

A (very) hot new garden feature

Want to barbecue in all weathers? Install an outdoor kitchen, says Carol Lewis

The sun is out — quick, fire up the barbecue. This is the typical British refrain when the mercury rises. But we are slowly beginning to take a more long-term view — and not just because the current

hot spell is predicted to last.

"You don't need 80 degrees and sunshine to have a barbecue. People in other countries barbecue all year round, they just put a coat on if it's cold," says Simon Prince, manager at The Lapa Company, which supplies outdoor kitchens to a growing number of developers and landscape gardeners.

Prince and colleagues have never been so busy. An outdoor kitchen is the new must-have. "People are spending more time at home and are fed up with buying a new barbecue every year," he says. "They want something that fits in with the profile of their garden, not a half-barrel sitting in the middle."

David Adams, managing director at John Taylor estate agency, confirms that outdoor kitchens are a must for the country set. "I am seeing outdoor kitchens in some country houses with terraces that are either open or within a gazebo providing a form of shelter," he says.

But it is not just country residents with space to spare embracing outdoor living. Roarie Scarisbrick, partner at buying agency Property Vision, says: "Outdoor kitchens are increasingly appearing in the design of high-end homes and particularly in premium new-build city apartments."

Kate Moore, director of the architecture practice Darling Associates, says: "High-end developers are now starting to

KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL



This kitchen in Kent has a barbecue, sink, fridge and granite worktops

include outdoor kitchens in their specifications, ranging in price from £10,000 to £60,000. In design terms, they are replicas of indoor kitchens, but feature industrial-style kitchen equipment, and sometimes dumb waiters are fitted.

"At Berkeley's One Tower Bridge development we are using Kerlite, a durable material usually used for cladding, which comes in a range of stone colours, complementing the stainless steel fixtures and fittings. Outdoor kitchens can look quite masculine, appealing to men looking for a statement entertaining space. But to work it needs to include a dining space and lots of plants to break up the areas. Light also plays a key role, so we incorporate task lighting as well as ambient lighting, which means the kitchen can be used safely at any time of the day."

Outdoor kitchens don't have to be expensive, though. Nadia Dean, director at BBQ Island, which makes bespoke outdoor kitchens, says a basic kitchen, including barbecue, fridge, sink and storage, can cost from £6,000. Prince says the average spend at his company is about

£10,000 per customer. This could buy an outdoor kitchen with barbecue, side burners, sink, fridge/wine cabinet, cupboards and granite worktops, like the one pictured above (in a garden in Kent). Spend more and you could have rotisseries, warming trays, bar caddies, beer pumps, griddles and smoker boxes.

But what about the British weather? Prince explains that all the equipment is specially designed for outdoor use, with barbecues made of marine-grade steel. And while the recent hot spell has resulted in a rush of orders for kitchens to be installed before the weather breaks, outdoor chefs are a hardy bunch.

"Most people predict they will use it two or three times a year for entertaining and special occasions. But when I speak to them a year later they tell me that, much to their surprise, they have used it almost every night," Prince says. This is despite "very few" of his customers opting to have roofs built over their garden kitchens. fire-magic.co.uk, bbqisland.net



FOR SALE

This four-bed newly built house on Radnor Walk in Chelsea, London SW3, has a roof terrace with outdoor kitchen — which includes a dishwasher. Price: £4.25 million Contact: Douglas & Gordon, 020-7225 1225