

Living

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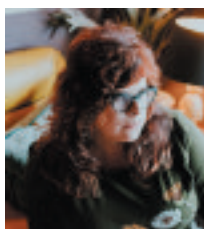
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GARDEN GROW-HOW

Leigh-on-Sea-based **Katrina Kieffer-Wells MSGD**, on embracing the al fresco dining experience this summer

You could be forgiven for wanting to eat inside a restaurant rather than outside in your garden this summer. But once the warmer weather arrives, dining outside becomes irresistible. Dining al fresco makes us feel like we're on holiday and brings family and friends together. Plus it's easier to tidy up afterwards. Make it a happy experience for all, with a few outdoor living hacks.

Garden furniture

When buying furniture for al fresco dining, think about how many people you'll regularly cater for. Consider their ages and individual needs – and, of course, storage. Where will it all go in winter? We often build bespoke dining tables and seating in our gardens for these very reasons.

A table made just for you will suit your individual household. We use railway sleepers or treated hardwood so it's as weatherproof as possible, which also means no need for storage.

Sunshine and shade

We may love the sun, but eating and drinking in blazing sunshine without shade is no fun at all. An umbrella will help, but a pergola or some pleached trees offer more interesting shade cover.

They also provide privacy. Grow gorgeous creepers like rose and jasmine over your pergola to make your dining experience look and smell divine.



‘Grow gorgeous creepers like rose and jasmine over your pergola to make your dining experience look and smell divine’

Accessories and lighting

Accessories are the cherry on the cake with outdoor dining. If you are outside after dark, you are going to need some lighting and probably heating too.

Cushions are always a good buy, because garden furniture is often hard on the backside as well as hard wearing, and they also add colour.

But there are loads of other ways to accessorise your dining area. Aromatic herbs in decorative pots on the table look and smell lovely. Candles, lanterns and tea lights bring a touch of romance, while outdoor rugs will make it more homely.

Cooking outdoors

There has been a huge boom in outdoor kitchens. They can be beautiful and no doubt a big step-up from the humble barbecue, but they also come with a hefty price tag.

A fire pit for marshmallows or an outdoor pizza oven are great for families. They make cooking a fun activity and add extra charm for eating food together as friends.

Award-winning Earth Designs are members of the British Association of Landscape Industries and the Association of Professional Landscapers

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