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THE GREAT Outdoors

Three innovative designers share their tips for creating immersive outdoor spaces.

ANDREW FRANZ

Andrew Franz Architect

People are really seeking outdoor spaces to relax and celebrate," says Andrew Franz, AIA, LEED AP, principal of Andrew Franz Architect in New York City. Even within a city, says the self-described urbanist, "there's a real awareness of people trying to be connected to the environment."

One of Franz's most recent projects, Upper Manhattan's waterfront destination La Marina, is an example of a successful outdoor space that just so happens to be built on a 75,000-square-foot public park. The restaurant, bar and lounge is located at the edge of the Hudson River with a view of the George Washington Bridge and the Palisades. With such a naturally beautiful location, Franz was careful to not overpower it.

The challenge, he says, was "how to enclose an outdoor pavilion in the park and make it feel open and unencumbered by walls, and blur the distinction between indoor and outdoor."

The restaurant's structure blends in with its surroundings as glass walls open up to the view outside. Mixed seating in the outdoor lounge area (some under umbrellas, some out in the open and others right on the beach) captures a casual vibe.

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According to a recent survey by the American Society of Landscape Architects, outdoor living spaces—defined as kitchens and entertainment spaces—were ranked at the top of the list of growing trends among American homeowners. It should come as no surprise, then, that customers are now expecting their favorite restaurants, bars and hotels to provide unique outdoor experiences. What's more, these outdoor spaces are just as important as their interior counterparts—if not more so—because of their many make-or-break design details.

It's not just about being outside—it's about creating an inspiring experience that still feels like a part of the interior space. This trend of creating outside "rooms" comes straight from the world of residential design, but designers and architects in the hospitality world have managed to take it to a whole new level (as they tend to do). We spoke with three design professionals about their recent outdoor projects, and bring you these tips for creating your own patio paradise.



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF ANDREW FRANZ ARCHITECT



Four Seasons
Jimbaran Bay, Bali

GENERAL LIGHTING & FURNISHING TIPS

Lighting's a different challenge," says Franz, and it depends on how you want to work the outdoor space into its surroundings. "It's about how you respond to the existing environment and whether the development recedes or celebrates it." He adds that low levels of light may be necessary if you want to highlight a cityscape or sky view.

Additionally, any furniture you use has to stand up to the elements: sun, rain, wind and whatever else the weather may bring. "You have to make sure everything is durable and doesn't fade in the sun. In California, you have never-ending sun beating down on everything," says Garriss, who favors Sunbrella fabrics for her custom furniture designs.

Eugene Freeland, president and owner of Link Outdoor, an outdoor furniture, fabric and trim manufacturer in Dallas, Texas, has also noticed a recent trend in both hospitality and residential design based on customer specifications. Designers have responded positively to the company's new and trendy color block fabric, but they are also starting to specify more optimistic colors in general.

During the downturn, Freeland says "people had to rationalize their space and there was a downsizing of huge spaces." But now that hospitality projects are picking up again, the company is seeing increased demand for bright, bold fabrics.

"It seems like there's always a cycle," he adds. "The hotels will do all white. Now, they're back into color. Especially after a downturn, people want to be happy and forget about the past."

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 Have you finished a notable outdoor space recently? Share your photos and tips with us through our Facebook and Pinterest pages!

LISA GARRISS | Plum Design West

An outdoor space in a hotel, restaurant or bar setting presents a problem, because the two things you're trying to create are drama and intimacy," says Lisa Garriss, owner and creative director of Plum Design West in West Hollywood, Calif. "How do you do that when you've got the sky and a space that's unlimited? You're forced to come up with bold gestures and dramatic solutions."

Having designed many exotic hotel interiors in Asia, where Garriss found there's always an indoor/outdoor element, she believes a standout outdoor space should reflect the personality of the interior space. Sometimes, these outdoor spaces have no ceiling or walls, so you have to be clever.

"There are various ways to do that—creating a tented structure within the space, using trellises or open roof systems, or a temporary rattan or bamboo roof that lets sun through but creates a shaded intimate space," she says, noting that the technique works well in warmer climates like southern California.

"When you don't have walls, guests can enter the space from anywhere," she adds. It also means the furniture "has to look good from the front and back, and be inviting from every angle."

When Garriss was hired to redesign the outdoor terrace bar and lounge for the Four Seasons Jimbaran Bay in Bali, Indonesia, it needed serious help. Two outdoor "bales"—pavilions with pitched grass roofs and wooden columns—sat unused because of their uninviting decor.

By adding an oversized custom light fixture above; a variety of custom sofas, rattan ottomans, tables and lounge chairs with high, dramatic backs; and metal lanterns and candles, Garriss transformed the pavilions into sexy, relaxing spots that are now in high demand.

**MICHELE WHEELER
Denton House Design Studio**

No matter the function, defining an outdoor space so that workers can service their guests efficiently is vital. In the outdoor dining patio at Talisker on Main in Park City, Utah, restaurant servers can keep an eye on who is coming and going thanks to its location between two buildings, as well as a decorative brick-and-block planter fence and wooden gate.

"It's a barrier without feeling like a barrier," says Michele Wheeler, vice president of architecture and design at Salt Lake City-based Denton House Design Studio. Interspersing tall trees throughout the patio also accentuates the height of the space and makes it feel welcoming. "It helps guests feel covered or protected. The space opens all the way up and feels like an outdoor room."

With outdoor dining, providing a diverse offering of seating is important for accommodating parties of all sizes, whether the restaurant is busy or slow. "It should be flexible," Wheeler says. "Group seating so that whether it's full of people or it's just one party, it always feels like an intimate experience."

Wheeler also notes that the pavers she used outdoors allow guests to pull dining chairs in and out easily. Festoon lights strung about, along with fire features at the gated entrance create a cozy ambiance, while a water fountain softens the street noise.



Talisker on Main,
Park City, Utah

