



This outdoor kitchen has five cooking appliances.

Cooking Under The Stars

It's time to bin the BBQ and make way for the ultimate outdoor kitchen.

BY JOHN WILLIAMS. PHOTOGRAPHY: KAILAN MACLEOD

Designer Cella Visser has created dozens of amazing kitchens, bathrooms and interiors during her 26-year career, and many of these have been recognised with national awards. Needless to say, she never shies a challenge – in fact, she thrives on them.

So, when a client recently came to her with a request for 'the ultimate outdoor kitchen', she rose to the occasion and produced what is arguably Auckland's finest alfresco cooking amenity – complete with a state-of-the-art wine shed.

"My brief was to fulfil my client's dream

of having the ultimate outdoor kitchen, dining and entertainment area," says Cella. "So we embarked on a journey to completely alter their backyard into a private, interactive and communal gathering space."

Cella says that five different cooking appliances were requested, which formed the basis for her design. "There's a specialist wood-fired pizza oven that my client had seen on MasterChef and I imported from Australia, a conical-shaped, charcoal-burning BBQ, a gas hob and a wok burner integrated into the island and, finally, a ceramic, egg-shaped cooker, called a Kamado, that she

imported from the Philippines. "These appliances not only give my clients a variety of ways to cook their food, they also enable friends to congregate and socialise around different cooking sources – ideal for this alfresco-style kitchen."

To help protect the kitchen from the ravages of the weather, the designer specified hardy, low-maintenance materials for the cabinetry.

"The exterior is clad in an impermeable, porcelain tile type material, cut from a large sheet, so no grouting was needed," she explains. "And the carcasses are

made from Coritex, which looks like MDF, but is completely waterproof."

The cabinetry is modern and sleek, and functions like a normal kitchen, with cupboards and drawers, a fully plumbed-in porcelain sink, a boiling water tap, and even a Fisher & Paykel Dish Drawer. The twin gas hobs have protective hinged lids, and are designed to work outdoors. The only elements missing are a roof and walls.

After long discussions with her client, Cella decided not to shade the cooking area, as the site was quite small and they both felt that any kind of awning would

make the space feel hemmed in. "We did, however, need to protect the kitchen when it wasn't in use, so I designed some fitted canvas covers, using the same material as the umbrellas that shade the adjacent dining area."

These twin umbrellas are fully automated, and can be controlled using a smart phone, as can the integrated LED lighting. They can also be zipped together to form one continuous cover. "We spent a lot of time tracking where the sun would be at different times of the day and year, so we could locate the dining area in the best possible position in the garden," says Cella.

Creating the right ambience in the rest of garden was also important, so feature lighting and an integrated sound system were installed, also controlled from a smart phone. And to meld the whole design together, the designer engaged a landscape designer for the planting and paving.

The outdoor kitchen is only half the story of this remarkable life garden. An integral part of the project was to come up with a solution for storing the husband's 2,000-bottle collection of French wine.

"We built a small shed in the corner of the garden, then softened it using lush vegetation," explains Cella. "As you walk in, there's an area to store extra plates, glasses and crockery, plus a full fridge. Then there's a fully climate-controlled wine cellar, imported from France; it can also be controlled by a smart phone."

This outdoor kitchen is a game changer, and is a testament to the huge amount of research the designer put in to overcome the issues of building a fully functioning kitchen in an outdoor environment. "It was a lot more complicated than you think," she says. "At the end of the day, it worked out to be a comparable price to one of my indoor kitchens." 🍷



Top: A 2000-bottle, climate-controlled wine cellar is housed in a specially shed garden shed. Bottom: The LED lighting and the umbrellas can be controlled using a smart phone.



Things to consider when installing a full outdoor kitchen

- ▶ You are likely to need building consent from the council.
- ▶ Height-to-boundary calculations come into effect if there's a chimney involved.
- ▶ A full kitchen takes up a reasonable amount of space, so if you have a small garden, site coverage relating to permeable ground may be an issue.
- ▶ You need to work out the best way to access the services – water, gas, electricity and grey water drainage.
- ▶ Everything needs to be waterproof, including all the hardware – hinges and drawer runners.
- ▶ Specialist appliances are preferable – made specifically for outdoor use.