

SAVOR SIMPLICITY

“My mantra is ‘keep it simple, keep it low maintenance, make it easy — and try to enjoy the outdoors every day.’ Skip nickel lanterns that can rust and need to be lit every night. Target does amazing outdoor things, including wicker solar-powered lights that are attractive and go on automatically — it makes everything seamless. Not everyone can have an outdoor fireplace, but a basic fire pit can bring wonderful memories. We often entertain, and the highlight is not the swimming but the s’mores. All the kids want to know is ‘are we going to make s’mores?’ Woodland Direct sells a modern-looking linear fire pit that’s very affordable.”

RAJNI ALEX,
RAJNI ALEX DESIGN



GO TO PREP SCHOOL

“With an outdoor kitchen, I design a space that follows the same principles as an indoor kitchen. You should have a work triangle with a grill area, as well as a burner or two for sauces or boiling, counter space for prep. An outdoor sink and refrigerator should be within reach. I like a minimum of 39 to 42 inches between counters, so if you’re placing an island, there will be plenty of room. Low-maintenance materials are the trend. Think quartz counters or dark stones that are easy to keep clean and tile backsplashes with large tiles or solid slabs, so there are few grout lines to stain — things that allow a cook to spend less time in the kitchen and more time with guests.”

RAIF BRANCA,
NEW DIMENSIONS REMODELING

PLANT AN INSPIRED LANDSCAPE

“When planning a home improvement or renovation, include a landscape architect on your team as early in the process as possible. A landscape architect takes a holistic approach to architectural features, engineering requirements, topographic features of the land, sun/shade patterns, and drainage patterns, as well as the family’s activities and their overall aesthetic. Too often, homeowners wait until it is time to do plantings to involve a landscape professional. By then, many opportunities may have been missed. When a landscape architect is involved from the start, a synergy forms with the entire design team, and the result is a much better finished product.”

JOHN CONTE, RLA, ASLA,
CONTE & CONTE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS