

Alfresco dining



Dara Wyton

The making of a fantastic outdoor dining room—an intimate cozy atmosphere with great ambience, great food, and great company—is summer dining at its best. An alfresco dining area can be something quick and simple that is put up with ease, or it can be a little more complex, like building a two-person gazebo. Whatever you choose will soon become one of your many summer delights.

Here are a few pointers for making the most of your outdoor dining room:

1. Choose a really great location such as a patio, a pergola, an intimate spot on the deck, or a cozy corner of the yard.

2. Your dining room should have defined boundaries. These can be achieved by the presence of walls, half walls, trees, or cloth. You should also have something overhead for a feeling of containment. If you do not have a covered patio or gazebo, simply purchase a large umbrella, canopy, or fabric.

3. Choose an appropriately scaled dining table for the functions you will be having. If it is just going to be you and your spouse or friend, then a small round table would be perfect. If you are planning to have dinner parties, it's probably best to have a larger rectangular table for ample seating. Try bringing a few pieces of your indoor furniture outside for special occasions. To make the space feel even more room-like, try adding a buffet, bar, or serving cart. Do not be afraid to mix it up—choose a round table with mismatched iron chairs, add different coloured seat cushions, or bring



PHOTO: SUBMITTED

Make the most of your outdoor dining room

a sense of whimsy outdoors by mixing your favourite styles.

4. Lighting, lighting, lighting. Try hanging a candelabra over the table, using hurricane lanterns or candles, or stringing lights around the room. Keep the lighting at equal intensity so it is balanced. If you have porch or other exterior lights, make sure they don't overpower the space and interfere with the ambience.

5. Decorate and accessorize. Outdoor dining is the perfect opportunity to get fun and funky. Look for bright colours, vibrant patterns, and different shapes. Or think vintage, softer colours, a real lived-in look. Bring the ocean to your backyard with sea blues, shells, accessories, and a sand-coloured sisal area rug. Do not be afraid to use fabric—there are numerous outdoor textiles on the market that look fabulous. These are durable and weatherproof, but to keep them looking their best, bring them in for the winter.

What not to do: Do not bring

your sofa outside. It will not withstand the weather. (Don't laugh—I have seen this!) Do not string multicoloured Christmas lights all over. Do not fill your outdoor dining room with tchotchkes (knickknacks such as garden gnomes and bird figurines). ■

Contact Dara Wyton Design for a design consultation: 604-989-4000 or www.darawyton.com

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