



“Experience the Difference”

BUILDING SUCCESS 101

Q: What's the difference between the various grades of stainless steel used on outdoor appliances?

A: Grade is determined by how much chromium and nickel the steel contains. Because grade 304 stainless has more of these elements than 430, it's more rust-resistant. Try putting a magnet on the grill: if it sticks, it's probably 430. Some manufacturers use grade 304 on the lid but not the body, so place the magnet in different places. And check the screws—some stainless grills have rust-prone non-stainless screws. If the budget only allows 430, a thicker gauge is better.



More Than a Deck

Creating Functionality and Beauty in Your Outdoor Space

A lot of homeowners are looking beyond the basic deck or patio to a complete outdoor experience. They're designing and building homes with multi-level decks, patios connected to decks and pools, screened porches, arbors and outdoor kitchens.

According to a May 2019 article on Zillow.com, a growing number of homeowners also want their interior design theme to continue outdoors. In other words, they want big spaces that serve multiple functions while also looking great.

Great spaces result from careful thought and planning. Before talking with your architect and builder, spend some time thinking about how you will use the space as well as aesthetics, views, maintenance and the weather.

Here are some issues to ponder:

What Will You Do?

In good design, form follows function. Do you just want a place to hang out and read? Something simple may be sufficient. Do you like to host sit-down dinners? You might want room for a grill, a dining table, chairs and a bar.

Do you prefer informal gatherings? Consider including discreet spots for intimate or small-group socializing, such as a step-down from a main deck to a few chairs around a low table. Will your toddlers use the deck or patio for play? You'll want doors and windows that offer a clear view from inside the house.

These are just a few examples. Your questions will depend on your lifestyle and priorities.

How About The Weather?

Outdoor living means planning for rain, sun, views, privacy and weather.

Think about how much of the year you want to use the space. An outdoor fireplace or fire ring can extend your enjoyment through spring and fall. A three-season room can have screens to repel bugs in summer that you switch out with storm windows when it starts to get cold. With a roof, you can be outside even on rainy days.

Speaking of rain, if the home will include an elevated deck, consider placing that outdoor room below it. Today's waterproofing systems range from watertight interlocking plastic or aluminum deck boards to membranes that are installed just below conventional decking and divert water to a gutter. They keep the space below bone dry.

Maintenance and Views

When it comes to decking, more people are opting for quality composites, which is no surprise since they never need refinishing. There are some great-looking products where the only maintenance is to sweep the deck and hose it off.

A more critical design choice is the railing. It's what makes the biggest impression on visitors and what you will look through when seated. Pickets or benches make sense where privacy is a concern, but for a deck with a view, cable rail is more popular than ever. If you want the view without the wind, glass panels are an option but they will need to be kept clean.

Outdoor Dining

A simple grill may be enough, but if you want to have a real outdoor kitchen, try to design it as an extension of the indoor kitchen that just happens to be outside. Place the two spaces as close together as possible, so it's easy to move between them. You can also create a pantry or dish cabinet that is easily accessed from inside or outside.

Marine-grade plywood is a good choice for outdoor cabinets, as is granite, glazed tile or stone for countertops.

Get the best grill you can. Quality, powder-coated steel will last if maintained properly but a better choice is grade 304 stainless, which has a reputation for long-term durability without rust. Also consider placing some shelter over the grill, such as a pergola for partial shade or a roof to repel rain.

If you want a sink, make it big enough to hold party platters. For the refrigerator, note that an expensive one may not perform better than a cheap one on a very hot day. You can also include a steel beverage trough in a counter and fill it with ice.

Thinking through these and other design issues takes time and effort, but in the end, you'll have an outdoor space that enhances your lifestyle and that you're proud to share with family and friends.

Warm Regards,

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