

Expand Your Living Space - Outside!

ARTICLE & PHOTOS BY KELLI WEGSCHEID



Cabana style outdoor kitchen with bar seating, built-in grill and sink.



Raised gas firepit with built-in stone seating.

Summer is the time of great family gatherings! Memorial Day weekend, the 4th of July, Labor Day weekend, possibly a high school graduation, a birthday or family reunion thrown in there and that makes for a season of major entertaining! And, in the land of lakes, that is what summer is meant to be. Kids running around full of mud and sand, chasing fireflies and frogs. Families and friends gathering at the lake by day, and the bonfire by night.

What a summer full of fun memories! That is, unless of course, you have a tiny house, or tiny cabin full of people. (And then throw in rain, of course!) Regardless of the weather, we can make the most of our outdoor spaces as a fully functional extension of our homes to accommodate any size family gathering.

The joy of summer is extending your kitchen, dining and great room spaces to the outdoors. Outdoor kitchens are so much fun, and provide a grilling, cooking and dining space beyond the traditional kitchen space limitations. Outdoor kitchens now offer built-in grills, outdoor sinks and appliances similar to our inside spaces. Granite, stone, or concrete countertops on top of cedar or stone faced islands really do become an extension of our home, while being durable enough to withstand the outdoor elements. Some homes, especially older cabins, need a better connection to the outdoor space - which may only mean adding a patio door for easier access in and out. Patio doors allow for better traffic flow and add more light into a small space. Adding a covered deck, separate structure or an extension of an existing patio may accommodate your new outdoor space. Be sure to check with local & county regulations before building anything new. Also check out the concrete finish work that looks like pavers or stone with a multitude of beautiful patterns & colors.

Another summer activity that can use its own space is the bonfire pit. Creating an above ground "pit" with built in seating may add safety value for families with younger children. Fire pits with a built-in gas line may also increase the use and ease of starting and safely extinguishing the fire. That won't prevent on-fire marshmallows from flying through the air, but it's a start!

Now, with lake homes and houses having finished garages - all it takes is a garage sink, and what ah! You have a space capable of accommodating the whole extended family for that summer get together! Garages have always housed the extra refrigerator, so why not some picnic tables and a screen on that overhead door? Now, don't let this article talk you out of that great new kitchen remodel, all I am saying is that we can make the most of our fabulous Minnesota summer while it lasts! Enjoy!

Kelli Wegscheid, AIA, Architect & Owner of Harmonious Architecture loves enjoying the outdoors during the summer with family. Her kids have found baby tree frogs & toads, tadpoles and turtles that provide year round memories of summer.

