

The Inside Scoop on Outdoor Kitchens!

By Phil Hanna

Outdoor living areas offer many advantages. Whether it is expanding usable square footage to accommodate entertaining, adding value to the asset or just having a great place to relax and enjoy dinner or drinks, the outdoor living experience adds a totally new dimension.

A few years ago, we decided to add a pool and while we were at it an outdoor kitchen. We shopped around for some prebuilt units. Even though there were some beautifully crafted kitchens, we decided to build our own. I contacted a friend of mine who was in the construction business and shared my vision. Since the pool had some neat angles I wanted to carry that theme through to the outdoor kitchen. We drew out a plan, made a materials list and pulled the needed permits to begin the construction. Since we live on the water, we constructed the kitchen of materials that can withstand the sea air environment. I love to cook and take great pride in preparing meals on the Big Green Egg, a ceramic cooker that uses real lump charcoal (not charcoal briquettes) as a fuel source. The Egg is the focal point of my kitchen. From time to time, I use our gas grill as well so building that into the plan was a must. Now that I had the two cooking sources as the co-stars of my entertainment area, I needed to complete the show with supporting cast members. I needed a sink, a refrigerator and plenty of storage space. Just like indoor kitchens are the center for gathering, the outdoor kitchen has to fulfill the same



role. So, a large granite countertop allowed plenty of space to serve food and drinks. We used metal studs to frame our kitchen. These require a special metal cutting blade to make clean and accurate cuts. Once we began framing and the kitchen started to take shape, the rest of the framing fell into place. Working with metal studs is a challenge initially. We used hardy board to cover the framework and it was gratifying to see the kitchen begin to come alive. I scoured the internet for a source for stainless steel cabinets and drawers and picked up a bar sink from the local Home Depot. Once all was in place, it was time to call in my best electrician friend, Allen Sheets to wire the kitchen. We had code come in and inspect our work and all passed. Next it was time to fabricate the granite countertop. Careful measurements were taken and the template was made. Next the actual granite was delivered and put in place. Wow, what a difference it made in the kitchen's appearance. The final step was having a crew of stucco specialist match the look of the outdoor kitchen area to the main home. They did a great job of bringing the old and new together. Next we placed the Big Green Egg into its next and the Twin Eagles gas grill into its new home. All connections were completed, new ceiling light put into place, fire up the Egg and start enjoying the new outdoor experience.

