

Summer Entertaining 101

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Summer is finally here! Making the most of every beautiful day is key to summertime fun in Michigan. It's a time to reconnect with family and friends and what a better way, than to throw a summer party. Whether hosting a family reunion, or an impromptu barbeque, here are some simple tips you can use to create an inviting atmosphere and always have the party that everyone wants to be at!



Ingredients for Fabulous Outdoor Entertaining:

Theme

A theme creates a common thread for your entire party. Go simple with a theme consisting of a fun color combination, or challenge yourself to pulling off a Mexican Fiesta. Either way, start your theme with your invitations, and finish with delicious desserts and party favors.

Location – Setting the Stage

Whether hosting an all-American backyard barbecue or an evening dinner party, defining your space creates a visual boundary. Potted plants such as flowers, grasses or ornamental trees, are an easy and inexpensive way to create that definition.

Inside our homes, fireplaces are key in creating a focal point of a room. To bring this element to your outdoor space, use a fire pit surrounded by Adirondack chairs. Try to find a freestanding fire pit that includes a table top that covers the “pit” area when not having a fire. This can be used for socializing with appetizers or extra seating and table space for dinner guests. After dinner, take the top off and bring out the s’mores!

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When working with a covered space or deck, try integrating an outdoor chandelier with candles above your dinner table to create visual warmth and ambiance. Sheer drapery panels with tie backs can be hung from the top of the covered space to soften your outdoor room and create a backdrop to your furnishings. The beautiful thing about sheers is that they give a sense of privacy while still enjoying all of your surroundings, including the sunset!

Your outdoor room should feel like an extension of your home. Just as fabrics and rugs create texture and interest inside your home, the outdoor versions of these compliment your outdoor living space as well. Make sure that your outdoor furniture is comfortable and inviting. Outdoor wicker and wrought iron furniture are low maintenance options, and can be paired with many water-resistant fabric cushions and pillows. An outdoor area rug is an inexpensive way to ground a conversation area. Don't be afraid to mix different finishes such as metal, wood and wicker. In most situations, the different finishes complement each other.



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Don't forget to accessorize! Flowers and plants add great texture and depth. Other outdoor accessories such as clocks, candle holders, vases, metal art, and sculptures all add interest to your space. Adding a punch of color will help draw the eye to your focal point. Home accessories can be comparable to jewelry. Just as jewelry completes your outfit, accessories add the finishing touches to complete your room. Decorations to complement your theme can enhance the element of fun and add splashes of texture and definition to your space as well.

Menu

Pig roasts are a great way to enjoy your party without doing a lot of the work! Most caterers typically provide all the food needed for your party. *Up in Smoke* Barbecue, run by Randy Rotschaffer Jr. has won awards at BBQ contests, including first place for his ribs. I have personally been to 3 of his barbecues and have never tasted a better homemade BBQ sauce!



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Don't forget the all-American classic: Brats, burgers, hot dogs and potato salad!

Hydrated guests are happy guests. A lemonade stand is a fun addition to any summer party and can be used time and time again. An easy refreshing alternative is glass pitchers of ice water with slices of lemon and fresh mint leaves, or classic Coke bottles over ice in a galvanized tub.



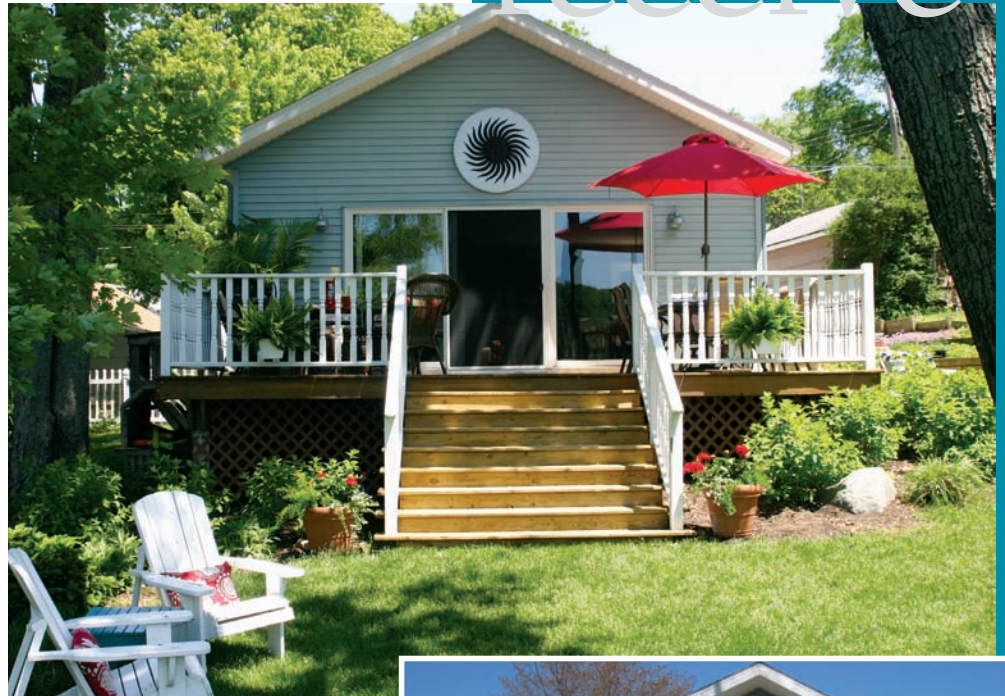
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My challenge...my space.

There is nothing better than enjoying cottage or lake living in Michigan; so many beautiful lakes to choose from, all having their own unique landscape and views. This spring, I felt the need to make over our cottage exterior, without breaking the bank. I started to see the transformation after the stained wood shutters were hung. We made them ourselves (maybe that is why they look so good in my eyes).

An iron bench with red throw pillows by the front door added a "Welcome" to all who will make summertime memories with us. On to the deck; I wanted to create a comfortable conversation area as well as an eating space without taking away from the view of the lake from inside the cottage. We previously added the center staircase which visually divides the deck into two potential spaces.

I was on a mission. I needed a larger piece of furniture to compliment the wicker chairs that were purchased at the end of the last summer. With the retail summer sales already underway, I found a great package deal on complimentary furniture. Fortunately, the neutral fabric opened the door to endless options for accent fabrics and pillows. The biggest challenge was the space above the slider door. The octagon window set in the gable has always looked too small and somewhat lonely to me. I stumbled upon a metal sun, smiling back at me. Knowing it was the wrong color and too small to cover the entire window,



I painted it and had a backing made out of galvanized aluminum, to add size and weight to the new artwork. Accessories and flowers added the finishing touches to my outdoor space.



Look out, summer fun and entertaining, here I come.

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