

TAKING THE

Inside Out

By Donna Cohen



There is something very welcoming about a secluded outdoor space surrounded by wonderful foliage, gorgeous flowers, candles and the sound of cascading water. From outdoor cookouts to elegant garden parties, the calming, soothing environment creates all the elements for very easy entertaining. Whether you are looking for a place to entertain, cook for your family or unwind alone, a secluded outdoor space is the perfect antidote for even the most hectic of days. To get you started with designing your very own outdoor space, you should start by considering these 10 basic suggestions:

1 Build a kitchen. For these hot Florida summer nights, it is so great to have an outdoor kitchen and not to have to go inside to do one thing. With those lazy, hazy days of summer upon us, you can make the salad, boil the pasta and grill the chicken—all the while enjoying a frozen daiquiri with your guests at your outdoor bar. Also, keeping a set of unbreakable dishes for patio dining on hand guarantees that you'll never have to worry about breakage!

2 Choose a style. When designing your outdoor space, make sure it follows the same architectural lines of your existing house. I can remember going to a friend's house who was so excited about her new "outdoor room." She had a lovely colonial New England style home, but her outdoor room was very Mediterranean in style, with arches and lots of heavy ornate tile. She was so proud, and it was beautiful, but it looked like two separate houses. Always make sure the styles flow together!

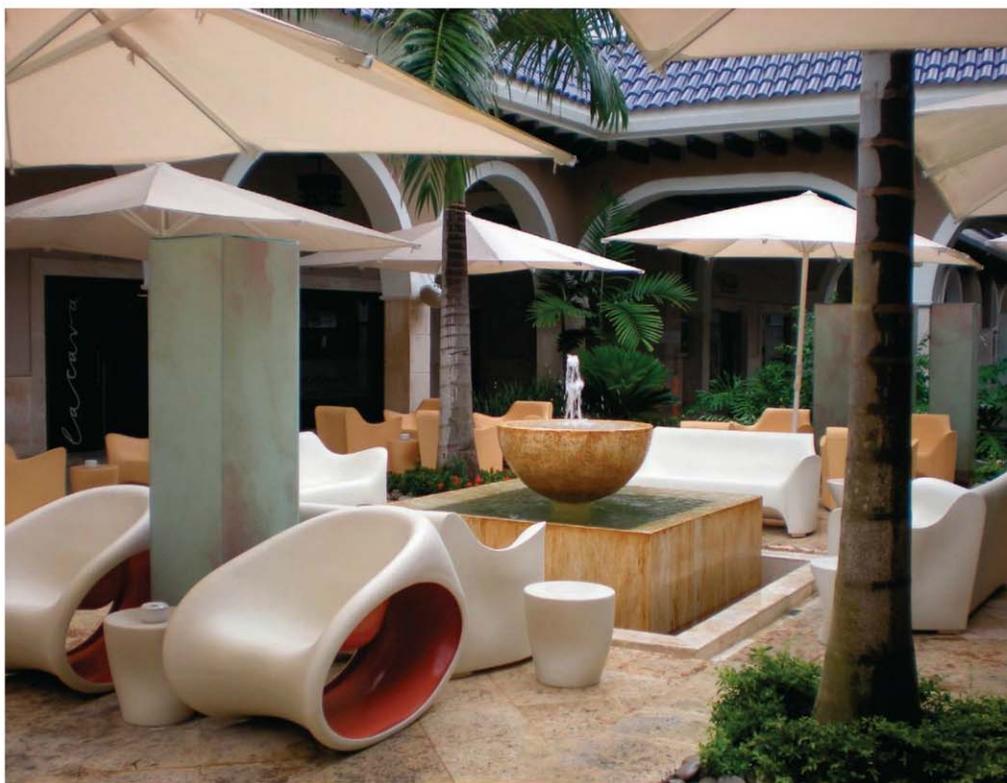
3 Relax with water. You want your outdoor space to become a personal oasis. Water is instinctively soothing, and water structures are crucial to outside rooms. Pick a pond, bubbler or waterfall that suits the style and scale of your space. You can do something as simple as a wall fountain, or as elaborate as a cascading wall of water, which would certainly be the focal point of your outdoor space! The look is important, but the sound is even more important!

4 Make it personal. Including items in your outside “living room” with all the elements you love is crucial for personalizing your outdoor space. You could create a “kitchen” that surrounds you or outdoor chandeliers and lighting that add charm and warmth. Rugs that can withstand the exterior elements add to the enchanting atmosphere and become a perfect accent. You can also integrate exterior furniture that is not all hard surfaces—there are so many fabrics that are weather resistant and do not look like they are “outdoor fabrics.”

5 Accessorize. There are many outdoor paintings now that withstand climate changes; your local patio furniture store should have access to them. These wall accents also make your space look inviting, and all you have to do is hose them off! Also, there are some very cool architectural elements that can withstand the outside and look great on an outside wall, while still adding dimension.

6 Make it functional. The ideal outdoor kitchen will have plenty of easy-care countertop space, an icemaker, an outside refrigerator, a side burner, a grill with a super venting system and good lighting. The ideal space will be L-shaped with a higher bar for your friends and family to sit and visit while you are cooking.

7 Make do with what you have. If you have a patio home with a small backyard, you can extend your living space with a small patio by installing a simple pergola to protect you from the weather. Along with hanging some candle chandeliers from the lattice work, you can hang a paddle fan to circulate the air. You can also add two comfortable chairs and an ottoman, a small dining table with four chairs, an exterior rug to cover the concrete and voila! You can easily



create an outdoor living room while adding to your square footage with very little money!

8 Keep it maintainable. In a bigger outdoor space, you will want a drain down the center of your space so that you won't have standing water after hosing the floor. Have tile, brick or travertine sealed—and have it done once a year for easy care!

9 Identify your space. You could center your outdoor area on entertaining a crowd for dinner or a football party, creating a reading nook for after work or to drink coffee, hosting children's birthday parties—or a mixture of several ideas to create a multipurpose space. Most outdoor rooms are outfitted with TV's now, so make sure they are well covered (TV covers can be ordered online), or you can purchase an outdoor TV that can withstand any kind of exterior elements and can be hosed off—it's expensive, but worth it.

10 Use it year-round. In this climate, this is one of the best additions to your home, and well worth it for resale. There are very few months that you won't be able to use your outdoor space, especially if you have plenty of fans in the hot and humid months—and in the cooler months, buy and use the inexpensive restaurant patio heaters.

If you are undecided when trying to design your space, call an expert—a designer is always willing to help and can guide you in the right direction. Before you know it, you will be enjoying your first margarita in your new outdoor room!



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