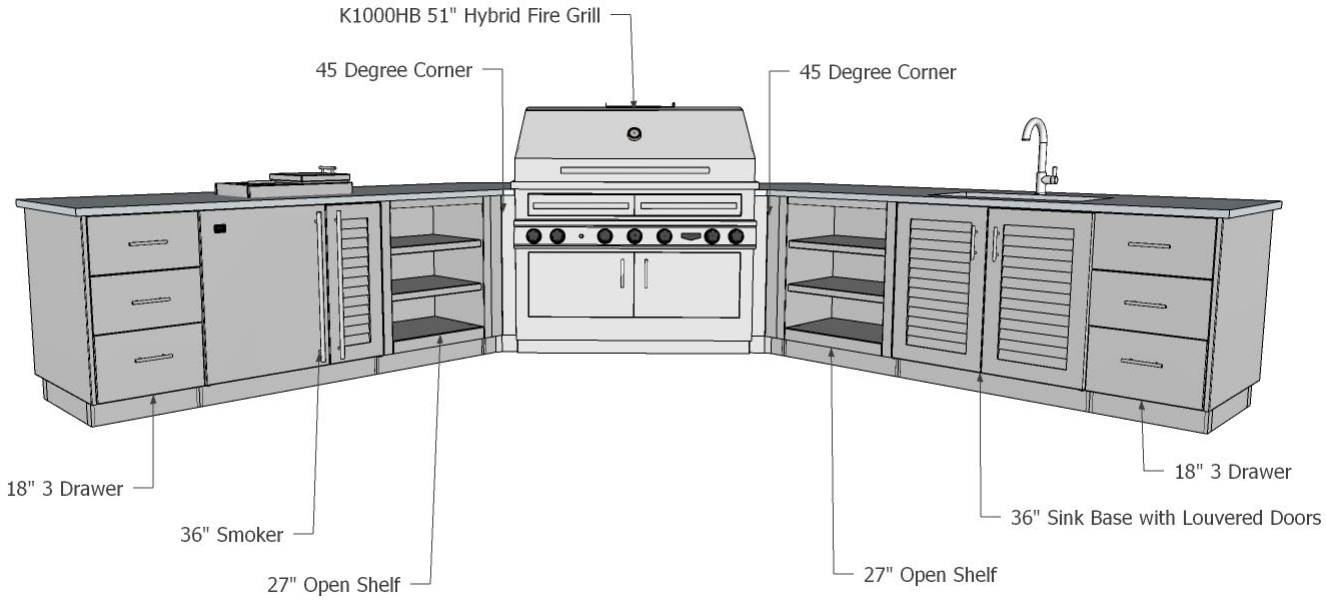
DOWNLOAD CATALOG

Sample Kitchen Plans

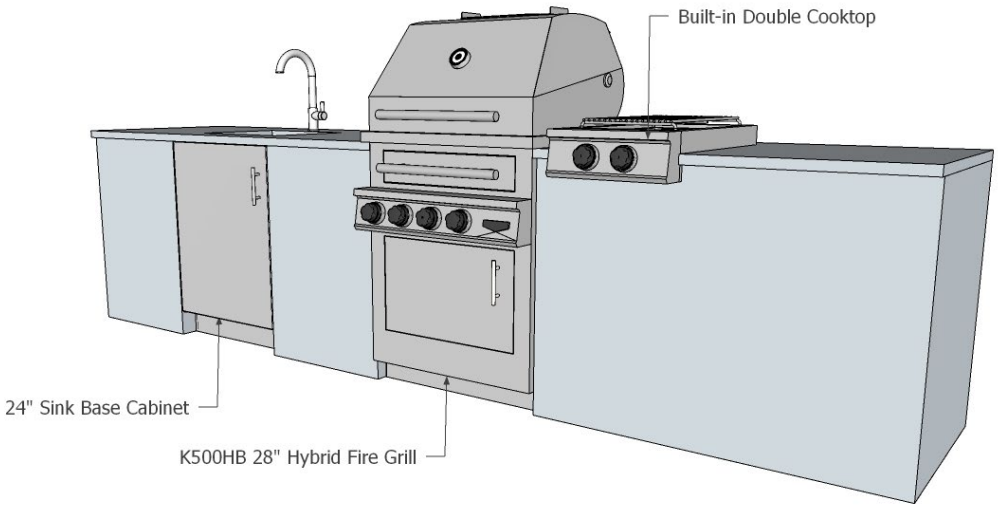
These sample layouts were developed by our design experts to help jump-start your creativity and explore layout possibilities to deliver a usable, enjoyable outdoor space.

EXPLORE ALL LAYOUTS

THE SIGNATURE SONORAN



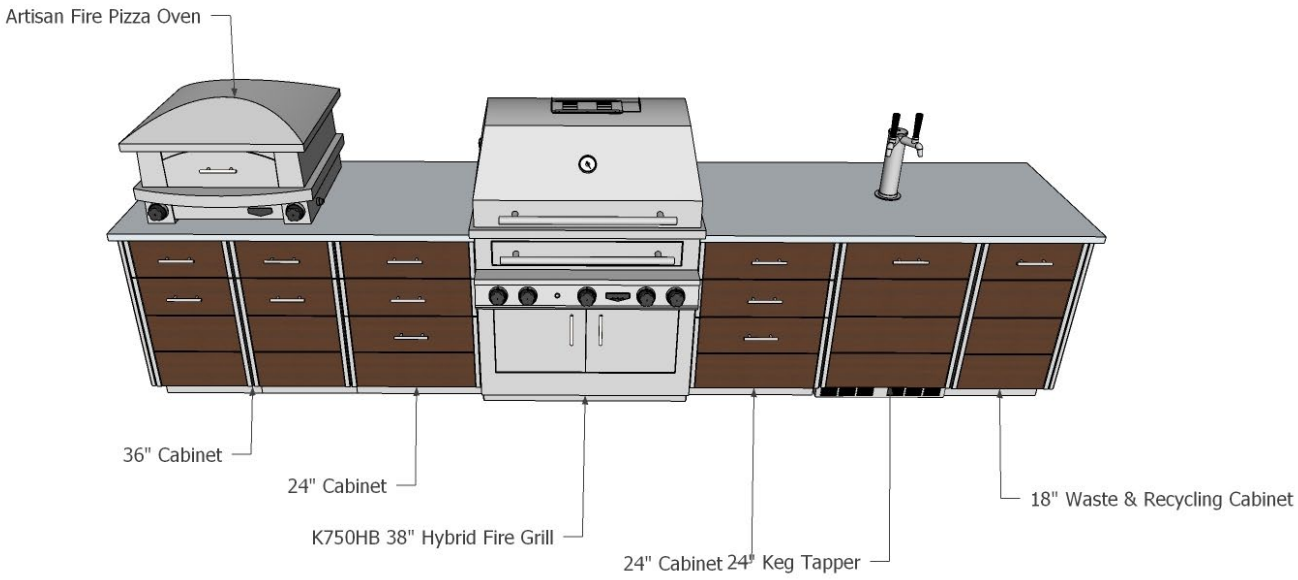
THE SIGNATURE HAVANA



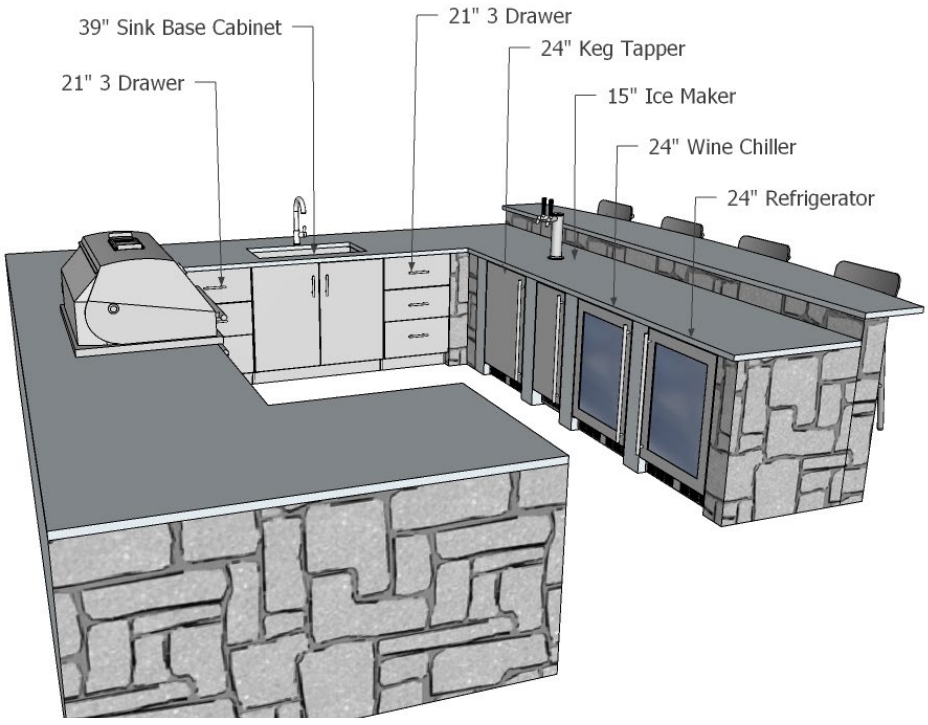
Sample Kitchen Plans

EXPLORE ALL LAYOUTS

THE ARCADIA LAGUNA



THE SIGNATURE OASIS



Bringing It All Together

A COMPREHENSIVE KITCHEN DESIGN AND INSTALLATION CHECKLIST

From initial ideas right through to installation and beyond, this checklist covers the key design aspects that apply to most outdoor projects.

SITE ASSESSMENT

1. How conveniently located will the outdoor kitchen be to the indoor kitchen? Is the path between clear of obstacles that may make it difficult to transport food, dishes and other items back and forth?
2. What is the relationship between the outdoor kitchen and other outdoor living spaces?
3. How will you connect to the home's utilities? Will the kitchen be against the house? If away from the house, what obstacles will interfere with any utility trenches you may need to dig?
4. Does the site need to be leveled?
5. What is the existing drainage pattern and how will it be affected by your plans? Does it need to be changed?
6. What is the prevailing wind pattern, and will you need to provide some shelter from the wind?
7. What is the sun exposure, and how will you ensure adequate shade?
8. Are you going to provide shelter from rain? Will the structure be an extension of the house? If so, how will you be affecting the home's rain management system?

LOCAL CODES AND PERMITS

9. Do codes govern the placement, size or design of the outdoor kitchen?
10. Are permits needed for the outdoor kitchen or any pavilions or other structures you plan?
11. Are permits required for gas, water or electric work you are doing? Are the professionals involved fully familiar with the local codes?
12. How much time is typically required to obtain the necessary permits?

UTILITIES

13. Has the gas pressure been confirmed? Natural gas should be 7" water column. Bulk propane should be regulated to 11" water column. Has the plumber or gas technician planned for the total BTU capacity of all equipment?
14. Will the kitchen be plumbed for water supply?
    - Hot and cold, or just cold? Is an inline water heater installed below the sink less expensive than running hot water lines?
    - How will the plumbing be winterized? Have you provided a shutoff valve and a drain valve in the basement? Is the kitchen plumbing connected to the sprinkler system?
    - How are you handling waste water? Bucket under the sink? Dry well or French drain? Connected to home's waste water lines? Recycling for watering the garden?
15. Have enough electric (GCFI) outlets been planned throughout the kitchen and above the counter?
16. Is ample task, ambient and safety lighting included in the electrical plan?

KITCHEN USABILITY

17. Have you considered the relationships among the four functional zones (hot, cold, wet and dry) and how the workflows will co-exist for cooking, serving and cleanup activities?
18. Have you planned enough space for multiple cooks working in the kitchen, if appropriate?
19. Will the bulk of the prep work be done inside or out, and have you designed your functional zones accordingly?
20. Have you provided enough counter space overall? Have you followed the Kalamazoo recommendations for minimum landing areas around each work center?
21. Have you provided enough storage for the planned uses of the outdoor kitchen?

Work with Our Design Studio

Designing an outdoor kitchen can seem daunting, but we're here to help. From seasoned product experts to meticulous designers and engineers, our team is dedicated to creating the outdoor kitchen of your dreams.

OUR DESIGN PROCESS

- LISTENING: Discovering the aspirations for your project and understanding how you cook and entertain.
- PRODUCT SELECTION: Identifying the right products for your needs.
- SITE ASSESSMENT: Reviewing site conditions and existing plans to determine space constraints, utility needs, architectural style and overarching design theme.
- DEFINING FUNCTIONAL ZONES: Recommending the necessary functional zones based on your cooking style.
- VISUALIZATION: Developing 3D sketches to reflect the kitchen layout, dimensions and workflow.
- REFINEMENT: Collaborating with you and/or your consultant on the design, ensuring your perfect outdoor kitchen is created.

THE ORDERING PROCESS

Your design liaison ensures the process is smooth, the details are handled, and you're informed throughout. Should questions arise, your liaison is just a phone call or virtual consultation away.

ONCE YOUR ORDER HAS BEEN PLACED:

- Detailed drawings with dimensions and utility notes are provided for approval.
- Electronic specifications package and installation instructions are sent in advance to aid with site prep.
- Crates arrive letter-coded to match the detailed drawings so that the right packages can be opened up in the right order.



LET'S GET STARTED TOGETHER.

Schedule a consultation with one of our experts to explore how we can design the outdoor kitchen of your dreams today.

SCHEDULE A CONSULTATION