

CASE STUDY

Blending an Outdoor Kitchen Addition

WITH AN EXISTING HOME



For the past decade or more, custom home builders have taken on new types of projects that are becoming more and more commonplace.

Even predating the pandemic when the demand rose even higher, homeowners have been looking to extend their home's living area into outdoor spaces. Over the years, the concrete patio off the back door or a cedar deck with a big-box hardware-store grill has become inadequate for many people looking to improve their homes. Those areas being replaced with full, covered outdoor living spaces, often complete with a dining area, expensive outdoor living room furniture, entertainment, fireplaces and a complete outdoor kitchen. It's a space where family and friends can spend hours relaxing, conversing, dining and watching TV.

"I'm seeing a huge trend in it right now, especially with interest rates going up," said Selby Davis of Selby Davis Builder, LLC. "People are wanting to spruce up what they have and enjoy being outside."

From the point of view of a custom home builder, the outdoor living space provides profitable new opportunities as well as new challenges. Among them is making the new addition blend seamlessly into the existing home. When done well, it shouldn't look like an addition at all, but rather part of the home that was designed and built together, as if it had been there all along. Doing so means not only consistency from a materials and structural point of view, but also the selection and design of the furniture and appliances within it.

In a Montgomery, Alabama project by Davis, he was faced with exactly that challenge. Joined to the existing home was a 20' x 8' patio with a pool off to the side.

"[His client] wanted a grand outdoor kitchen living area where they could spend time all year," Davis said. "They didn't want it to look like an afterthought and wanted to make sure it tied in."

Where the structure was concerned, Davis' plan extended the home's painted white brick, arched openings, a 48" fire rock fireplace and a vaulted ceiling. He specifically designed it in a way that the much larger area naturally flowed to the pool area so that the house, outdoor living space and pool became visually and functionally integrated.

As proof that his project accomplished its goals, it received Best in Show honors in the Outdoor Living Category at the Alabama Remodeling Excellence Awards.

Incorporating Appliances into the Blend

When it came to creating the outdoor kitchen and bringing its style and quality in line with the home itself, Davis is quick to credit the homeowner's preferences.

"At first, I was thinking just a simple grill," he said. But the homeowner was familiar with Fire Magic gas grills and outdoor kitchen accessories and wanted the elegance and high-performance functionality that the brand provides. An 80-year-old brand with a reputation for high-end, luxury outdoor cooking products and innovative, exclusive features, Fire Magic offered an ideal look that blended with the design of the outdoor area.

The homeowner was also interested in a brand that could stand up to nearly daily use, whether that meant entertaining dozens of people in the space or cooking breakfast outdoors on any given day.

With Fire Magic accessories working in tandem with the gas grill, Davis was able to create a self-sufficient outdoor kitchen space. "They've had multiple dinner parties where they never felt the need to go indoors. They were able to do everything they wanted—serving, keeping things cold, and cooking everything from rotisserie chicken to hot dogs and smash burgers on the cook top."

For the grill, Davis installed the Fire Magic 36" E790 Echelon Diamond Series Grill. The top-of-the-line Fire Magic luxury gas grill, it features Diamond Sear cooking grids, stainless steel burners and state-of-the-art features, such as hot surface ignition, blue back-lit knobs, internal halogen lighting and an optional Magic View Window. It's built with the highest quality 304 stainless steel and delivers precision cooking with an advanced heat distribution system, searing options, smoking capabilities, a rotisserie, and charcoal grilling features. It provides more BTUs and offers a larger cooking area than other same-size grills.

"A lot of grills I've used in the past, they look pretty but they just don't cook well...hot on one side with a sweet spot you need to find. [My client] says he can cook 40 burgers at a time and not have a single flare up."

To round out and complete the kitchen, Davis included a 30" griddle, a roll-out trash bin, double-access doors under the grill and a 14" single-access door. "It turned out to be a hell of a kitchen," he said.

Davis first noticed the quality of the product during the installation process, especially after hearing back from the plumber and brick mason who set all the drawer and door storage units.

"I was really impressed with it. The appliances were easy to set and install versus other ones we've done in the past," he said.

As a true test for any builder, once they've installed a product and seen it in use, would they choose it again on future projects? In Davis' case, he's quick to answer.

"One hundred percent," he said. "I was blown away. You could just tell how well made [Fire Magic] is when we were moving and setting them. It definitely isn't lightweight. It's very substantial."

