

# What's cooking in Long Island's backyards

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For some Long Islanders, backyard entertaining isn't about firing up an ordinary barbecue. "Outdoor kitchens," some featuring high-end stainless steel appliances and granite countertops, are a growing trend, as some people look to bring all the conveniences of their indoor kitchen outside.

"About 10 years ago, I didn't see any outdoor kitchens," said Cathy Casalicchio, a licensed associate broker in the Huntington office of Daniel Gale Sotheby's International Realty. "But I have seen them gradually increase every year. What's amazing is the amount of cooking space they have," she said. The only appliance that Casalicchio has not seen outdoors is a dishwasher.

Many of the elaborate outdoor kitchens are found on high-end properties, in the \$2 million and up range, said Michelle N. Cohen, a licensed associate broker and executive vice president of Century 21 Laffey Associates in Greenvale. "But with the high cost of travel, people are staying at home and entertaining more," Cohen said, adding that this trend is contributing to the growth of outdoor kitchens among more moderately priced homes.

Business has doubled this year for Exquisite Outdoor Living, a Huntington Station-based company that custom builds outdoor kitchens, according to company president Scott Lucia. Lucia noted that his market is not limited to luxury homeowners. "It's anyone who loves to entertain," he said.

According to Lucia, Exquisite Outdoor Living designs, fabricates and installs custom outdoor kitchens to fit the existing surroundings or in conjunction with a remodeling project. "The kitchen can be virtually any size or shape," he said.

According to Lucia, an outdoor kitchen usually has two main areas: a grilling/cooking station and an entertainment section, which might feature a counter-height bar with stools. People often request specific appliances and accessories to suit their lifestyle, such as a pizza oven or a blending station, perhaps for preparing margaritas at the bar. The stainless steel appliances have raised panels, like kitchen cabinets, Lucia said.

"The amount of new products that are coming out every day is just incredible," Lucia said. "The products come in so many different styles, down to a number of choices for the cabinet handles."

Casalicchio finds that homeowners with the more elaborate outdoor kitchens typically have pools, as well. "They enjoy hanging out in their backyard," she said.

Cohen is marketing a property in Brookville with a high-end outdoor kitchen that is accompanied by a covered dining area with a chandelier, which, thanks to a built-in stone fireplace, can be enjoyed nine months of the year.

"People, especially those who love to entertain, are flipping out when they see it," Cohen said.

Even at the high end, outdoor kitchens have not become ubiquitous enough that buyers expect them. However, Casalicchio said, "a lot of times it's the finishing touch that makes people want a house."

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