

Outside Ambience

By Janet Green

How would you like to spend more time outside right about now? Would it be cozying up to the fire or pulling dinner off the grill with that smoky barbecue flavor? Feeling a little claustrophobic after winter's had you cooped up inside for too long? I thought so.

It's no wonder outdoor kitchens and fire pits have become so hot, design wise that is. It's one of the top priorities now with regard to landscape improvements. Maybe it's the primitive attraction that a fire lends, or maybe just a craving for more space that an outdoor room can provide, but outdoor kitchens and fireplaces are on everyone's wish list these days. One of the finest aspects of an outdoor fire pit is the feeling it lends; like camping without the packing and set up, or leaving the comforts of home.

There are abundant options, but the most popular, according to Doug Payette, of Mountain Home Center in Truckee, is to customize your own. The typical components of an outdoor kitchen include a barbecue, sink, and mini fridge. You may also want a fire pit or even more elaborate, an outdoor fireplace. Usually the fireplace shares a wall with the house and may reverse as the inside fireplace, but nowadays, the free standing fireplace is often designed around an outdoor loggia, or covered patio, enclosed with canvas curtain panels for an intimate and cozy retreat. At the new development in Glenshire, (in Truckee) called Knight's Crossing, the proposed plaza will include a see-through outdoor fireplace, so that the restaurant can have a privacy wall but the plaza side will share the warmth.

If it's a fire pit you're interested in, you can buy them ready made or make them yourself with your own hand picked rocks. You'll need a plumber's help to patch in the gas line and then to connect to the log assembly. Seven to nine log assemblies seem to be the most popular, and logs that look like they came from Truckee, (pine, not birch logs), are also popular. The logs are clay, so you won't be able to put real wood on top of them, but you won't need to clean out the ash either. Make sure you include drain holes in the bottom for the rain water or snow melt to drain out. A spark arrester, or metal mesh cover, is



*Taboe Donner residence with wood burning fire pit by LJM Design Group.
Photo provided by LJM Design Group.*

*Lake Tahoe residence with gas fire pit and copper cover, by LJM Design Group.
Photo provided by LJM Design Group.*

needed for real log fire pits, but is also a safety feature for gas log assemblies.

For an outdoor kitchen, in addition to a plumber, an electrician will be necessary to connect outdoor lighting, other than low voltage, and to run electricity to your appliances.

Plan on about 6 to 15 months from start to finish for the entire project, depending on permit processing time, approval from all local agencies, weather, and of course, the extent of your project. You'll need to consider setbacks, view corridors, in some cases lot coverage, as well as your budget.

A small patio with a single fire pit can start at about \$10,000 to \$15,000, with larger projects the sky's the limit.

The rewards of having these amenities can be well worth the effort. You'll appreciate the ease of outdoor cooking and have a place to call your own, that's not only a cozy getaway but a tranquil and relaxing place to entertain.

Resources: LJM Design Group, Inc.: (530-587-6003), Mountain Home Center, Truckee and Design Outdoor, Reno, NV

The New Truckee Gallery *from page 11*

photography; custom designed, handmade jewelry; stunningly creative handmade quilts and more.

Guild members of the Truckee Gallery have pooled their talents and are committed to working toward the goal of bringing to the community their best creative works. The gallery plans to be a creative source for the art needs of locals and visitors, which promises to build on the cultural importance and development of art in our area.

The Truckee Gallery is located in the Mountain Forge Complex, 10950 B, Industrial Way, Suite B, at the corner of Comstock, in Truckee, CA. Call the gallery: (530) 550-7797. The Gallery is open daily 10am to 5 pm; closed on Tuesdays.