

Ah, summer, what power you have to make us suffer and like it. - Russell Baker

OUTDOOR COOKIN' - JOE VICKERS



As the mercury rises in Las Vegas and the summer months approach, many local homeowners turn to their second kitchen for refuge. Trying to evade the additional heat that comes from turning on the oven in the summer is paramount and with the high cost of electricity, keeping homes cool during this time of year is often a financial struggle. Add to that the current state of the economy, and dining out every meal suddenly doesn't seem a very viable option either. Enter the outdoor kitchen.

The demand for outdoor kitchens and other outdoor living spaces has risen exponentially over the past few years. Homeowners have found that converting their backyards into their very own resort getaway provides a perfect place to entertain, dine, and cook. Everything a culinary expert needs can be found in these spaces: state-of-the-art

barbecues and grills, rotisseries, fryers, refrigerators, sinks, icemakers, wine coolers, warming drawers, pizza ovens, and even kegerators. All of it built into sleek counters and enclosures that are as stunning as their indoor counterparts. Supplemented with other outdoor elements such as fireplaces, overhead structures, water features, furniture, televisions and sound systems these outdoor spaces truly become an additional room with benefits that only Mother Nature can provide.

For years, successful restaurants have adopted the idea of providing an outdoor dining area to take advantage of the tranquil atmosphere and feeling of freedom that comes with being outside. Now that same idea is being brought into backyards everywhere. Homeowners and guests alike can opt to wine and dine at the bar or lounge in comfy couches around a fireplace. They can sit and listen to bubbling water while watching birds or reading their favorite book. In the end, the feeling of relaxation that comes from fresh air, the smell of blooming flowers, the sound of running water, or the crackle of a fire provide all the reasons to save your money and choose to dine in.

FAVORITE RECIPE

To go with this month's article of outdoor kitchens and since the BBQ season is upon us, we decided to add a favorite recipe to the newsletter. This month it's Super Simple Guacamole!

- 1 ripe avocado
- 2 garlic cloves, pressed or minced
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- juice of 1/2 lime

Mash all ingredients together with a fork. Serve immediately with chips, on quesadillas or in another favorite recipe. Serves 2-4.



FAVORITE FLORA:

HESPERALOE FUNIFERA - GIANT HESPERALOE - BY: MATT DURHAM



Usually the plants covered in this section have an interesting story or fact I like to tell but this month's plant is about as straight forward as you can get. Maybe it's simplicity and all-around good qualities make it such a great plant for almost every landscape. The Giant Hesperaloe (*Hesperaloe funifera*) is a large evergreen succulent that grows to about 6' in height and about 8' in width. It loves full sun and reflected heat and can handle Las Vegas winters with ease. This Chihuahuan desert native will shoot up 8-12 ft. tall stalks topped with greenish white flowers in the late spring to early summer. The Giant Hesperaloe is drought tolerant once established and can live on a watering every month or two in the summer months. The only maintenance this plant needs is the removal of the dead flower stalks.

Hesperaloe funifera can be used in many landscape settings from a desert foundation plant to a tropical accent. Try planting Verbena or other flowering groundcovers to add some color around the base of this succulent. The Giant Hesperaloe can even make a good accent or specimen for a large pot.

Next month's plant is about as native to Las Vegas as you can get, it also gives this desert its great aroma when it rains...

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



DUCK CREEK, UT

JOE CRAPO

INTREPID ENGINEERING