



The form and function of the Coleman BackHome Select 7700 Grill makes a stylish choice for upscale dining on the patio.

High-end grills for outdoor kitchens

BY CHANDRA ORR
Copley News Service

Nothing says summer like alfresco dining on a new patio complete with a built-in homage to barbecue. The latest cookout craze blends the outdoors with out-of-this-world bistro-inspired kitchen areas featuring integrated grills, plenty of counter space and casual seating.

City dwellers and homeowners sitting on small plots don't necessarily have the room to create a full outdoor eatery, but that doesn't mean they can't transform their patio into an oasis of culinary delights. The latest portable grills and accessories go a long way toward replicating the look of high-end outdoor kitchens. From die-hard barbecue buffs to amateur enthusiasts, anyone can transform a small space into an open-air eatery with major charm. "People are always looking for a way to maximize the space they already have. The great outdoors is no different," said Jay Baker, host of DIY Network's "Build an Outdoor Kitchen."

Transforming a back yard into an entertainment haven doesn't take much — just a well-planned space and a will to have fun. Finding a way to incorporate plenty of work space and cooking equipment may be the biggest hurdle homeowners face. Because most patios are limited in size, space-saving grills can make all the difference between a relaxed eating area and cramped quarters. "The important thing is to use the space you have wisely," Baker said. "You don't want to have so many appliances and storage

areas that your guests don't have a place to sit and enjoy the area with the cook.

"Once this consideration is in the design, put the grill in the most convenient spot for access to the house and add other appliances and features around it," he said.

■ For maximum grilling in the minimum amount of space, nothing beats the Coleman BackHome Select 7700 Grill. This posh portable grill has real power. With 50,000 BTUs, a split lid for zone cooking, a chromed warming rack and a rotisserie back burner, it takes gourmet grilling to the next level.

The exclusive steamer, fryer and warmer all-in-one is perfect for whipping up a batch of homemade fries or cooking fresh corn on the cob. Large 15-inch side tables provide plenty of room to work.

With multiple cupboards and drawers for spices, sauces, marinades and utensils, this grill is ready to go whenever the urge strikes.

The retail price is \$1,200. For more information, visit www.coleman.com.

■ The space-saving Ducane 5-Burner Grill is another great bet. More compact than the Coleman model, it comes with all the bragging rights of its larger counterparts. The sleek cast-aluminum grill features five burners, and with hidden coasters, this portable piece looks as good as any built-in model.

With ample cooking space, a built-in warming rack and a spit-fork rotisserie, it packs the mandatory grilling gadgets yet measures less than 6 feet in diameter. Its small size is deceiving though. With three large storage cup-

boards built into the portable stand and ample counter space for whipping up a batch of Dad's famous hot sauce, this grill is a complete kitchen unto itself.

The retail price is \$900. For more information, visit www.ducane.com.

Add a few well-designed deck chairs and an outdoor serving cart and let the block party begin. The stainless-steel Coleman Outdoor Entertainment Center is a great fit for those with limited space.

With a large counter and a drop-leaf shelf, chefs will never want for work space. Two removable storage shelves double as serving trays, which makes for quick work when dishing up the delicacies. When dinner is done, cleanup is a breeze: The Entertainment Center features built-in utensil storage, towel racks and a sink and faucet, which easily connect to any garden hose.

The retail price is \$250. For more information, visit www.coleman.com.

A backyard kitchen doesn't have to be extravagant or expensive. Patios with portable grills can look just as good as those fancy built-in grills — and at a fraction of the cost. The prime ingredient here is fun. Just taking dinner outdoors is enough to spice up any summer day. After all, as Becker put it, "Who doesn't like a cookout?"

For more information on designing an outdoor eatery, visit www.DIYnetwork.com.

Seasonal sales offer big savings

BY BETHANY BROADWELL
Special to the Record-Eagle

While sailboats are breezing across the bay this summer, sale signs are floating in Traverse City-area stores this season. Customers looking to purchase home furnishings and goods are apt to find savings in a variety of stores for a different reason.

With the amount of competition in the appliance business, Jeff Owens, owner of Max's, said his store offers values everyday to match the chain stores. What changes, according to him, are the types of items being promoted.

The summer, Owens said, is when Max's has the best selection of refrigerators. He estimated family-sized refrigerators will start at about \$399 and the store's best-selling refrigerators will sell for approximately \$599.

Looking ahead to his hottest fall product, Owens described the General Electric front-load washer, expected to sell between \$899-\$999, which will have a built-in water heater, super-sized capacity and come in white and platinum gray.

Compared to Max's independent store atmosphere, the Traverse City Home Depot is one of the chain's 1,500 retail stores, and there's a good reason to keep an eye on their flyers.

"Our main office in Atlanta, Ga., maintains and directs all of our marketing strategy," said Brian Chandler, Home Depot kitchen design manager. "We rarely know of any promotions until 48 hours of its release."

Chandler said appliances that help people stay cool, like wine coolers, portable ice makers, keg refrigerators and mini-fridges, are popular to beat the summer heat.

Chandler reminded the store staff does not work on commission so they are inclined to offer products to meet customers' needs as opposed to earning a higher profit.

He said, "The Home Depot will beat any competitor's price on the same product by a full 10 percent."

Steven Petrosky, general manager for The Comfort Center, not only emphasized the free delivery his store offers, but also the sales staff's friendly, low-pressure approach to helping customers this season.

This summer, he said, the cost of steel has risen, making some of the store's sleep products more expensive.

Nevertheless, they are trying to hold the prices as steady as possible.

The Comfort Center's summer sleep sale will feature as much as 20 to 50 percent discounts on items customers can sleep on — pieces like mattresses, futons, sleep sofas and bunk beds. According to Petrosky, a main purpose of the sale is "to accommodate people with out-of-town guests."

Art Van, meanwhile, will be helping customers get into the true shopping spirit when they hold their Christmas in July sale throughout most of the month.

"Christmas in July is a favorite with our customers," said Cathy DiSante, Art Van's director of marketing. "They get great sale prices like the ones you would find during the Christmas holiday season and also can pick out a free gift with every purchase — things like a cake platter, chip 'n dip set, spice rack, votive candle sets and other great items for the home."

Savings will be as much as 65 percent on merchandise storewide.

For the fall, DiSante said Art Van is bringing in some special products with a lodge look just for the northern Michigan area. The store will have a great collection of upholstery with a northern Michigan motif of hunting, fishing and camping. Another fall trend DiSante described is a pub height gathering table, generally in a square shape, with seating for eight.

DiSante added with more than 60 styles to choose from, electric fireplaces should be popular, too, because they can be plugged into any wall socket and create the ambiance of having a fireplace in any room of a customer's home.

Creating a relaxed atmosphere is what Natalie Foisie, store manager and designer for VanDrie Home furnishings, said their sales team tries to accomplish.

This summer VanDrie's factory overstock sell-off sale will run from July 10-24. Savings will vary, but they will be up to 75 percent off regular prices. This will

include one of the cash plans, interest-free payment for one year.

The manufacturer is giving her a pick up bus, and she is giving her a pick up bus. Vandrie's, a main purpose of the sale is "to accommodate people with out-of-town guests."

Plus, Foisie said, a month when making room for arrivals.

New fabrics from the Art Van Customers' own fabric collection. Vandrie's pick up bus, a main purpose of the sale is "to accommodate people with out-of-town guests."

"Designer furniture is a trend toward per se, robin's egg blue, said. "Flooring went to more while beige is popular."

Another trend described is decorative and tie kitchen room color.

"We run a summer month people to be normally on summer activities than working projects like new furniture."

Golden-Furniture Furnishing their sale outside during annual tent sale 27-31.

"The tent is overstock, is promotional. Mike Mahn, store manager, said, an assistant, including dining room tables, living room pieces, and more, for 40-70 percent prices.

While Max's store is a popular customers' Fowler's terrace served refreshments they will find upbeat outdoor atmosphere.

Bethany Broadwell is a local freelance writer.

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