

## Paradise is Where You Make It—Your Backyard!

The smell of barbecued meats wafting through the warm air, the sound of squeals and splashing in the pool...what could be better? Not sizzling like a human steak next to the grill as you prepare the food, for one. There's a simple solution to complete the picture of backyard fun that adds quality of life for everyone in the home: an outdoor kitchen and patio cover. However, there are some basics to decide on before "digging in."

Determine how much protection you want your roof to provide from sun and weather. If you want shade that allows plentiful air flow but aren't concerned about keeping precipitation out, an open-air design is the perfect fit. Alternatively, protection from the sun *and* moderate precipitation can be achieved with a solid roof outfitted with shingles or metal. A final option that mixes elements of both is polycarbonate panels, which diffuse light coming through and also protect from the weather. If choosing a solid roof, the installation of a ceiling fan may be necessary to dissipate trapped heat.

Remember the phrase "Location, location, location!"? Clearly, they were talking about outdoor kitchen and patio covers. Though you might have the ideal spot in mind for your cover, building codes can dictate whether structures need to be attached or detached, and whether a structure can be set directly on an existing concrete slab. The concrete slab must be thick enough to support the weight of the structure, otherwise, original footings will have to be fabricated. If working with an existing deck, some local building codes will actually allow bolting the patio cover to existing deck beams, joists and other heavy parts of the structure. HOAs also have their own guidelines when it comes to the aesthetic of your patio addition, so be sure to check with them before beginning construction, or better yet, hire a professional who's already familiar with local building codes and HOA requirements.

Careful consideration must be paid to the size of your outdoor kitchen and patio cover. For any furniture that will be housed beneath it, you'll want to ensure there's enough room to move around it and between posts or columns. How much of the area do you want your outdoor kitchen to take up? Or if there will be no seating beneath the cover, will your kitchen function as a bar with barstools on the opposite side of the counter? These questions not only play into the width and depth of your cover, but height as well, because shorter heights will provide more shade but can feel tighter on space, whereas taller heights will provide a more open feel at the expense of shade.

With these considerations in mind, your backyard paradise will be off to a splendid start, destined to become the outdoor living space your home was meant to have while also adding exponentially to its resale value.

