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The living is easy: Outdoor living options trending right now

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Here's proof positive that Americans are tired of being cooped up indoors due to coronavirus.

Eighty-five percent of home improvement experts recently surveyed by [Fix.com](#) are convinced that homeowners are more willing to invest in outdoor living spaces this year.

And that makes sense. Recent government stimulus payments coupled with the increased desire to improve our homes, enjoy the warmer weather outdoors, and spend less time inside are motivating owners to step beyond the back door and focus on fine-tuned yards, patios, decks, and other alfresco areas where outdoor amenities can be enhanced.

Curious about the outdoor living trends identified by the pros polled? [Fix.com](#) found that three in five respondents believe outdoor kitchens are the most desirable outdoor living upgrade; nearly three-quarters say an indoor/outdoor blend is best accomplished by using folding and sliding doors and windows; approximately 48% of outdoor spaces are going to be adapted for use year-round; and four in five envision gathering with family and friends as the most popular use of outdoor space, versus relaxation (chosen by 61%).

Cristina Miguez, remodeling specialist with [Fix.com](#) in Wilmington, Delaware, was taken aback when the survey revealed that patios and porches are the most popular outdoor space in single-family homes in 2021 – as chosen by 48%; 19% selected "porch and deck."

"While porches have been popular in recent years, it wasn't necessarily for outdoor living but for curb appeal and resale value. The fact that people are now using them and combining them with patios was an interesting revelation," she says.

However, Miguez wasn't surprised that more homeowners are willing to invest in outdoor living features this year and in the near future.

"People staying home last year really made them rethink their spaces. Homeowners were forced to examine their existing living areas in a new light, and what they found was that it wasn't going to meet their needs," she adds. "While travel and other entertainment options are reopening, many people have found a new love of being at home and entertaining in their yards. This, in turn, will continue to drive people to put money into outdoor living improvements in the coming years."

Ralph Choeff, principal of Choeff Levy Fischman Architecture + Design in Miami, subscribes to that



theory. "Many homeowners are spending more time at home simply because they're working out of the house more. They want to be able to walk out to their patio or deck, take a break, re-center, and enjoy the outdoors. They're also entertaining more at home, which explains why outdoor kitchens are the most desired new amenity – nothing brings people together like great food and beverages and cooking and dining alfresco with family and friends while enjoying views of nature and fresh air."

Choeff says he's designed elaborate outdoor kitchens for some of his clients, including areas equipped with TVs, refrigerators, bar seating, lounge sofas, exotic stone, durable Brazilian lpe wood, and cantilevered roofs that provide shade from the sun.

"Outdoor kitchens bring a great deal of functionality, offering more space to prepare meals for loved ones while enjoying some fresh air. They can also be tailored to fit any style or budget; you can install a grill and accessories for a few thousand dollars or go all out with built-in bars, brick ovens, and more," notes Joe Raboin, director of Residential Hardscapes for Atlanta-headquartered Belgard.

Additionally, shade-providing outdoor structures like gazebos and pergolas are all the rage.

"Orders for our pergolas increased 300% in 2020, and that demand has only expanded this year. Covering your patio, deck, or outdoor kitchen is imperative to getting the most enjoyment

out of that investment," explains Leslie Chapus, vice president of sales for Miami-based Azencia.

Jan Rutgers, co-owner and designer at JAN-GEORGE Interiors and Furniture, with locations in Florida and New York, says outdoor workstations are trending, too, as is resort-inspired cozy outdoor lounge furniture.

"Lounge chairs and even cushy lowseats and sofas are perfect next to a pool or perhaps just out in the garden," says Rutgers. "And lanterns, rugs, and other outdoor-rated accessories can easily accent any outdoor living area."

Fire pits and outdoor fireplaces are hot right now, as well.

"People like a gathering spot, especially for nighttime use. With a fire pit, it's a natural focal point that also makes it easier to use the space in cooler months of the year," says Miguez.

Concerned that your outdoor living dollars won't translate into a good investment or pay you back at resale? Most experts say you shouldn't worry.

"I think this trend is going to continue for several years. Some people may still be wary of big crowds for a while, while other people may have found that they really enjoy simply being at home now that they've had a chance to try it," Miguez continues. "And with all of the various project types available right now, there's definitely a fit for everyone – which should make this desire for outdoor amenities longer-lasting as well."

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