

Kitchens IN THE GARDEN

Creating an outdoor kitchen in the garden has long been popular in sunnier climes, and is now growing in popularity in the UK, too



ABOVE This outdoor kitchen, designed and photographed by Cassandra Crouch, has two Fire Magic barbecues and clever planting to soften its edges. BELOW A Röhults garden kitchen with outdoor barbecue grill, sideboard, trolley and furniture.

The enticing concept of a kitchen garden has, for centuries, related to the idea of expansive fruit and vegetable plots in a domestic garden. But a vogue for more sophisticated modes of cooking and entertaining in an outdoor setting has led to the concept of the 'garden kitchen' complete with cooking appliances and work areas.

Craig Ormiston, director of The Lapa Company (distributors of Fire Magic, specialists in premium barbecues and garden kitchens) says: "Over the last 10 years, we've seen phenomenal growth in the market for luxury outdoor kitchens and this shows no sign of slowing down. Our sales are up 47 per cent on last year."

Garden kitchens offer the chance to make the most of the unpredictable summer

weather, offering the opportunity to cook and dine al fresco with family and friends whilst enjoying the garden. Designed with the same care, quality and attention to detail as an interior room, with attractive homely touches and well-chosen accessories, an outdoor kitchen can enhance family life and add allure to a property when working with a trusted industry expert.

Scandinavian brand Röhults offers sleek, beautifully design-led outdoor kitchens that are suitable for year-round use. Its luxury barbecues won a design award and are complemented by a range of same-height food preparation areas such as sideboards, trolleys and sinks combining anti-corrosion protected stainless steel and teak, which will change over the years to take on a lovely natural patina. Fire Magic and Outdoor Kitchens UK both offer a bespoke design service to assess each client's needs and desires and tailor the design accordingly.

Outdoor kitchens can be created to suit countryside living, town back gardens and city roof terraces, all sizes of family and both novice chefs and culinary adventurers. Everything needed for food preparation, cooking and dining can be stored outside, with appliances suitable for outdoor use including range cookers and barbecue grills (either gas or charcoal) as well as granite work surfaces, an integrated refrigerator, a wine fridge, a sink, a waste bin and more.

Garden kitchens constructed from materials such as stainless steel, stone, tiles and treated wood will be durable enough to withstand rain, and some may incorporate an element of shelter for intimate dining and, in case the heavens open. Lids and covers for appliances and furniture will help over winter.

Average spend on equipment is between £6,000 and £10,000; complete kitchens can be installed from £10,000 upwards.

In addition, technological advances have led to much greater choice for furnishings suitable for both indoors and outdoors. Dash & Albert has a good range of indoor/outdoor rugs, cushions and pouffes. Garpa uses weatherproof teak sealed like the deck of a yacht to ensure its outdoor furniture is robust enough to withstand the English weather. Its sideboards, for example, can store serveware, cutlery and plates, and its vented chests offer storage for cushions and outdoor chair upholstery allowing air to circulate to avoid mildew.

Flooring wise, decking is ideal, as it allows access for utility supplies. Raised decking can afford a lovely view across the garden, and even incorporate home-grown vegetables and herbs in integral raised beds. Do always check that existing decking can take the weight of a planned new kitchen. And do not forget to consider clever lighting to set the mood and continue the al fresco fun after dark. ■

