

OUTDOOR KITCHEN COST? HOW
LOCATION AFFECT MY OUTDOOR KITCHEN?
WHAT SURFACE IS BEST FOR AN OUTDOOR
KITCHEN? WHAT LAYOUT IS RIGHT FOR



OUTDOOR KITCHEN **BUYERS GUIDE**



INSTALL MY OUTDOOR KITCHEN?
HOW LONG WILL THIS PROJECT TAKE?
WHAT IS THE BEST CUSTOMER SERVICE?
ARE THERE ANY HIDDEN COSTS? WILL I MAKE
A MISTAKE WITH MY OUTDOOR KITCHEN?

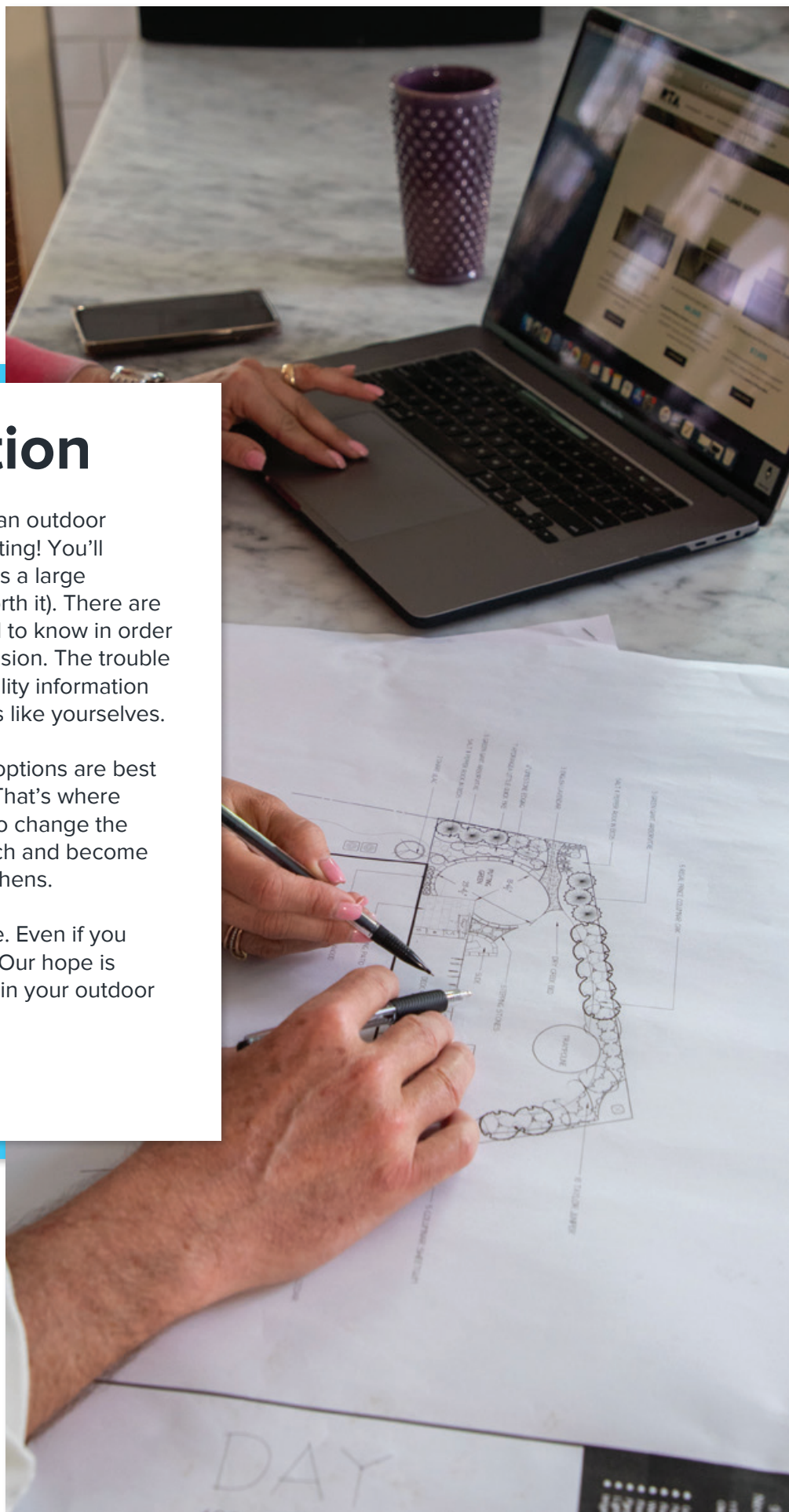
Introduction

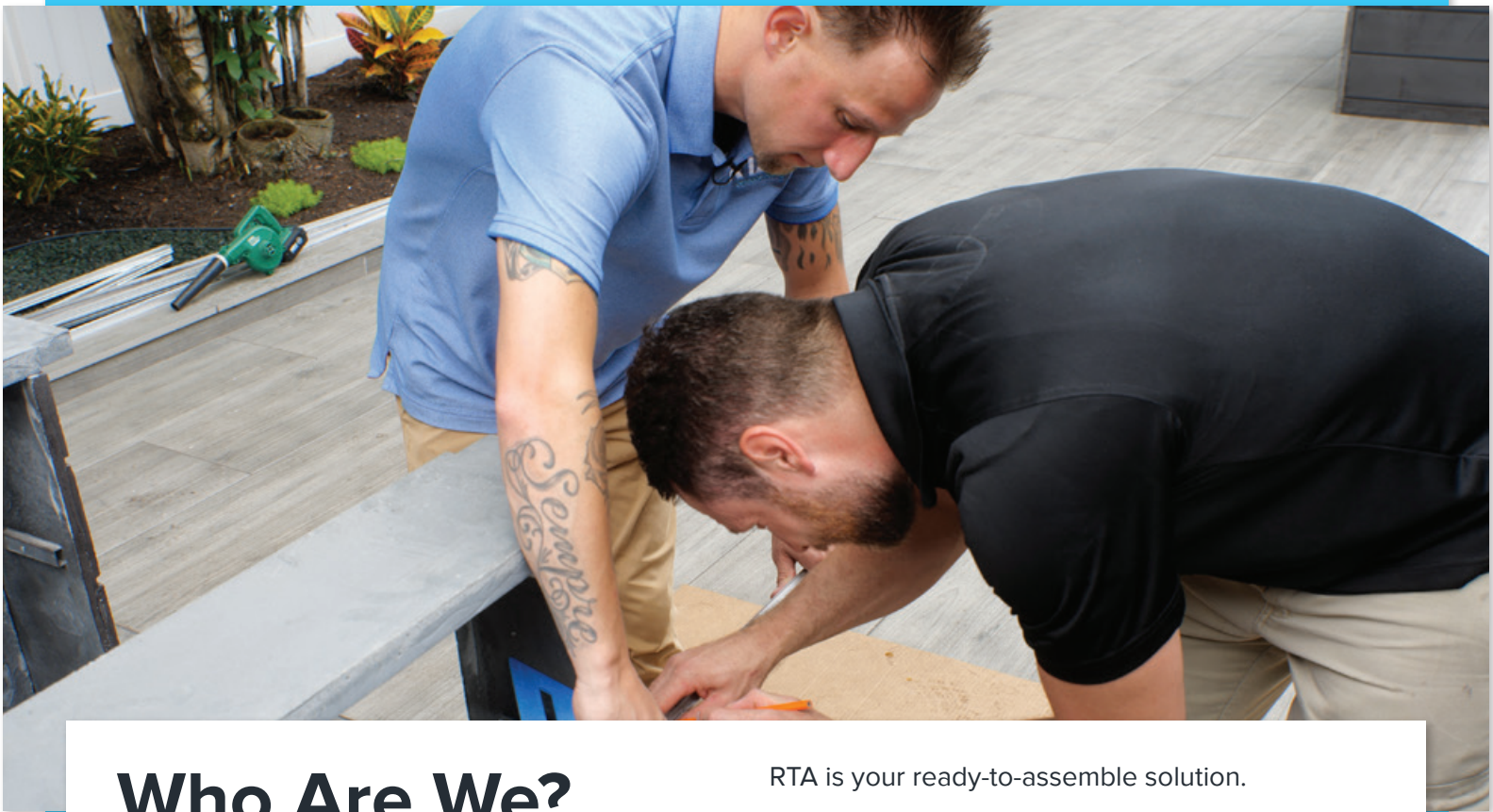
So you're contemplating an outdoor kitchen project. How exciting! You'll quickly learn this project is a large undertaking. (But very worth it). There are so many details you need to know in order to make an informed decision. The trouble is... There's not much quality information available for homeowners like yourselves.

How will you know what options are best for you and your family? That's where we come in. We're here to change the way homeowners research and become educated on outdoor kitchens.

Hence, this Buyer's Guide. Even if you don't purchase from us... Our hope is this guide is instrumental in your outdoor planning process.

Let's get started.





Who Are We?

Before we dive into the guide... We wanted to introduce ourselves.

Like you, we at RTA have a deep passion for family, friends, and the great outdoors. It's the driving force behind all that we do. So when we had the opportunity to create a product that made it easier for you to enjoy time with loved ones... We jumped at the chance.

Since 2017, RTA has been disrupting the industry with our ready-to-assemble outdoor kitchen solution.

Traditional methods of installing an outdoor kitchen tend to be burdensome. Long lead times... Disturbance of your backyard for weeks or months... A need for construction knowledge... There can be many complicating factors in play.

We'll talk a bit more about traditional methods later. But for now... Know these methods present challenges we sought to eliminate with RTA.

RTA is your ready-to-assemble solution.

What does that mean, exactly? It means your outdoor kitchen is 95% complete when it arrives on your doorstep. All you have to do is assemble. It takes as little as a few hours... With no construction experience needed.

The design process has also been streamlined. Using our free online design tool... You can have your dream outdoor kitchen designed in a matter of a few clicks. You'll also consult with one of our design experts to ensure your layout is absolute perfection.

No matter where you live... RTA outdoor kitchens thrive. Harsh, northern winters and coastal climates are no match for our kitchens. Where some outdoor kitchens crumble in just a few seasons... RTA will still be standing strong, year after year.

We'll pepper in more information about RTA outdoor kitchens in this guide. If you're looking for more specific details... Our website is a wealth of information.





Table of Contents

What Are My Options?	<u>6</u>
How Much Does An Outdoor Kitchen Cost?	<u>10</u>
Perimeter or Satellite? How Does Location Affect My Outdoor Kitchen?	<u>14</u>
What Surface Is Best For An Outdoor Kitchen?	<u>15</u>
Choosing The Right Layout	<u>17</u>
Custom or Pre-Designed?	<u>20</u>
Utility Line Considerations	<u>22</u>
How To Find The Right Appliances	<u>24</u>
Material Considerations	<u>28</u>
Finding a Reputable Outdoor Kitchen Company	<u>30</u>
Outdoor Kitchen Upgrades - Are They Worth It?	<u>32</u>
Installation Considerations	<u>34</u>
How Long Should My Project Take?	<u>36</u>
Customer Service	<u>38</u>
Hidden Costs You Should Be Aware Of	<u>39</u>
Mistakes To Avoid When Buying An Outdoor Kitchen	<u>44</u>

What Are My Options?

	Built From Scratch	Prefab	RTF (Ready to Finish)	RTA (Ready to Assemble)
Construction	Common island structures are made from wood, metal or concrete block.	Galvanized steel or aluminum frame with cement board.	Galvanized steel or aluminum frame with cement board. Precast GFRC boxes or light weight concrete panels.	Engineered concrete composite panels, reinforced with composite rebar and aluminum alignment channels.
Countertop	Common countertop materials used are tile, concrete or various stones like granite.	Most come standard with a framed veneer tile countertop.	Countertop is usually purchased separately. Granite, concrete or tile are common materials.	Engineered concrete composite countertops that are reinforced with composite rebar or granite.
Finish	Common finish materials used are stone, tile, and stucco.	Typically stucco or glue on veneer stone paneling.	Requires masonry finishing.	Available in Stacked Stone, Weathered Wood, Reclaimed Brick, Modern Concrete, or Plank.
Installation	Requires constructing the frame, covering the frame, applying a scratch coat, installing the countertop(s), applying the cladding material, and installing the appliances.	Depending on access, islands require heavy equipment or crane to set in location. Installation usually includes hooking up grill and appliances.	Some assembly of boxes or panels. Can usually be transported by cart or 2-person hand carry. Requires veneer finishing, countertop, grill and appliance installation.	Panels and countertops can be carted or 2-3 person hand carried into location. Installation includes assembly of panels, placing countertop, and inserting grill and appliances.
Install Time	1-4+ weeks	1-2 days	2-5+ days	2-6+ hours
Price	\$10,000 - \$80,000	\$4,000 - \$12,000	\$4,000 - \$35,000+	\$6,000 - \$28,000

Before we jump into project details... Let's talk about the outdoor kitchen options currently available to you. Of course, each option has pros and cons. It's important to understand these in order to make the best decision for your project.

Your goals and needs weigh heavily on the solution you ultimately choose.

Speaking of outdoor kitchen solutions... Let's briefly describe the main four.



Built From Scratch / Fully Customized

Built from scratch options are your custom builds. Generally, these projects are completed by a contractor.

This solution is excellent for those wanting a highly customized outdoor kitchen. You're building it from the ground up. So you'll have no limitations on design, layout, or other customizations.

A contractor will be able to work with you on all exact specifications. You'll also have a wide variety of materials and appliances to choose from.

What is the downside?

Well... This option is now a bit outdated. Why? It's due to long lead times and an invasive construction process.

Contractors are always in high demand. Naturally, this will extend the timeline of your project. So before proceeding with a scratch built outdoor kitchen... Consider that your backyard may be partially unusable for a period of time.

Expertise is another factor. There are few contractors that truly specialize in outdoor kitchens. Therefore, they're likely to be inexperienced when it comes to building outdoor kitchens. So if you choose to work with this type of contractor... Recognize you could be working with a generalist vs. working with a specialist.

Prefab

Prefab refers to options that are pre-designed or pre-built. Prefab outdoor kitchens were designed with a lower barrier to enter in mind... As well as a more convenient choice compared to traditional options.

Most companies will offer a pre-designed layout

that's ready to order immediately. For some homeowners... The time savings in the design process is more than worth it. Some companies also offer the ability for limited customization. You may be able to swap appliances, appliance locations, etc.

You'll find many prefabricated outdoor kitchens at big box stores or online retail sites. These can be a highly convenient option. Why? They are often pre-built and are dropped into place in your backyard. As long as the space is easily accessible... Installation can happen quickly.

The downside is prefab outdoor kitchens are limited in design. There's little wiggle room in terms of flexibility of layout. In essence, you're ending up with a cookie cutter design. Since the units arrive in one piece... There's heavy machinery required to get them into your backyard. And if access is tight, you may need a crane to accomplish this.

There's also a negative to the lower price points. These options are usually engineered and constructed with low quality materials. Unfortunately, these materials don't hold up well in the long run. This is especially true if you live in an area with freeze/thaw, high moisture, or other frequent inclement weather.

RTF (Ready to Finish)

Ready to Finish systems were developed to allow homeowners more ability to customize their outdoor kitchen layout. They are composed of three layers. You start with premade cabinet modules made from metal or aluminum studs. These are then lined with cement board. Finally, you attach a finishing material of choice.

What are the perks of RTF?

You have more flexibility with design than a prefab offering. You can create longer linear layouts, L-shaped, U-shaped, and more by combining various units. Cabinet modules are either bolted together on site or shipped as pieces. This depends on the design and how the



company operates.

Once the cabinets are bolted together... They'll be ready to be finished with whatever you like best. This is where you can really get creative! Most commonly, you'll see stucco, manufactured veneer stone, or tile.

There are some downsides to Ready to Finish systems. The cabinets generally don't come with appliance openings or cutouts. You'll have to do this according to appliance specifications. This task can be quite tedious... And even a small mistake can be costly! The appliances won't fit properly and you'll have to start all over again. Not fun.

Most RTF modules don't come with countertops and appliances, either. You'll have to source these on your own from separate suppliers. So this will add more layers to your project.

The main perk is added design flexibility. What you gain in flexibility, you lose in convenience. There are additional layers to RTF that will add to your project timeline.

RTA

Finally, we have RTA. We've already discussed our system a bit... But let's compare with the other options outlined.

RTA was created out of the desire to provide homeowners like you with a better outdoor kitchen option. One that's incredibly convenient, customizable, and constructed with durable materials. We firmly believe you shouldn't have to compromise when it comes to your outdoor kitchen.

Ready to Assemble outdoor kitchens are exactly as they sound. When the pieces arrive at your door... They're ready to put together and enjoy. Even better, very little construction experience is required. All you need is a power drill and friend to help. It's no sweat!

Our design process is also rather flexible. You

won't be able to fully customize... However, you have much more flexibility than traditional prefab options. We also offer pre-designed finishes to select from. This is great if you prefer to have a limited list of options to choose from. We understand, too many options can be overwhelming sometimes!

No need to worry about quality, either. RTA outdoor kitchens are made from ultra high performance concrete. So no matter the climate... Our outdoor kitchens perform and persist.

Feel free to use our free design tool to get a taste of what's possible. From there, one of our design experts will hammer out on the rest to your specifications.



"When the pieces arrive at your door... They're ready to put together and enjoy."

DESIGN YOUR DREAM OUTDOOR KITCHEN



Use our free 3D Design tool to build the outdoor kitchen that is equipped with the **layout, appliances and finish you want.**

We hate compromise, you should too.

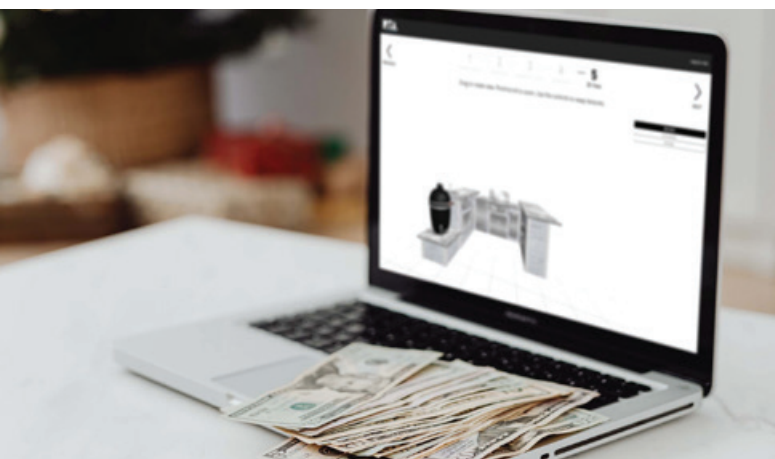
DESIGN NOW

How Much Does An Outdoor Kitchen Cost?

More than likely, this is one of the first questions that comes to mind. Visions of dollar signs make you wonder... Is this going to cost me an arm and a leg?

Not necessarily.

In this chapter, we'll be discussing the ins and outs of outdoor kitchen cost.



Let's start with the average price of an outdoor kitchen overall. In America, that's about \$12,000 - \$13,000. As with most home improvement projects... Pricing varies depending on multiple factors. Materials, location, upgrades, layout, etc. are just a few.

Average Cost Of Different Solutions

Custom: \$1,200-\$2,000 (per linear ft)

Prefab: \$4,000-\$10,000

Big Box: \$1,500-\$5,000

It's important to note that the \$12,000 - \$13,000 range only encompasses the outdoor kitchen itself. Oftentimes, there are small side projects

that have to be completed before you install your outdoor kitchen. You'll need a patio or surface to put the kitchen on. You may also need to run utility lines depending on the appliances you choose.

Patio Construction

Let's talk about patio construction. You may already have one that you plan to use. That's great! Is it adequate to withstand the weight of your outdoor kitchen? It's essential that you know the answer.

If not... It's not game over. You'll just have to reinforce your patio or deck with additional supports.

If you don't have a patio yet... You can plan ahead for weight requirements. See below for average pricing so you know what to expect.

Determining The Budget For Your Patio

The average cost of a patio hovers around \$3,000 ([HomeAdvisor](#)). Let's go into further detail to see how this average lines up with the specifics of your project.

Square Footage Needed

Generally speaking... You'll need at least 200-400 square feet to put your outdoor kitchen on. We find that's how much our customers need on average.

Linear islands can easily sit on a 200 square foot patio. You can even squeeze some L-shaped layouts on this footprint. For a U-shape? You'll need at least 400 square feet.

Ultimate cost of your patio depends on size and materials used. Refer to the section below to get an idea of what a patio may cost for your space.

Price Per Square Foot

Concrete Patio: \$8-\$20 (per sq ft)

Paver Patio: \$15-\$35 (per sq ft)

Flagstone: \$15-\$30 (per sq ft)

Bluestone: \$20-\$40 (per sq ft)

Utility Lines

The need for utility lines depends on... Well, utilities! Some outdoor kitchen setups don't require utility lines at all. If you plan on using propane tanks for your grill and don't order electric appliances... You can completely avoid this expense.

Some of you may have already run utility lines to the area. If so, you're ahead of the game.

Most of you will end up having to run utility lines. If you want a refrigerator, sink, gas grill, etc... It's a requirement. Check out the section below to get a sense of how much utility lines will cost.

Water: If you want a sink... You'll have to factor running water lines, drain lines, etc. into your budget. Expect to pay around \$500-\$2,000 to hire a plumber for this task.

Electrical: Naturally, you'll need electricity for anything that requires power! An outdoor refrigerator is a classic example of this. Electricians will usually charge \$50-\$100 per hour. This task takes 6-10 hours of work depending on what needs to be done.

Gas Lines: You'll only need these if you choose to run a direct gas line to your appliances. Set aside about \$15-\$25 per linear foot to run the gas lines.

Utility Line Installation

Water: \$500-\$2,000

Electrical: \$300-\$1,000

Gas: \$15-\$25 (per linear ft)

Current Events and Pricing

Island Materials



Due to inflation and recent price increases, some materials may experience a 20-40% increase.

Stucco: \$5 (per sq ft)

Mfr. or Cultured Stone: \$20 (per sq ft)

Standard Brick: \$25-\$35 (per sq ft)

Natural Stone: \$25-\$45 (per sq ft)

Countertop Materials

Porcelain / Ceramic Tiles: \$10-\$25 (per sq ft)

Soapstone: \$35-\$60 (per sq ft)

Concrete: \$50-\$70 (per sq ft)

Granite: \$60-\$150 (per sq ft)

Stainless Steel: \$70-\$100 (per sq ft)

As we know, the events of 2020 and 2021 have notably changed the way we think about many purchasing decisions.

In terms of outdoor kitchens... The pandemic significantly increased demand in an already high demand industry. With more time spent at home, consumers want to invest more in their outdoor living spaces.

This increase in demand for outdoor kitchens has compounded issues with the supply chain. While we at RTA have been fortunate not to experience much in the way of shortages... We can't say the same about price.

Unfortunately, pricing has been a bit of a moving target over the past 18 months or so. There have been a few price increases over this period of time.

What you need to know is... While reading this, we are giving you a concept of how pricing works in the present day. However, prices will not remain stagnant in the current climate. Keep this in mind if you're reading in the future!

Built From Scratch

Scratch-built outdoor kitchens usually involve a high upfront investment. Depending on what area of the country you live in... Starting cost can vary greatly. On the lower end, you can see these options start at around \$10,000. Most often, you'll see projects



quoted at the \$20,000-\$30,000 range. High end projects could reach the \$50,000-\$80,000 range!

Prefab

Prefab outdoor kitchens have a much lower barrier to entry. For a basic straight layout... The cost generally begins at around \$4,000. More elaborate layouts you'll see as high as \$12,000. Just keep in mind you won't be able to customize these layouts nearly as much as scratch-built. These are more of a cookie cutter solution.

Now, that lower barrier to entry and convenience does come at a cost. With prefab, you will compromise on the quality and longevity of your outdoor kitchen. It's important to know that most prefabricated outdoor kitchens are designed as a short-term solution.

This means that overall... You can expect to pay more over the lifetime of ownership. It's typical to perform frequent maintenance or even repairs as quickly as a few years later. For such an important investment, that can be frustrating!

RTA

RTA falls into the middle of the market. We won't be the least expensive option out there... But we certainly won't be the most expensive, either! RTA usually costs about 20-30% less than a scratch built or contractor built outdoor kitchen.

You can also avoid many of the complicating factors that drive the price up. In many cases... You won't even need permits. This is because RTA is considered a non-permanent structure when assembled.

With RTA, there are no structural footings required either. Our outdoor kitchens are lighter in weight compared to paver block or other traditional masonry construction methods.

Alright, now that we've addressed the elephant in the room... Let's dive into a bit more detail. Reviewing the average cost of different layouts will help you narrow down your selections.

Average Cost Of RTA's Outdoor Kitchen Layouts



Our linear layouts range from \$6,000 - \$10,000.



Our L-shaped and Galley layouts range from \$12,000 - \$18,000.



Our U-shaped layouts start around \$18,000 and go up into the mid/high \$20,000s.

Outdoor Kitchen Accessories And Upgrades

We'll talk more about accessories later on. From a budgeting standpoint... We want to mention a few options so you can keep these in mind. None are necessary - consider these accessories "nice to haves".

Appliance Covers: \$50-\$200

Island Covers: \$300-\$1,000

Appliance Accesories: \$50-\$500

Lighting: \$500 (average package price)

External Outlets: \$50-\$200



*"In many cases...
You won't even need
permits because RTA
is considered a non-
permanent structure
that is assembled."*

Perimeter or Satellite? How Does Location Affect My Outdoor Kitchen?



In the outdoor kitchen industry... You'll often see terms like "perimeter" or "satellite" outdoor kitchens thrown around.

What does this mean, exactly?

Good question. These terms reference where your outdoor kitchen will be placed in relation to the location of your home.

A perimeter outdoor kitchen refers to an outdoor kitchen that is either directly touching the back wall of a house or close to the back walls/perimeter of the house.

On the contrary, a satellite outdoor kitchen refers to an outdoor kitchen that is located far away from the house.

So, how does this impact your planning?

There are two main things that location will affect: price and the appliances you ultimately choose.

Starting off, a perimeter outdoor kitchen will generally cost less. A large part of this is utility lines will be easier to run. You may also choose to make your outdoor kitchen less elaborate. Why? Close proximity to your indoor kitchen may cause you to reassess what you truly need outdoors.

And of course, the converse is true of a satellite outdoor kitchen. Since this outdoor kitchen is further away... You'll pay more to run utility lines. You will also be more likely to choose a more elaborate layout. Additional appliances will translate to more convenience. If your outdoor kitchen is 100 feet away from your house... You won't want to leave off a fridge or other components. Having to lug supplies that far gets old quick!

Ultimately, there's no wrong location to place your outdoor kitchen. These are just points to keep in mind during the planning process.

What Surface Is Best For An Outdoor Kitchen?

This is a loaded question! There's a lot you must consider. The best surface for you depends on many factors.

While there are certainly some surfaces that should never be used for an outdoor kitchen... Most are adequate. Let's review those most commonly used for an outdoor kitchen space.

Concrete Patios



Concrete patios can be a great surface to place an outdoor kitchen on. We have just a few considerations to note before deciding on this method.

Most concrete patios are poured between 4" - 6" thick. Generally speaking, most concrete patios are not engineered to bear the weight of an outdoor kitchen.

If you are using an outdoor kitchen method that is extremely heavy like concrete block... You'll want to consider structural footings. This will prevent your patio from settling over time.

If you don't want to deal with the hassle of structural footings... Consider a more lightweight option. A prefab or RTA outdoor kitchen may be a better fit for you.

Also know that most patios are poured with a pitch for water runoff. Standard pitch is between $\frac{1}{8}$ " - $\frac{1}{4}$ " per foot. You'll want to ensure it's within tolerance. Otherwise, it could be challenging to construct

your outdoor kitchen on this surface.

Paver Patios



Paver patios, like concrete, make great surfaces. However, paver patios are made from separate pieces... Rather than a monolithic piece like a concrete slab. Therefore, there's a chance for unevenness on the surface and settling to occur.

Similar to concrete... It's important to have structural footings if you are using a heavier construction process for your outdoor kitchen. Concrete block construction would be an example. Without supports, your pavers can settle over time.

Paver patios are great for outdoor kitchens as they are fairly economical and straightforward to install.

Flagstone Patios



Flagstone patios are a decent surface for your outdoor kitchen. However, there is a lot of variation in the stones used to piece a flagstone patio



together. This can present challenges when it comes to installing your outdoor kitchen.

Flagstone patios utilize natural stones. This differs from manufactured stones which tend to have a flatter surface. You'll need someone skilled to install and make sure the surface remains flat.

Bluestone Patio



Bluestone patios are essentially larger pavers that are pieced together to create a larger patio space. Bluestone is a natural stone... But they generally have a flatter surface. This benefits you when installing your outdoor kitchen.

Bluestone does require a higher skill level for installation. You'll typically have to hire a mason for the installation process. Bluestone will be more expensive than a paver or concrete patio... But your backyard will have a higher end and natural appeal.

Decks



Decks are ideal for outdoor kitchens when it comes to installation. A deck surface is perfectly flat... So you don't have to account for surface pitch like you would for all other methods. The challenge is not all decks are designed to withstand the weight of an outdoor kitchen.

Plan for the weight of your outdoor kitchen by reinforcing the deck or adding additional support. Another consideration is that some decks can be

elevated... Why does this matter? Installation could be more difficult as you'll have to carry heavy pieces up stairs.

RTA has a distinct advantage here. Our lightweight system doesn't require structural footings. This makes our outdoor kitchens perfect for a deck application. RTA islands also come in separate pieces to be easily carried up the stairs of a deck.

Determining Pitch



Understanding pitch is a key part of the planning process. More than likely... The surface you build on will have a "pitch" or "slope" to it.

Pitch on your patio is intentional. It's designed to drain water from the patio, usually away from the house. Standard pitch on a patio is around $\frac{1}{8}$ "- $\frac{1}{4}$ " per foot. This is what you'll have to account for when installing your outdoor kitchen. Some outdoor kitchen systems account for pitch better than others, so keep this in mind.

If you're installing a new patio... It's best to understand the footprint of your outdoor kitchen first. You can instruct your contractor to make the footprint of the kitchen level, while also pitching the patio away from it.

While the above scenario is ideal, sometimes you're working with an existing patio. If so, determine the pitch of your patio to see what you're working with. Sometimes, you'll have to make some adjustments to prepare for the outdoor kitchen. If you are unfamiliar with how to determine the pitch of your patio you can refer to our [pitch assessment document](#).

If you have a deck or plan to install one... They are usually installed with little or no pitch at all. So oftentimes, you can avoid extra legwork here.

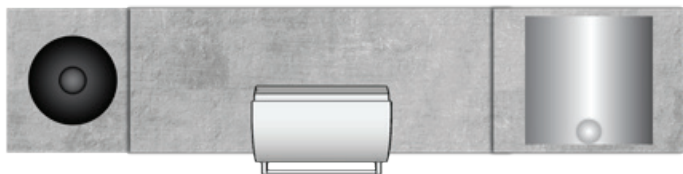
Choosing the Right Layout

Let's start with the basics. There are three main categories you have to consider when determining layout.

1. Assess your current space
2. How do you intend on using it?
3. What type of components do you want to incorporate?

We'll further discuss these points in a moment... First, it's important for you to understand what layout options are available.

Linear Layouts

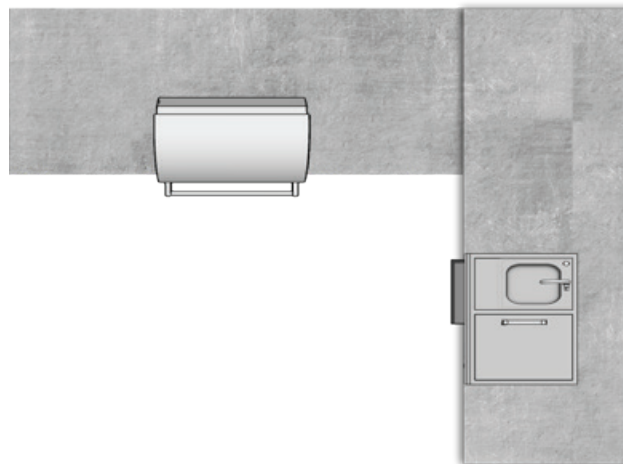


Linear layouts are excellent for smaller spaces. They're also budget friendly for those who need to keep costs down. Since many homeowners build their outdoor kitchens against the exterior wall of the house... Linear layouts lend themselves well to this scenario.

Of course, the smaller footprint of a linear layout translates to limited functionality. You have limited counter space and limited ability to incorporate appliances. It's common to place the grill in the center... This allows for counter space on either side of the grill.

Linear layouts are great if cooking and prepping food is your main priority. Bar seating and entertaining is not a requirement for you. If you plan to entertain a lot but still want a linear layout... Consider having a dining table or outdoor seating area nearby.

L-Shaped Layouts



L-shape layouts are definitely the fan favorite. If you're looking for additional functionality... An L-shape is probably for you.

This layout is highly convenient. You're able to combine your cooking space with your entertainment space. You can engage with your guests while you're cooking. It's a hibachi-like experience. This layout also creates a better workflow when cooking and preparing food for your guests.

Are you a big entertainer? If so, you'll love the vision of your guests sitting at the bar while you're grilling. Many of our customers upgrade from a linear layout to an L-shape so they can add more appliances to their design.

CUSTOM OUTDOOR KITCHENS – ENJOY THESE 7 ESSENTIAL FACTS

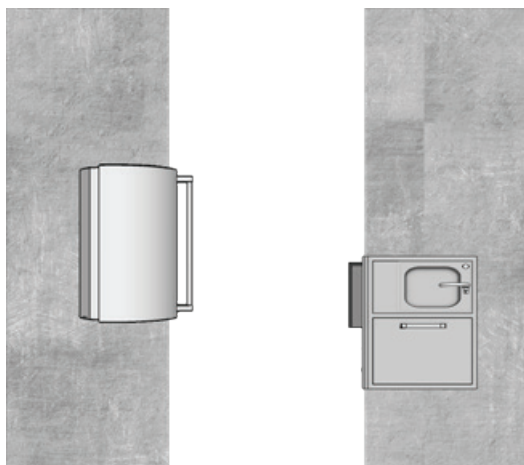
When looking into an outdoor kitchen project, undoubtedly you are thinking... What type of kitchen is right for me? And for good reason. There's a lot of information to sift through...

[Read More >>](#)





Galley Layouts



Galley layouts are a great unconventional option. Sometimes, you don't want to have your islands directly adjacent to one another. If that sounds like you... You may want to consider a galley layout.

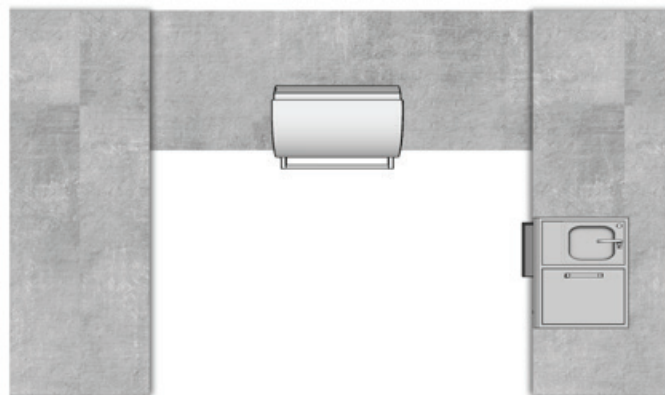
Some outdoor spaces aren't set up to easily incorporate an L-shape layout. In this situation, a galley outdoor kitchen may work better for you. They offer virtually the same functionality as an L-shape with its own distinct advantages.

Workflow is slightly different than L-shape but still very good. You'll have your cooking and grilling on one side... With your prep and entertainment space behind you. A simple 180° turn and you're ready to serve your guests.

You also don't have any dead space with a galley layout. With an L-shape, you lose some space where the bar island and grill island are connected. Not so with galley. Therefore, you can incorporate more appliances in a galley layout.

For spacing, we recommend at least 3' between the two islands.

U-Shaped Layouts



Want to take your entertaining game to the next level? A U-Shape island is by far the most elaborate and functional layout. It also requires the most space! When grilling, you'll quite literally be surrounded by loved ones.

If you're all about appliances... A U-shape will allow you to incorporate as many as possible. This added space allows you to have tons of cooking versatility.

Keep in mind it's best not to incorporate bar seating behind your cooking zone. No one wants to sit behind the grill and get smoked out while sitting at the bar!

Now that we've gotten layouts out of the way... Let's revisit the three main considerations when choosing your layout.

Assess your Space

You can't decide on the perfect layout without understanding your space! First, assess your space... Then figure out what layout would work best there.

In terms of patio size... Most linear layouts require a minimum of 7' x 7'. L-shapes need at least 12' x 12', and U-shapes need at least 18' x 12'.

Determine How You Intend To Use It

You've got your outdoor space figured out. Now, you need to consider how you intend to use your outdoor kitchen. Are you a big entertainer with a need for bar seating? Or are you just looking for a convenient setup to cook outdoors?

If you're interested in entertaining and hosting... A galley, L-shaped, or U-shaped layout may be best for you. Some people want to split up their outdoor kitchen into multiple sections. This creates a "grilling station" and a "hosting station".

If you're just looking to cook outdoors, you'll probably be happy with a straight layout.

Also consider your cooking style. This will help you decide what appliances and components to incorporate into your layout. Consider your flow

while using your outdoor kitchen and cooking. This is a big indicator of what layout will suit you best.

Components To Incorporate

The final tricky decision is appliances. What appliances and accessories do you really want? In situations with limited space... There may be some tough decisions ahead!

Based on the size and quantity of the appliances you want... You'll have a better feel for the footprint needed to make your outdoor kitchen dreams come true.

Start off with a list of appliances you desire. Separate this into two categories: "must haves" and "nice to haves". This will significantly guide you when deciding on appliances for your outdoor kitchen.



Custom or Pre-Designed?

When considering your layout... You've likely heard the terms "custom" and "pre-designed" tossed around a lot. What does this mean, exactly? Excellent question.

Outdoor kitchens have been rising in popularity in recent years. As a result, many developments have been made to improve your access to an outdoor kitchen. Pre-designed outdoor kitchens are an example of this. This option is great for those who are happy with a premade layout.

If you're looking for something beyond cookie cutter... You may decide on custom to personalize your outdoor kitchen.

You may be wondering...

How hard is custom? Will it cost me an arm and a leg?

Let's get into the details between custom and pre-designed.

If you're considering a custom design... There's a lot more to keep in mind. Without the proper resources, a custom project can be quite challenging.

Many prefab outdoor kitchen companies don't offer a customized option. So right away, that will narrow down your selections.

Other than the few companies that offer prefab custom options... You'll be confined to working with a local contractor, custom outdoor kitchen builder, or home builder. This isn't necessarily a bad thing! You just have to understand the additional challenges in play.

This is especially true when working with a builder or contractor. Generally, they don't specialize in outdoor kitchens. In addition to limited resources... They may keep you waiting for weeks or months on the proposal and construction. When working

with a contractor... Don't expect to be able to adhere to a strict timeline!

Pre-designed eliminates many of the pitfalls normally associated with custom. The project is completely on your time. You order and assemble according to your schedule. As long as you're okay with having a design that's not completely customized to your needs... Pre-designed layouts may work well for you!

Feel free to browse through our pre-designed options to see if anything piques your interest.

Pre-Designed Outdoor Kitchens For **Any Space.**

SHOP NOW



What Will Custom Cost?

It's no surprise that custom outdoor kitchens have a higher price tag. The question is... How much more money will you have to fork over?

Naturally, there are a lot of factors! Some of which we've already outlined in the cost section. Additionally... It depends on whether a company specializes in custom outdoor kitchens or not.

Across the industry... You can expect to pay about 15-20% more for a custom layout over pre-designed. On the high end, this can reach upwards of 40-50%... So keep that in mind when price comparing!

An example will help illustrate this. Most high quality pre-designed outdoor kitchens cost around \$1,000 per linear foot. So a 6' design will run you about \$6,000. Simple enough. A contractor could charge as much as \$9,000 - \$10,000 for the very same design. It adds up quickly!



RTA is a bit different. We're able to produce custom islands for almost the same cost as our pre-designed offerings. Our custom kitchens are as little as 5-10% more.

How, you ask? We specialize in prefabricated custom outdoor kitchen layouts. Therefore, we have the technology and infrastructure needed to make the process efficient. This makes it easier for us to produce an outdoor kitchen customized to your needs.

Design Resources

An incredibly important part of a custom project is being able to visualize it. If you can see it, you can conceptualize how the layout will work in your space. It's key to work with a company that can present you with strong visual resources and design concepts. That way, you won't be left in the dark wondering what your project will look like.

Many projects can go south fast if you're not on the same page with your builder or company. You may be visualizing one thing... And then another. The design ensures everyone is in agreement before construction starts. If a company is unable to provide a visual resource... Proceed with caution. You don't want your project to be a guessing game!

Here at RTA, we are fully equipped to help you visualize your project. We have a dedicated design team and endless resources at our disposal. You can always feel free to use our online design tool. This tool will put you in the driver's seat and allow you to design your project. Best of all? You can do this from the comfort of your own home.

We do have the ability to design outdoor kitchens outside of the limits of the design tool. You can reach out to us if you don't see something that suits your needs.

Appliances & Custom Outdoor Kitchens

We're going to take a deep dive into appliances later... But we wanted to point out an important

note on appliances and custom outdoor kitchens.

Many people choose a custom project so they can choose and orient the appliances how they want.

Why? They usually can't find the perfect arrangement with pre-designed or cookie cutter options. So they look to custom.

When it comes to appliances... It's even more important to work with an outdoor kitchen design expert. They will help you assess your needs and guide you to the most functional layout. This will ensure your outdoor kitchen flows seamlessly from a design perspective.

Specs & Schematics of Custom Outdoor Kitchens

If you have settled on a design... You will want to verify it all works inside your space and fits on your patio. This is where specs and blueprints come into play.

When working with a local contractor, you have the benefit of them coming to your home. They'll measure and build everything on site. Your contractor will have a direct understanding of your space.

If you're working with a nationwide company / manufacturer virtually... Blueprints and crystal clear specifications are essential. You don't want to have to go through all of this work just to have the kitchen not fit!

Here at RTA, we provide ample resources to our customers. Every customer gets comprehensive blueprints tailored to their design. That way, you can verify everything before the design is finalized.

You can also share your blueprints with any contractors you may be working with. We take it a step further by assigning every customer a customer success specialist. They'll work with you every step of the way to ensure a successful project.

Utility Line Considerations

Utilities are a key aspect of your outdoor kitchen installation. You need them to feed water, electricity, and/or fuel to your appliances! The appliances you choose for your outdoor kitchen determine what utility lines you need to run.

If you want a refrigerator, grill lights, wine coolers, ice makers, or warming drawers... You'll need electrical lines run to your outdoor kitchen.

For a sink or ice maker... You'll also require water and drain lines to be installed.

And of course... Natural gas and propane lines are necessary for any grill or cooking appliance. You can avoid this by using a propane tank. Just keep in mind, you'll sacrifice convenience if you choose this route.

The way utility lines are run depends on the placement of your outdoor kitchen. If you're building yours against a wall, it will be easier. You can simply punch the utility lines through the wall and have them run inside the structure of your kitchen.

The process is less straightforward if you plan to have your outdoor kitchen in the middle or edge of your patio. You won't have the convenience of punching utility lines through the wall. What's the best way to tackle this? Run your utility lines underground and stub them up through the patio where your outdoor kitchen will be. This has to be planned before your patio is installed.

If your patio is already installed and you're building your outdoor kitchen off of your house... It's more complicated. Not impossible! Just complicated. With a paver or natural stone patio... Pull up the pavers/stones, trench the utility lines, and place the pavers back in their original place.

Installing utility lines in a deck is a bit easier. Most are elevated off the ground... So you can usually run lines under the deck and punch them up through the floor.

Concrete patios are the most challenging of them all. You may have to tear out entire sections of your patio... Then trench for utility lines and repour those sections. That's a lot of work!

PRO TIP

The closer you build your outdoor kitchen to the house, the more you will save on running your utility lines.

Electricity

For electric lines, consult with an experienced electrician. They'll be able to tell you the codes in your area and understand requirements for your design. It's recommended to put your outdoor kitchen on its own circuit inside your home. This provides easier access if you need to reset the system. Much better than having to crawl into the outdoor kitchen!

Plumbing

If you plan to incorporate a sink into your design... You'll definitely want to consult with a plumber. They'll tell you what is needed to get drain and water lines into the area. Sometimes, you can get away with running the drain line into a french drain or dry well rather than the septic system. However, this depends on local code and whether you'll be putting solids down the sink.

If you plan to run hot water... You'll need to insulate the entire run of pipe. If you live in a cold climate, you'll have to winterize your plumbing lines every year. To do this, you have two options. You could use an ejector pump to flush the lines... Or install a gravity-based system where you can open a valve and empty the pipe. Gravity will do the work for you.

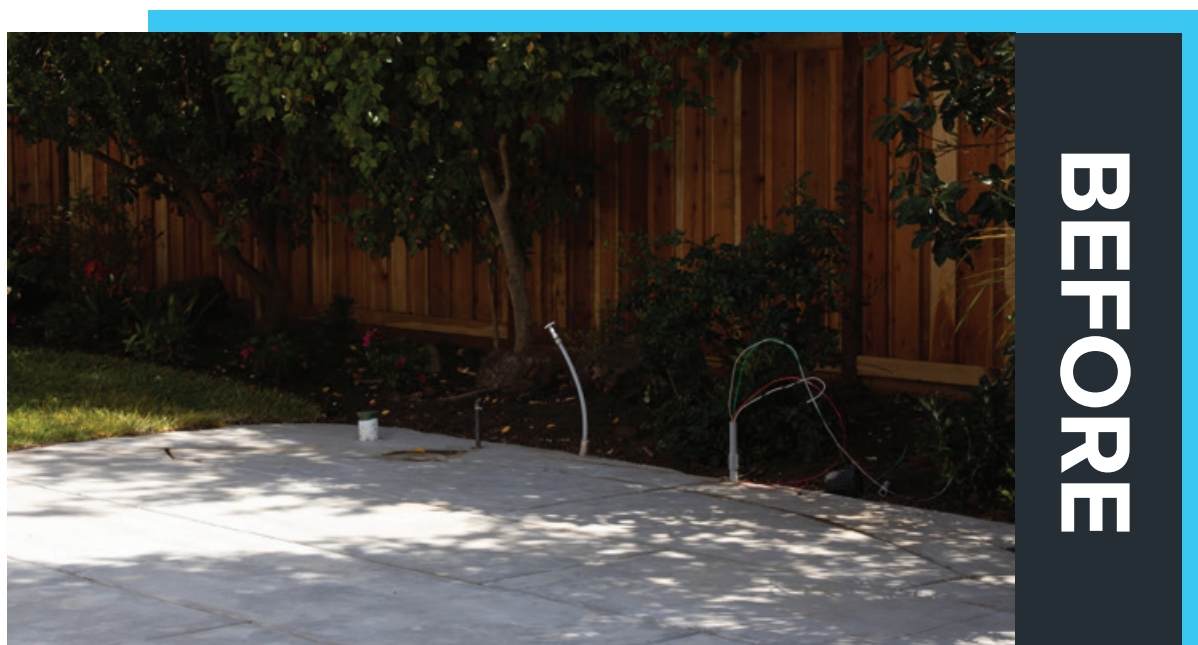


Gas

Of course, you'll need to fuel your barbecue and other cooking appliances. The exceptions here are a charcoal or pellet grill. But otherwise, you need fuel!

If you live in an area where natural gas is readily available... You may want to consider running a direct line. That way you can enjoy the convenience of a permanent solution. There's an ongoing expense for the cost of natural gas, yes. But it will sure be worth it when you don't have to worry about running out of fuel halfway through cooking dinner.

You can always run off of reusable tanks if you don't want to run gas lines. If you do decide to run them... Consult with a professional plumber. They'll walk you through a game plan and ensure the lines are set up properly for your appliances.



How To Find The Right Appliances

Sometimes, choosing appliances can be more overwhelming than the outdoor kitchen layout. There are so many options out there... It can make your head spin!

In the following sections, allow us to provide some guidance when it comes to appliances. Ultimately, only you know what is best for your needs. We'll just provide the information you need to make that decision.

Cooking Style

Your cooking style reveals a lot about the appliances that will be best for your needs. Are you all about the grill, or do you want all the bells and whistles?

The type of food you like to cook will tell you which appliances you'll use the most. If you're not big on making elaborate sauces and side dishes... It's likely a side burner will not get much use from you. You're probably better off focusing on the grill.

When narrowing down appliance selections... Always ask yourself, "Will I actually use this?" You'd be surprised at your answers!

Grade of Stainless Steel

Quality is absolutely essential when considering appliances. You want them to last a long time! Longevity of your appliances comes down to the materials used.

When considering appliances... Look for complete 304 stainless steel construction. This type of stainless steel is best for enduring the outdoor elements. You won't have to worry about it rusting or corroding.

The key word here is "complete" 304 stainless steel construction. Many appliance manufacturers market their grills as being made with 304

stainless steel... But that's only partially true. Parts of the grill will be made with 304 stainless, yes. But not all of it. Wording can be tricky, so be on the lookout!

Warranties

A good warranty indicates a grill manufacturer that is willing to stand behind their product. The more robust the warranty... The more confident you can feel you're getting the best appliances possible.

So, what is considered a good warranty? It depends on the components.

For the exterior housing and burners, it's best to look for at least a limited lifetime warranty. This tells you these components were made to last.

For cooking grids, look for a 5 year warranty minimum. Flame tamers are usually around 2 years. Finally, you'll commonly see valves and ignition at a 1 year warranty.

The smaller components are relatively easy to replace. So when looking at the warranty... Exterior housing and burners are most important.

Grill

Arguably the most important appliance decision you make is the grill. It's what makes your outdoor kitchen a kitchen, after all!

Most of your decision will come down to fuel type and upgrades. Let's start with fuel type.

Gas or propane is most likely what you're considering for your grill. This type is best in terms of convenience. You'll be cooking in just a couple minutes. However, what you gain in convenience... You lose in that classic, smoky, barbecue flavor.



On the other side of the spectrum are charcoal grills. It's this method of grilling that's responsible for the trademark barbecue flavor we crave. But all that flavor takes time! You have to get the charcoal burning and allow the grill to get up to temperature. If you're looking for convenience, charcoal grills may not be ideal for you!

Finally, pellet grills have recently come onto the scene. Pellet grills offer a unique combination of convenience and flavor. These grills are fueled by wood pellets, which are rather convenient to use. And by virtue of using wood for fuel... There's a great smoky flavor added to your food. Pellet grills also offer several different functions not available on a regular grill. You can use these to grill, smoke, and even bake.

Refrigerators

Refrigerators are definitely more straightforward than grills! As long as you're set up for electricity... All you really need to think about is what size of refrigerator you want.

Just make sure the refrigerator you choose is outdoor rated. There are many refrigerators that are enticing from a price standpoint... But they are not truly outdoor rated.

What happens if it's not outdoor rated? It won't be designed to deal with the temperature fluctuations of outdoor use. There's a high probability that fridge will burn out in a couple years. This turns into an ongoing cost and headache dealing with replacements.

If you don't want or are unable to have electricity... You could consider a drop-in cooler or ice chest. This will allow you to keep cool beverages handy when you're hosting.

Storage

We find that storage is vastly under appreciated when it comes to outdoor kitchen design. It's understandable... A set of drawers aren't exactly glamorous!

But they're essential for the quality of your outdoor cooking experience. A big draw of an outdoor kitchen over a grill is to have everything

you need in one place... No running in and out of the house.

If you don't have storage in your outdoor kitchen... Where will you put your utensils and everything else you need? Do yourself a favor and include storage!

For options... You'll find doors, drawers, and a combo of both.

Sinks

Just as with your indoor kitchen... A sink in your outdoor kitchen can be extremely helpful.

Washing hands, cleaning up, rinsing produce... It almost completely eliminates the need for you to run in and out of the house.

As long as you're okay with running water lines, sinks can be a worthy addition to your design. Most options available are basic. Some manufacturers offer sinks with their own variations.

The refreshment center from Coyote Outdoor Living is an example of this. The sink is smaller, but it includes an integrated cutting board and drop in cooler. This is a great combo for those who enjoy making fresh beverages for their guests.

Speciality Burners

Are you an outdoor cooking aficionado? You may love the added versatility of specialty burners.

You may be interested in a simple side or double side burner. These are great for cooking up a side dish or sauces.

Or perhaps you'd like a power burner for ultimate heat potential. Power burners work well for lobster boils and wok style cooking.

Some manufacturers also offer griddle attachments for side burners... Breakfast al fresco, anyone?



Grill Classes

When browsing for an outdoor grill, you'll want to have an understanding of the classes. This will put your budget into perspective and guide you to what class will work best for your project.

Economy

As it sounds, the economy class is most economical from a pricing standpoint. You'll most commonly find these options at big box stores. Pricing ranges from \$200 - \$1,500. Generally speaking, these grills are not built to last a lifetime. The typical lifespan is around 10 years or less.

What you gain in savings, you lose in quality. Most economy grills are made with low quality stainless steel. They also have limited features and often don't get consistent heat retention.

Another note is most economy grills are not designed to be built into outdoor kitchens. Some brands you may encounter are Weber, Cal Flame, Charbroil, KitchenAid, Summerset, and more. Warranties are often limited... But a 10 year max warranty can be expected.

Premium

Premium grills are your mid-market price point. Expect to see prices from \$1,500 - \$4,000. Most are designed to be built into outdoor kitchens.

Premium grills also offer better heat consistency and upgraded features. You'll see things like rotisserie attachments, smoker boxes, infrared burners, and more become available.

For construction, the appliances are made to last a lifetime. Most are constructed with 304 stainless steel. Popular brands you'll see are Blaze, Coyote, Lion, Bull, and more. Most of these brands offer a lifetime warranty as well.

Luxury

As expected, luxury grills are top of the line.

Lifetime warranties are standard... With tons of bells and whistles. Digital controls, assisted grill hoods, very flashy features.

Luxury grills offer great heat control and can easily reach high heat. Most are designed to be built into an outdoor kitchen.

Of course... The quality and the features certainly drive up the price tag! Expect to pay \$5,000 - \$8,000 and up for grills in this class.

Grill Pricing

Economy: \$200-\$1,500

Premium: \$1,500-\$4,000

Luxury: \$5,000-\$8,000+



BUILT IN GRILL: 5 CONSIDERATIONS TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT ONE FOR YOUR OUTDOOR KITCHEN

So you've decided to start on an outdoor kitchen project. That's exciting! You must already be imagining the parties you'll be hosting in the near future. Actually, let's visualize for a moment. Picture you're having your first gathering with your new outdoor kitchen. Friends and family are enjoying a drink, the sun is shining, and fresh burgers are sizzling on the grill...

[Read More >>](#)

"Most are constructed with 304 stainless steel. Popular brands you'll see are Blaze, Coyote, Lion, Bull, and more. Most of these brands offer a lifetime warranty as well."



Material Considerations

An outdoor kitchen is only as good as the materials used. Therefore, you want to be aware of what materials may be best for your project.



Let's consider a few of the material options you may encounter.

Combustible vs. Non-Combustible Materials

This is a topic that often gets glossed over during the research stage. Understanding this topic will ensure the outdoor kitchen you build is safe for your backyard.

Let's start with defining each term.

Combustible Materials: Combustible materials are materials that will catch fire or burn when subjected to high levels of heat or fire. Lumber is the most obvious combustible material that surely comes to mind. Also know that plastic and composite materials fall into this category.

Non-Combustible Materials: As expected, non-combustible materials are the opposite of combustible. These won't burn or ignite when exposed to high levels of heat or fire. Examples of non-combustible materials are concrete blocks, cement board, metal, and brick.

If you're using non-combustible materials... You're

in great shape! There's much less to worry about when it comes to safety.

Now, this doesn't mean that you can't use combustible materials... It just means you have to be more careful. You must use insulated jackets for all cooking appliances to protect the combustible materials from catching fire.

Countertops

There are a ton of countertop options available. There's tile, quartz, granite, bluestone, soapstone, stainless steel, and concrete.

We'll do our best to keep it simple here.

Tile: This is likely your most cost-effective option. Unfortunately, tile is quite brittle... This makes it prone to cracking and falling apart. Further, the grout is exceptionally difficult to keep clean. This opens the door for a non-hygienic surface. Yuck.

Blue Stone: These countertops provide a nice, natural look as they are pure stone. However, there is potential for cracking or splitting. This doesn't happen often... Just something to be aware of.

Concrete: Concrete countertops come standard with RTA outdoor kitchens. Despite being man-made, they look very natural! Concrete avoids some of the pitfalls of natural surfaces in that they can be structurally reinforced. Therefore, concrete can handle temperature fluctuations and ground movement well.

However, concrete as a material is softer and more porous. Therefore, it requires ongoing maintenance. Know the surface can be more susceptible to staining and scratching.



Granite: Granite is offered as an alternative to concrete for RTA outdoor kitchens. It's an excellent choice for those looking for that sleek and contemporary aesthetic. Granite is a dense, hard material that's easy to maintain. However, it gets extremely hot in the sun. Consider a lighter color to reduce this effect.

Soapstone: Soapstone brings a beautiful, modern aesthetic to your countertops. It's a nonporous material that doesn't require resealing. It's also more resistant to staining than granite. While more resistant to staining, soapstone is a softer material. So it will be more prone to being scratched, dinged, or even chipped.

Quartz: Quartz is a beautiful material for countertops! Like granite, it's a dense and hard material. So quartz is resistant to staining and scratching. However, quartz doesn't handle sunlight well. Over time, it will yellow. Quartz also has a tough time with humidity and moisture.

Dekton: Dekton is made from a combination of quartz, glass, and porcelain. This creates an "ultra-compact surface". This technology is new compared to other countertop offerings. This involves mixing the raw materials and compressing them to create a nearly indestructible surface. A bonus is, Dekton is easy to maintain. The downside is that Dekton is limited to fabricators and installers. It's extremely heavy and requires some nuance to install properly. A final drawback is that the pigment doesn't run through the entire slab. So in the rare event the countertop chips... It would be noticeable.

Stainless Steel: Unfortunately, there's not much to write home about with stainless steel countertops. Yes, they are easy to clean and maintain! However, they absorb heat like nobody's business. You're better off keeping stainless steel limited to your appliances.

Frame

Not all outdoor kitchen solutions use frame construction. For example, RTA is a frameless system. However, you'll encounter these frequently so it's important to discuss commonly used materials.

For the frames themselves... You'll see metal, concrete, and sometimes wood.

Wood Frames: We do not recommend wood for outdoor kitchen framing. It's prone to rotting and insect damage. In a short period of time, the structure of your outdoor kitchen can become seriously compromised.

Concrete Block: This method has fallen out of favor in recent years, but can still be very useful. Concrete is extremely heavy which can make it difficult to install. You also won't be able to install it on an existing surface. The advantage? If you live in an area with frequent freeze/thaw cycles... Concrete won't rust or rot like the other materials will.

Metal Frames: This is the most common framing material you'll come across. They're lightweight, easy to ship, and easy to install. Metal frames provide solid structural support for appliances as well. Unfortunately, metal frames are vulnerable to environmental stresses. So freeze thaw climates are not the friends of a metal frame! If you live in a drier climate, you'll probably have a better experience with metal frames.

Veneer: Most often, this is referred to as the cladding material that goes over the frame. Basically, it's what makes your outdoor kitchen look finished and beautiful! When installing a wood or metal frame... You will have to attach a surface over the frame to adhere the veneer to. In most cases, this will be cement board. If you're using a concrete block frame... The veneer can be applied directly to the concrete block. The types of veneer used can vary depending on the desired aesthetic and budget.

Common Veneer Or Cladding Materials

- Stucco
- Manufactured Stone
- Cultured Stone
- Tile
- Brick
- Natural Stone

Finding A Reputable Outdoor Kitchen Company

How do you know an outdoor kitchen company is reputable? It's an important question.

The outdoor kitchen industry is still young in American business standards. Being established for only a couple decades... It's an industry that is grossly underdeveloped.

Finding a builder that's truly up to the job can prove to be a tall task! Especially in certain areas of the country. Before deciding on an outdoor kitchen company... Make sure they work with integrity and stand behind their product.

Below are some of the categories we review to decide whether a company is reputable or not.

Business Information & Experience

How much information about the business is out there? Do they have a website with a lot of details about their products and services? Do they have a blog? The more information you can find, the better.

Experience is key as well. Does the business have a long track record in the industry? For manufacturers... It shows they are able to meet the desires of consumers.

For contractors or laborers, experience is especially important. If you're hiring someone to build or help with your outdoor kitchen... You want them to know their stuff! At minimum, you want to make sure they are licensed and insured.

Outdoor Kitchen Experience

Now, you may already know a great contractor. However, being a good contractor doesn't always equate to being a good outdoor kitchen contractor.

Ask them the following questions to understand their experience with outdoor kitchens:

How many outdoor kitchens have they installed since being in business?

How many outdoor kitchens did they install last year?

Do they have pictures of the finished kitchens they built?

Reviews

Reviews are the best indicator of the experience you will have working with a business or contractor.

For an outdoor kitchen company... It will tell you if the quality of the product is truly what they claim. You'll also get a sense of their customer service if any of the reviewers have encountered problems.

For a contractor, it's similar. Are they as experienced as they claim? Do they follow through on their projects? You'll also understand what past customers' experiences were like.

PRO TIP

Don't just look at contractor reviews. Check to see if they have reviews on outdoor kitchen projects specifically. They may have great landscaping reviews, sure... But that won't tell you much about their expertise in outdoor kitchens.

[Read RTA's Customer Reviews](#)

Construction Methods

The construction methods the company uses will quite literally be the foundation of your investment. Since we've already discussed the pros and cons of certain materials... Ask them what materials will be used for the following components:

1. Island Structure
2. Countertops



Ventilation / Safety

Safety is an important piece of your outdoor kitchen! Although it may not seem obvious... There are companies that don't follow the proper safety specifications for an outdoor kitchen build.

If you aren't careful with this choice... You may end up with an outdoor kitchen that is a ticking time bomb. Trust us, we've heard the horror stories!

Ask the company these questions to make sure your outdoor kitchen will be safe:

Are they using combustible materials to construct your island? If yes... What precautions are being taken to ensure these materials won't catch fire?

What is their plan to properly vent the island?

Appliances

It's true, we've already gone into depth about appliances. But when deciding on the right company... You want to ensure you're getting appliances that are best for your project.

While we wish it were true... Not all companies are well-versed in appliances. This can lead to undesired results. Therefore, you're better off working with a company that specializes in outdoor kitchens. You want to feel confident you're getting a product designed and made by experts.

If your contractor or outdoor kitchen company is recommending a certain appliance brand... Ask them why. Since they're guiding you on your project, the answer will tell you if they truly are experts or not.

Know that not all companies or contractors work directly with an appliance manufacturer. Get a feel for the relationship they have with the appliance source. You'll want to understand how warranty claims work... Or how the relationship will be handled if you have to service the appliances.

Design & Project Planning

Make sure you work with a company that can provide you with all the resources you need. By resources, we mean the resources you require

to effectively plan and execute your project. This begins with a concept. That way, you can visualize your project before confirming the design. Proceed with caution when working with companies who are unable to provide conceptual designs and schematics of the layout. You need these resources to have absolute clarity of the outdoor kitchen you will receive.

Pricing & Contract

Comb through pricing and the contract with a discerning eye. Make sure that the quote is final. If it's not, ask how change orders will be handled. You don't want the cost of your project to keep creeping up!

PRO TIP

Some quotes will be incomplete. You may find things like countertops and other components are left out. Ensure you read the fine print so there are no surprises down the road.

Warranty

As we've mentioned earlier, warranties are important. A good warranty gives you confidence in your investment. Any reputable company that promotes their product should be able to back it up with a warranty.

When constructed properly... An outdoor kitchen is something that should last decades.

Ask the company what warranty they offer on their outdoor kitchens. If they don't offer one or the offer is short lived... There's some cause for concern.

There are few things worse than investing several thousand dollars into your outdoor kitchen... Only to have something go wrong a few years later and you have to foot the bill for it. Now that is frustrating!

Resources

[How to Properly Vet An Outdoor Kitchen Contractor](#)

[10 Questions to Ask A Contractor](#)

Outdoor Kitchen Upgrades, Are They Worth it?

In this section, we'll discuss the "nice to haves". They're not required, but if you have the ability... You may want to consider some upgrades. These are items that are not always included in outdoor kitchen packages.

Upgrades aren't just items that add a flashy touch to your outdoor kitchen. Often, these are items that improve the utility of your outdoor kitchen.

When considering whether an upgrade will be worth it for you... Think in terms of convenience. Much of this convenience will pay off throughout the lifespan of ownership. Yes, you can survive without them! However, the inconvenience of not having these items may be more painful than shelling out the extra cash.

Let's take a peek at some common outdoor kitchen upgrades.

Covers

Covers definitely aren't 100% necessary. At the same time, this item can be an inexpensive way to provide you peace of mind. Covers are a great way to protect your investment and keep your outdoor kitchen looking new. If your outdoor kitchen will be out of commission for several weeks every year... It's never a bad idea to invest in island covers. In fact, we highly recommend them!

Lighting

Lighting firmly falls into the category of "nice to have". If you already have surrounding lighting, this upgrade would be unnecessary. But if your backyard is not well lit... You would benefit greatly from considering lighting.

A well-lit outdoor living area means you can extend the fun! You'll be able to use and enjoy your outdoor kitchen well into the evening. And the more you're able to use your outdoor kitchen... The more you're getting out of your investment!

Appliance Accessories

Appliance accessories are nearly endless! Ultimately, what you decide on comes down to personal preference. Most grill accessories will give you added versatility with your cooking style. Think of things like a griddle, charcoal trays, smoker box, etc.

For the outdoor cooking enthusiast... Many of these accessories are worth the extra dough! A perk is you don't have to purchase these immediately, either. You can always choose to add these accessories later.

Electrical Outlets

Electrical outlets are all about the amount of convenience you desire. As we know, an outdoor kitchen makes it convenient to cook outdoors. The question is... How convenient do you want your outdoor experience to be?

Here are a couple common scenarios you'll encounter. Your phone is sitting at 10% battery... Do you really want to have to run inside to charge it? Or maybe you want to serve some margaritas at the bar. That doesn't work if you don't have a place to plug it in!

For us, electrical outlets are nearly considered a must-have.

Speakers

Speakers in your outdoor kitchen are pretty much the pinnacle of cool. You can create the perfect ambiance for every gathering with ease.

However, if your speakers go out... It can turn into an ongoing headache. The way they are installed makes it difficult for repairs/replacements.

The alternative? Just put speakers in the surrounding area! This will make it easier to service in the future... And you get the same exact benefits. It's a win-win.

"Covers are a great way to protect your investment and keep your outdoor kitchen looking new."



Installation Considerations

Depending on the outdoor kitchen solution you choose... There will be a variety of points to consider when it comes to installation. Let's cover the most common options here so you're not caught off-guard.

Built from Scratch

More than likely, you'll be working with a contractor. Since they'll be doing most of the work... You don't have as much to worry about with the installation!

However, there are still important aspects to take note of. Most custom builds involve an invasive installation process. You'll have to expect your backyard to be disturbed for weeks... Or even months!

Also know you'll probably have a lot of cleanup to do once the project is complete. It's just the cost of making an outdoor kitchen from scratch!

As long as you're okay with some backyard disturbance and cleanup... Built from scratch shouldn't be a bother to you.

Prefab

Perhaps built from scratch isn't for you. Prefab outdoor kitchens have a much more straightforward installation process.

Most of the time, prefab kitchens are delivered to you mostly complete. Pretty simple, right?

Well... There are still challenges. This is mainly true when yard access is limited. A prefab outdoor kitchen has to be properly placed into your backyard. If your backyard is difficult to access... You may have sticker shock at the crane expense to drop your outdoor kitchen in.

If your backyard is easy to access, you won't have much to worry about here.

Ready-to-Finish

Overall, RTF solutions are less invasive than custom or prefabricated builds. However, you're responsible for most of the construction unless you hire out.

If you're taking on the project yourself... You have a lot more to think about!

Someone has to construct the frames, create appliance openings, attach the cement board, install countertops/appliances, and do the veneer work.

Do you have the skills required to complete all these tasks? This is great if you're a savvy DIYer... But you may not want to be bothered with this amount of work. If not, you can consider hiring out for installation.

Ready-to-Assemble

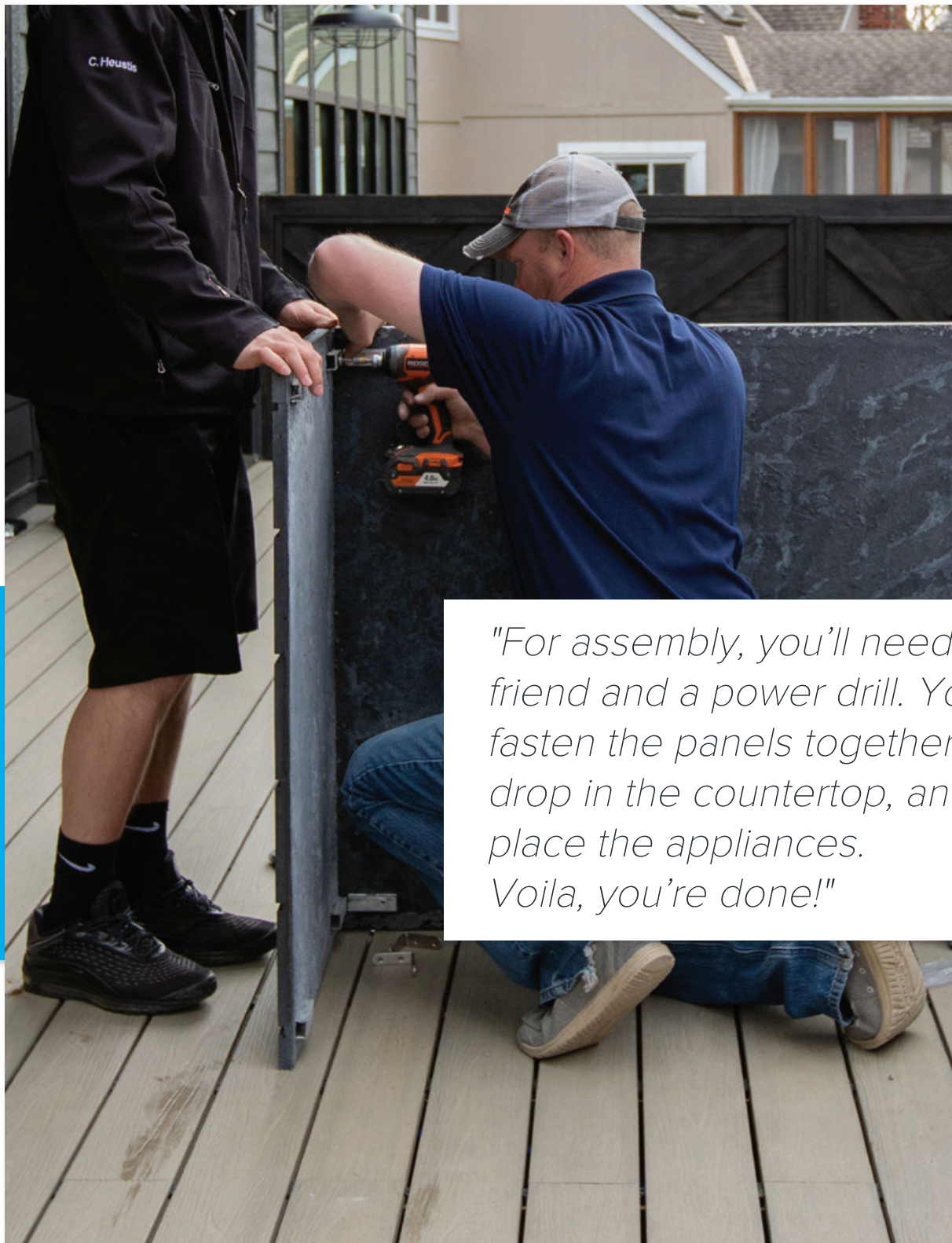
At RTA, we pride ourselves on having the most convenient installation option! However, there are still things you have to know.

Much like RTF... RTA is a true do-it-yourself solution. It's much simpler, yes! Yet, there is still assembly involved.

RTA outdoor kitchens arrive to you 95% complete. That means the panels are completely finished, you get appliances, and you get countertops as well. All you need to do is put everything together!

For assembly, you'll need a friend and a power drill. You fasten the panels together, drop in the countertop, and place the appliances. Voila, you're done!

If this still seems a bit daunting to you... You can also hire out to complete assembly.



"For assembly, you'll need a friend and a power drill. You fasten the panels together, drop in the countertop, and place the appliances. Voila, you're done!"

How Long Should My Project Take?

Naturally, you'll want to know how long your project will take. This will help you decide when you need to get started. That way, you can be grilling all summer long!

The timeline will vary depending on the outdoor kitchen solution you choose. We'll discuss some of the factors below.

Stages of your Project

When it comes to your outdoor kitchen project... There are four distinct stages to note. Each stage will have their own timeline to consider as a whole.



Stage One is design and planning. Timeline will vary greatly depending on how much research you need to do. Generally speaking... It takes at least 1-2 weeks to properly plan. Ideally, you'll work with an expert for your final design and game plan for your project.



Stage Two is manufacturing and construction of the project. This will vary depending on the outdoor kitchen solution you choose. For a prefabricated solution... Expect about a 2-8 week lead time to manufacture the island.

If you're working with a contractor... They will essentially be "manufacturing" your outdoor kitchen on-site. Here, the timeline really just depends on your contractor's schedule. It could take as little as a couple weeks. (This is rare!) A good contractor will likely already be booked out several weeks/months in advance.



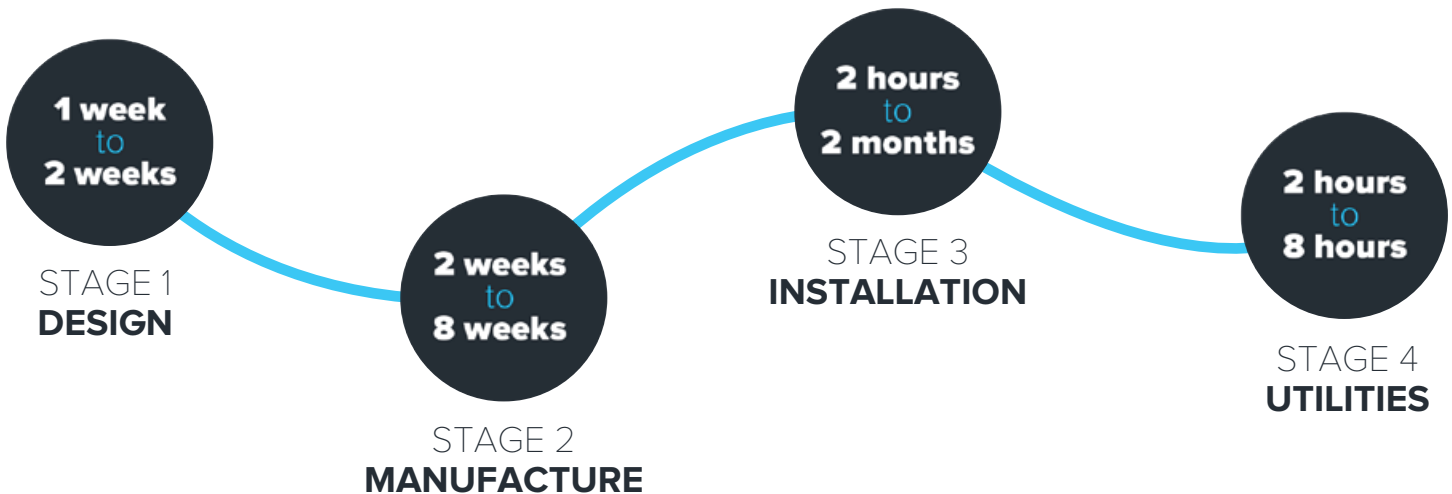
Stage Three is the installation itself. When working with a prefabricated option... Your outdoor kitchen will be ready to use the same day of delivery. As we mentioned earlier, timeline can vary with a contractor. On the extremely short end, installation can take a couple days. Typically, you can expect installation to take anywhere from a couple weeks to months on the long end with a contractor built project.



Stage Four is hooking up utilities. If you don't have appliances that require gas lines, water, or electricity... Then you won't have to worry about this step! Either way, it's relatively quick. A plumber or electrician can usually hook up utility lines in about a half day.



Now... What about the overall timeline? As you can see, the type of outdoor kitchen will significantly affect timeline. Let's discuss what you can expect for the main outdoor kitchen solutions.



Type of Outdoor Kitchen

Custom

Let's begin with custom.

It's no surprise that scratch-built options take the longest. Contractors are always in high demand! So if you do manage to snag one... You're beholden to their timeline.

If their schedule is fairly open and they're responsive... You won't have much to worry about. The project can take a few weeks as a whole.

However, you're much more likely to work with a busy contractor. Especially if you want to work with someone truly qualified for the project. Being in high demand with such a full schedule... You may be waiting weeks or months for your project to be completed. During this time, plan on having limited access to your backyard.

Also know that this construction process takes longer in general. Most custom outdoor kitchens require a minimum of 4-5 days to complete. Longer projects can extend to be a few months.

RTF

The second common option is RTF. As we've discussed, a lot of the work has been done for

you. Therefore, it will not take as long as custom.

If you're completing the project yourself... It could be done in just a couple days. You could also spread it out over a couple weeks as free time allows.

With RTF, you work on your own timeline. It can take as much or as little time as you like. Most of the time, you can complete it in a few days. Know that an elaborate project could take up to a week or two.

RTA

Finally, we have RTA. As mentioned previously, our solution arrives to your door 95% completed. All you need to do is assemble like a piece of furniture.

Even though you assemble yourself... There's not much active work involved. You can have a custom design drafted in as little as 5 minutes. After some exchange with one of our design experts... You just have to wait for your outdoor kitchen to arrive.

You'll have full access to your backyard while you wait for delivery. For assembly, it can be completed in as little as a few hours. Not days... Not weeks... Hours! Pretty incredible, right? As our world continues to shift towards the concept of instant gratification... RTA satisfies this desire in the outdoor living space.

Customer Service

Customer service is an often overlooked aspect of the purchasing process.

It's understandable why many of us discount the importance of customer service. In our daily lives, we make tons of small transactions without giving customer service a second thought. We simply consider the product at hand.

When you're making a large investment such as an outdoor kitchen... You want to consider the customer experience as seriously as the product you choose.

We all know outdoor kitchens are a big ticket item! So it's understandable to be concerned about what customer service will be like after the product is purchased. Will they be helpful? You want the company you choose to take good care of you... Even after they have your money.

Of course, high-quality customer service is essential during the buying process as well. Any questions or concerns you have should be answered swiftly.

How do you know a company has reputable customer service?

It's all in the reviews. Pay close attention to reviewers that have had negative experiences with the product. Did the company address the problem before the review was made? If not, did they respond to the customer? The answer to these questions will indicate what the customer experience is like.

Most companies have a "reactive" customer service approach. Customer service acts in response to a problem that has already occurred. While there's nothing inherently wrong with this... There's more that can be done.

RTA Outdoor Living



When it comes to customer experience, we go the extra mile. We take a "proactive" approach rather than reactive. Our high-touch purchasing process allows us to workshop and solve problems before they ever happen. And should you run into any problems with RTA... Everyone of our customers is assigned a dedicated customer success specialist to ensure that you receive world class service. Ensuring you have a positive experience is of utmost importance to us!

A Few RTA Reviews...



"Besides the quality of the product, the quality of the people that I dealt with should be the model for customer service. Every question that I had was promptly answered and every phone call was returned"

-Stephanie T



"Kevin and Phil worked tirelessly to make sure we were pleased with our final product. Their customer service is why I would recommend them to anyone looking to put a new kitchen in their outdoor space"

-Ben G



"I worked closely with Devin Graves throughout the process who was ALWAYS available to talk through and find solutions where necessary, thanks Devin, you made this a great experience with amazing results, thank you."

-James S

Hidden Costs You Should be Aware Of

It's true, we've talked about cost already... But what about hidden costs?

This is a topic most outdoor kitchen companies will gloss over. From our perspective, it's unfair to leave this information out.

Just because some of these expenses aren't obvious doesn't mean they won't factor into your budget! Understanding hidden costs will give you a glimpse into the true price of an outdoor kitchen.

Here, we'll outline the main hidden costs you will encounter.

Number One: Patio Construction



This may seem obvious to some... But it's still important to note. You need a place to put your outdoor kitchen, after all!

There are two main scenarios that catch homeowners by surprise. One example is if the outdoor kitchen you want doesn't fit on your current patio. If you're unable to adjust your outdoor kitchen layout... You'll have to extend the patio. This of course, will be an unseen added expense!

To avoid this problem, we recommend working with a design expert. They will ensure the design you've chosen will truly fit on your patio.

Another scenario is if your patio cannot handle the weight of your outdoor kitchen. Some outdoor kitchen methods are extremely heavy... So the patio requires reinforcement. You'll have to add structural footings to prevent settling or a compromised structure in the future. Oftentimes, this means you will have to rip up a section of the patio to install reinforcement. This can get expensive. (And messy!)

PRO TIP

Don't want to worry about the hassle of structural footings? Choose a lightweight outdoor kitchen system like RTA.

Number Two: Utility Lines



We've already touched upon utility lines several times... But let's take it a step further.

For those who live in cooler climates... You'll want to take special care with utility lines. If you live in an area with freezing weather, you'll want to winterize your utility lines. This will keep the



lines from freezing in the wintertime and prevent damage. So there's a bit of an added cost here.

The other hidden cost is installation of your utility lines. It's ideal to get this done before your patio is installed. You can have them stubbed up through the patio in the location of your outdoor kitchen.

Installing utility lines after your patio is built will be more expensive. More obstacles your plumber/electrician has to maneuver will translate to an increased labor bill. That bill can inflate even more if you have to rip up a section of your patio to install the lines as well.

Number Three: Landscaping



With all the upgrades you're adding to your outdoor living space... It's only natural you'll want to spruce up the landscaping as well. If your landscaping is already on point... You can most likely avoid this expense.

Depending on the outdoor kitchen solution you choose... You may actually have to pay to re-landscape your backyard.

Why?

Some construction methods are invasive to your property. They can tear up the yard and leave you with a huge mess to clean up. That means you'll be footing the bill to re-landscape your backyard. Not fun!

PRO TIP

Using a non-invasive construction method like RTA will leave your property undisturbed. That means there's no need to worry about re-landscaping... Unless you want to, of course. The choice is yours!

Number Four: Change Orders

Change orders can be an unwelcome and annoying part of any project! Most commonly, you'll encounter these when working with a contractor. Things come up during the project that aren't factored into the original proposal.

Some companies aren't a complete solution. Perhaps they supply the cabinets and countertops, but not appliances. Others may supply the appliances and cabinets, but not countertops. Either way... These companies will make it seem like you are being priced for the entire package. Only for you to find out later an essential component isn't included. That fine print can be sneaky!

Unfortunately, change orders aren't always avoidable. We suggest working with a company that can provide a final and transparent price. You want clarity upfront... That way you're not surprised by a change order in the middle of your project.

Number Five: Appliance / Island Covers





Many homeowners wonder... Are covers even necessary?

The short answer is... No, they're not necessary. However, appliance and island covers are highly recommended! Think of them as an extra way to protect your investment.

Appliance covers are fairly inexpensive. You'll find them costing anywhere from \$50-\$100. Even appliances made with a high-grade 304 stainless steel could benefit from a cover. The more you take care of your appliances... The longer they will last.

Island covers are a bit more expensive and depend on design. You'll usually see them priced around \$300-\$700. Think of these like you would a pool cover. You won't put them on and off whenever you use your outdoor kitchen. You'll put the cover on during the off-season for a few weeks or months.

Number Six: Grill Hoods



Hoods aren't necessary for all projects. However, it's important to know if you would benefit from one or not. Pay close attention if you are building your kitchen under a covered structure or against a wall with overhang.

Let's briefly describe how a range hood setup works. When you're grilling, the range hood sucks up and exhausts smoke from the cooking process. If your outdoor kitchen is against a wall or in a confined area... The smoke won't be able

to escape the area very easily.

This is where a range hood comes into play! It will protect the wall, ceiling, and nearby areas from becoming a sooty mess. It will also keep the area relatively smoke-free. So you and your guests won't be engulfed in a cloud of smoke. No one wants that! Let's keep your backyard a non-smoking area.

A range hood setup will typically come with three components: the hood, flue, and blower. Altogether, this will cost anywhere from \$2,000-\$4,000. There may be an additional cost for labor if you hire a contractor as well.

Number Seven: Appliance Parts & Replacements

Most reputable appliance manufacturers will



offer a lifetime warranty on appliances. Now, this doesn't cover all parts of the grill! Most often, this warranty only covers the housing/structure and the burners. Sometimes you will see grates covered under a lifetime warranty as well.

Other components of the grill will be covered under a lesser warranty. Parts such as the grill lights, electrical components, etc. will only be covered for a period of 1-5 years. After this time passes... You'll be responsible for any repairs or replacement parts. These parts won't set you back too much financially. It's just important to know what to expect. A refrigerator compressor could cost you as much as \$50-\$300... While a small ticket item may only run you \$15.

It's best to work with a company that has parts readily available. This makes repairs quick and easy. Much better than having to replace the



entire appliance! Ask the appliance manufacturer if they have parts readily available if something goes wrong in 5-10 years.

Number Eight: Hosting

You probably already knew about this one, but it's



worth a mention. Now that you own an outdoor kitchen... You'll undoubtedly be hosting more.

Therefore, you'll have the added expense of food, meats, drinks, and other party supplies. Your house will soon become the go-to hangout so plan for an uptick in hosting expenses!

Number Nine: Maintenance or Repairs

As we all know, an outdoor kitchen is a long term



investment. Regular maintenance will ensure your investment remains in pristine condition.

So, what has to be maintained?

Countertops and appliances are the main things.

Consider this more of an ongoing chore than an added expense. You'll spend more time than money maintaining your outdoor kitchen!

Appliances should ideally be cleaned after every use. Countertop maintenance depends on the material you choose. A more porous material such as concrete will require resealing annually or biannually.

Pretty easy, right? Repairs are really where the hidden costs reveal themselves.

Now, high quality outdoor kitchens should not need any repairs. Unfortunately, not all outdoor kitchens are created equally! Some methods are engineered as temporary solutions... Or they aren't designed to hold up in certain environments.

If you invest in an outdoor kitchen that's not meant to last... You'll be left with the nightmare of never-ending repairs. Even worse? Bearing the expense of a complete replacement. Yikes.

The need for maintenance and repairs ultimately comes down to the quality of material used. So ensure you choose materials wisely and diligently.

If an outdoor kitchen company offers a lifetime warranty... This is a great benefit! The company stands behind their product so you can feel confident in your investment. If the company offers no warranty or a limited warranty... We would advise against selecting said company. When things go wrong, you're going to be the one paying out of pocket. Some of these repairs aren't cheap, either!

OUTDOOR KITCHEN MATERIALS: WHAT ARE THE BEST OPTIONS?

So you're planning your outdoor kitchen. And you're wondering... What's the best material to make it out of? As you know, an outdoor kitchen is a huge investment. You want it to last as long as possible...

[Read More >>](#)





"Your house will soon become the go-to hangout so plan for an uptick in hosting expenses!"

Mistakes To Avoid When Buying An Outdoor Kitchen

If you've made it this far... You've certainly realized there's a lot to know about purchasing an outdoor kitchen!

As a result, there are many mistakes homeowners make in the process. This doesn't have to be you!

Below are the most common mistakes to avoid when purchasing an outdoor kitchen:

Improper Timing During Planning & Design

We all know the cliché about the early bird and the worm. Sadly, many homeowners are the late bird when it comes to their project.

Many homeowners wait far too long to begin the planning process. They may want to wait until the patio is in place to begin speaking with a designer. You may be wondering... What's wrong with that?

The reality is, the sooner you begin planning your project... The better. You can avoid many complications later on if things don't go as planned.

For example, the patio. If you design your outdoor kitchen before the patio is in place... You can be confident it will actually fit on your patio. You could even run utility lines ahead of time to streamline the process later. When you reverse the process, you run the risk of having to re-do sections of the patio.

Planning sooner will also allow you to properly complete your research. You can thoroughly research products, companies, contractors, etc. So when it comes time to install your outdoor kitchen... You have the best for your needs.

Time of year also plays a role. Most homeowners are beginning to think about outdoor kitchens in the spring. The weather's getting warmer... You

want to be outside more... It makes sense.

However, you can run into some trouble beginning your project in the spring. Between busy contractors, patio installation, utility line installation, deciding on the right company, etc... You can see how quickly you can become overwhelmed!

If you want your outdoor kitchen ready to use for the summer... There are a lot of decisions you have to make in a short period of time. The last thing you want to do is rush the process. You'll end up making decisions you regret later on.

So... When is the best time to plan, then? We recommend you begin planning in the fall and winter months. This will give you plenty of time to have your design ready to go for a spring installation. You may also save some money locking in your price during the fall/winter months as well.

Choosing a Company Based on Timeline

It's true, the timeline of your project is important. Especially if you have your heart set on being ready for Memorial Day weekend.

However, we suggest you take caution here. Don't fall victim to impatience! We can understand how enticing it is to hire a company because they will finish the project quickly.

The reality is... Good outdoor kitchen companies are in high demand. So if you want to work with a quality company... You may have to delay gratification for a bit.

The above is why we are huge advocates of planning early. You'll be prepared for the busy season and won't have to feel rushed.



Making your Decision Solely on Price

Ah, yes... The elephant again... Price. At the end of the day, a purchase is only made if the price is right.

Most homeowners come into projects wanting to adhere to a predetermined budget. While it is important to stick to your budget...We advise against choosing a company solely to stay within your budget.

You want the best deal that provides the most value. This doesn't always mean the cheapest option is the right choice.

Let's explain... Most people make a purchasing decision based on three factors. They want the best quality product, the highest level of service, and the lowest price possible. Therefore, the lowest price isn't the only thing you're looking for. What you truly want is the best value for your money.

When considering a purchase solely on price... You have to ask yourself some questions. Mainly, what are you willing to give up for your long term happiness? Companies won't be able to offer all three purchasing factors to you. In order to offer the highest quality product with the best service... It's simply going to cost more.

For example, we don't boast about having the lowest prices. We're not the cheapest option out there. However, that increased cost allows us to deliver the best quality product and service possible. We pride ourselves on world-class service and a high quality outdoor kitchen you'll enjoy for the long haul.

It's true... The price tag may sting at first. Yet, most homeowners never regret shelling out a bit extra for a product they love. The emotion behind owning the product is what they'll remember. Not the price. When you're enjoying your outdoor kitchen 10 years from now... You won't be concerned about the extra \$1,000 or so dollars you spent!

Conversely, people will regret saving money on a product they are not 100% thrilled with. Living with

a product that comes up short will simply serve as a negative reminder of what could have been.

Not Planning Enough Counter Space

Don't make the mistake of installing your beautiful outdoor kitchen... Only to have no functional counter space.

You need ample space to prepare and serve food. While it's appealing to fill your design with grills, side burners, and other appliances... If you're left with no work space, you're going to be frustrated! While these appliances are wonderful, it won't mean much if you have no countertop space.

A huge reason why people purchase an outdoor kitchen is convenience. You don't want to run in and out of the house to cook a nice meal outdoors. If you don't plan for adequate counter space... You can just about throw that convenience out the window!

Not Including Storage

We know storage drawers aren't glamorous appliances. However, they are extremely functional!

Remember, an outdoor kitchen is all about convenience. Just as with counter space... You want an area to store utensils and other supplies. Otherwise, you'll be running in and out of the house just like before you owned an outdoor kitchen.

You purchased an outdoor kitchen to avoid the runaround! Don't be that person. Ensure you have at least some storage incorporated into your outdoor kitchen design.

OUTDOOR KITCHEN PLANNING? – TOP 5 MISTAKES TO AVOID

Imagine how glorious it will be to have an outdoor kitchen in your backyard. The sun is shining, the birds are chirping, and fresh burgers are sizzling on the grill. You'll finally be equipped to host all your...

[Read More >>](#)



What Are My Next Steps?

First of all, give yourself a pat on the back for reading this entire guide. You are well on your way to becoming an educated outdoor kitchen buyer!

Certainly, you're wondering where to go from here. Consider this the beginning of many decisions you are about to be making!

For now, we'd suggest continuing your research. Are there any outdoor kitchen solutions that jumped out at you? Explore them more.

Begin determining your needs/wants. What is important for you to have in an outdoor kitchen? What are your non-negotiables?

As you start to narrow down what may work best for you... Begin researching outdoor kitchen companies and/or contractors. You'll get a sense of what is offered and who best serves your needs.

Another suggestion is to speak with a design expert. When taking on an outdoor kitchen project in earnest... Planning your design is one of the first things you will do.

Speaking directly with an expert will help you truly understand what is possible in your space. They'll answer your burning questions and guide you into the right direction.

If you're looking to speak with a design expert... Why not schedule a call with one of our own? Outdoor kitchens are our passion, after all.

We would be honored to assist you in your outdoor kitchen project.

Best of luck to you on this journey!

[Start By Using Our Free Design Tool](#)





A photograph of a group of people at an outdoor kitchen. In the center, a man in a blue patterned shirt is being toasted by two others. A woman on the right is smiling and holding a glass. A man on the left is also holding a glass. They are all raising their glasses in a toast. The background shows a wooden fence, some greenery, and a white sink with a fruit basket. The text "HOST THE MOMENTS THAT MATTER" is overlaid in the center, with "MOMENTS" in large white letters and "HOST THE" and "THAT MATTER" in smaller white letters. Two blue triangles are positioned behind the text.

HOST THE
MOMENTS
THAT MATTER