

planning your outdoor kitchen

determining place & purpose



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Having an outdoor kitchen is a luxury that most homeowners and grilling enthusiasts only dream of. Being able to cook, entertain, and store food all in one outdoor area is a useful amenity to anyone looking to increase the value of their home or to improve the amount of quality time that is spent with their family. When you work with LanChester Grill & Hearth to design your outdoor kitchen, that dream can easily become a reality.

Now that you've determined you want to make the investment in an outdoor kitchen, there are a lot of seemingly daunting tasks that go along with the decision-making process. In this article we will walk you through how to hone in on optimizing the function and location of the cooking station in your new outdoor kitchen.

Determine Your Needs. The first step to planning your outdoor cooking station is to determine everything that you need before you get started or make any purchases. We've put together a list of common questions to ask yourself, but we suggest keeping your own list in addition to this one to help make the planning go as smoothly as possible.

Establishing a Budget. If you're only seeing dollar signs

around every corner of the planning process, take a moment to step back and actually assess all of your outdoor cooking essentials. Is it necessary to have that extra storage cabinet, or are you close enough to your indoor kitchen that you can keep things consolidated to another area? Put a cap on how much you want to spend and plan within those means—and don't forget to ask a professional for more help on how to contain costs.

Connecting to Utilities. A big factor in your outdoor kitchen plans that most people forget about is figuring out the cost of running utilities to your kitchen. Unless your outdoor entertainment space is close to your current kitchen or other utility lines, installation costs may come into play. Whether it's gas, water, or electric, we advise discussing this with one of our professionals to determine where your current utility connections are located.

What Drainage Will You Need? The plumbing needs of your outdoor kitchen can be another big cost dynamic if you're not careful with your outdoor kitchen plans. Determining if you need both hot and cold water to run, where the sink will drain to, and adhering to any local codes are all things to ask your contractor about.



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What Kind of Shelter Will You Want? Having an outdoor kitchen also comes with the challenge of facing the elements. Certain appliances may need some kind of cover if they're going to withstand storms—will you need partial cover, full cover, or maybe no cover at all? If your space is going to be used for entertaining, you may want cover to simply have an escape from the summer sun as well. Coverage can come in the form of a roof, awning, or pergola—ask us what we think will work best for your layout.

What Kind of Cooking Do You Want to Do? There is a plethora of uses for outdoor kitchens, and with that variety also comes an assortment of cooking methods and appliances. Smokers, pizza ovens, cooktops, grills, and wet bars are some of the most common ones, but your imagination is the limit when it comes to what you can use your kitchen for to prepare your favorite food and drink. Determining the main uses of your outdoor area will help set a foundation for your outdoor kitchen plans.

How Many People Do You Plan to Cook For? Depending on the size of your family, you may need to plan for more entertainment or seating space for your outdoor area. If you plan on hosting larger get-togethers, allowing enough space for tables and chairs is essential when planning your design. Make sure you plan for enough walking space, as well, and don't block any appliances or cabinets from opening.

How Much Prep Space Will You Need? Are you one of those people who tends to spread out and make a huge mess while cooking? Or maybe you're a bit neater and tend to clean as you go so you have more space to cook? Either way, think about how large you need your prep stations to be. If your outdoor kitchen is close enough to your indoor one, you may not need a huge amount of counter space. On the other hand, if you plan





on storing food outside, having a larger prep area may be easier so you're not running back and forth between counters.

Finding the Best Location. Figuring out the layout of your outdoor kitchen plans is not necessarily as simple as drawing up where you want your appliances and storage. Before you even get to that step, you'll need to decide on the location for your new outdoor entertainment area, and there are a few things to take note of as you plan it out.

Estimating How Much Space You Need. If you haven't yet done so, make a list of areas and features that you'd like to be included in your plans. Once you've done that, you can better estimate how much space you're actually going to need. Not only that, but once you know what you're going to primarily be using your space for, you'll be able to come up with an optimum flow that makes sense for your needs.

Once you have planned the potential layout of your kitchen and figured out any other outdoor kitchen essentials, get in touch with us and we'll work with you every step of the way to make sure your outdoor kitchen plans become a reality.

FIGURING OUT KITCHEN ZONES

Your new outdoor kitchen is so close that you can almost taste those perfect grill marks on your next steak. You can't help but visualize your family playing in the backyard as you cook a hearty meal, enjoying that much-desired outdoor time with them. Yet there's still one thing missing—where are you going to put everything?

When it comes to outdoor kitchen designs for your new space, there's a lot to consider. Even if you've already decided on the placement of your kitchen and appliances, there's at least one more aspect that LanChester Grill & Hearth suggests looking at—kitchen zones. There are essentially four types of kitchen zones: cooking, prep, plating/serving, and entertaining. Each of these zones can also be classified as either hot, cold, wet, or dry, and they will help keep your outdoor cooking as organized as possible.

Cooking Zone. The first, and probably most important, zone is your cooking zone. This is a hot zone and contains your grill, oven, smoker, pizza oven, cooktop, or any other appliance you plan on using for outdoor cooking. It's important that this zone has plenty of space for when you're cooking. Nothing is more frustrating than running to the other end of the counter for an ingredient or shoving things together to try and optimize more counter

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space. We recommend side burners for grills and storage space for propane tanks and cooking utensils. The side burners will give you more space to cook, but can also work as a place to keep your food warm. Having plenty of cabinets and drawers will allow you to hide unsightly propane tanks or wires, as well as store outdoor cooking utensils so you don't have to run inside when you forget to grab a spatula.

Prep Zone. Any good cook knows that keeping raw foods away from cooked foods is extremely important. When you're working on your outdoor kitchen plans, make sure that there is plenty of space between your cooking and prep zones. As a wet zone, consider having your sink, freezer, and waste disposal all in this area. Not only will it help with prep and clean-up, but it will also help keep anything from getting contaminated. The prep zone is also a good area to keep any sealed, dry storage items you may need to use frequently. Dishes, glasses, paper towels, cutting boards, and even dry food can be easily stored in drawers or cabinets in this area, so take that into consideration.

Plating & Serving Zones. After your food is prepped and cooked, the next step is plating and serving. If you already have your prep area dedicated to non-food items like cleaning supplies, the plating and serving area is the next best zone to store your dishes and glasses. That way, when you're ready to serve food, it's as easy as getting plates out of a cabinet near the grill. In addition to dish storage, consider installing warming trays or drawers to help keep food at the desired temperature before you're ready to serve. If you don't already have cold storage in your prep area, the plating and serving zones are great for refrigerators for drinks as well. Having a good balance of both dry and cold storage will be essential in your outdoor kitchen plans. If your area has a space constraint, storage will be even more important in order to optimize your outdoor cooking and keep pathways clear.

Entertaining Zone. If you plan on large outings with friends and family, this last zone may be the most important to you. Some outdoor kitchen designs have less cooking space to accommodate bartending or food serving space. If that sounds like your ideal design, consider moving cold storage to this zone and keeping it close to your plating and serving area. Appliances like wine coolers, kegerators, ice machines, and blenders are perfect for the entertaining zone. Also, depending on how much bartending will be involved, an extra small sink in this area may not be a bad idea.

Don't forget to consider counter space and layout for this area of your outdoor kitchen. If you have barstool seating, you may want to have a tiered counter so that your guests have more leg room, but also so you're not preparing drinks on the same level that they'll be leaning on and eating at.

No matter what route you go with your outdoor kitchen plans, know that the professionals at LanChester Grill & Hearth are here to help you every step of the way. Outdoor cooking is our passion, and we want to make sure that the layout of your outdoor kitchen is efficient and optimized for all of your needs. Get in touch with us to start your big project TODAY!

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