



The great outdoors

WITH SPRING ON ITS WAY, IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE WE SEE PUB GARDENS AND RESTAURANT TERRACES FULL OF SUN-SEEKING CUSTOMERS. JACKIE ANNETT REPORTS

If you haven't tapped into the alfresco dining market yet, now could be the perfect time to jump on board. With a little investment, bars and restaurants with outdoor drinking and dining areas often see their sales increase by 30% or more. Don't let the unreliable British weather put you off, outdoor spaces can be used all year round if you invest in outdoor heating and canopies.

Natalie Fogelström, founder of Koja Design in London, says that if you're considering turning your outdoor area into an alfresco hotspot, the first thing to bear in mind is that the design needs to flow and fit in with the overall brand image. "An outdoor bar or restaurant space needs to complement the exterior of the building and there should be a flow in the design so that the outdoor area matches the inside," explains Natalie. "It should also be in keeping with the brand image of the rest of the venue."

Design is crucial when it comes to creating the desired atmosphere and the right look can be achieved with well thought out furnishings and décor. "Add chevron carpets, scattered chill out zones with poufs, use on-trend colour schemes such as rose pink and don't forget it's all in the detail," adds Natalie. "You can also add potted palms or greenery to give it that outdoor feel. Creative lamps can add to the atmosphere and upholstered bar stools exude sophistication. For a safe bet – minimise! This makes it look very exclusive and expensive."

When summer turns to autumn, you don't have to pack everything away. Instead, consider adding a few stylish touches to prepare your outdoor terrace for the colder months. Natalie recommends adopting a winter wonderland theme and investing in heating and outdoor cover. Heaters aren't just practical – they create a cosy, warm and friendly atmosphere too.

Faber has a range of luxury outdoor fires and the company has been helping operators maximise their outdoor space well beyond the summer months. The selection includes built-in, portable and freestanding models including Faber Mood, a modern, landscape format outdoor gas fire in a steel finish which can be used as a freestanding stove or built-in as a frameless fire. The Faber Buzz is an outdoor fire with realistic ceramic logs and the Faber Tube is a fully portable, contemporary round outdoor gas fire in black painted steel.

Hospitality furniture suppliers GO IN recommends putting your table and chairs outside in March as soon as the first rays of sunshine start to appear. "The reality is that outdoor eating and drinking is becoming the norm for a much greater part of the year – the outdoor season now stretches from March to October, and sometimes even longer with carefully designed areas of cover and outdoor heating," says Jan



Dammis. "With heating, extra blankets and decorative lanterns as accessories, terraces can attract guests even when the temperatures is low."

Jan says this year's outdoor furniture trends will see wood, wood effect, wicker, and a combination of teak, wicker and aluminium prove popular in the hospitality sector. Muted, lighter colours that have an elegant and timeless feel are a sensible choice and can be combined with boldly coloured cushions.

"Light colours will shape the outdoor look this year; shades of white, cream, taupe and grey, as well as blue," explains Jan. "Taupe, when combined with grey tones, can easily be integrated into nature's green palette. As far as design is concerned, it's all about taking the lounge outdoors; this can be seen in vintage style cross-back chairs, and in the many new interpretations of classic Scandinavian designs."

As with any design, a solution that is both pleasant to look at and is practical, works best. One tip is to make sure all your outdoor chairs are stackable, easy to look after and robust. "This makes it easy for staff to make changes to layouts and ensures your chairs take up minimal storage space when they're not being used," Jan says. "Robust, hard-wearing chairs will stay looking good for longer, prolonging the return on your investment."

LeisureBench says that the amount of space you have available outdoors will determine what type of furniture you choose. For dining areas, it recommends separate tables and chairs with arm rests and parasols, providing added comfort for customers who are eating. The company has just introduced the Madrid table and chairs, made from durable weather-resistant resin in a continental style, suitable for outdoor and indoor use.



UHS has a range of outdoor tables and chairs that can brighten up your outdoor space and has been working with the Wetherspoon team to come up with a selection of products that are durable and maintenance-free. The result is the Mill Collection, a range of table tops that look and feel like wood and are long lasting.

Jason Eastwood, managing director of Canopies UK, says that regardless of whether your outdoor area is compact or spacious, your exterior space is what you make it. "Whether that's an alfresco dining hot spot that everybody flocks to in the heat of the summer or a trendy rooftop terrace where customers can relax and unwind after a hard day's work, the opportunities are endless," Jason says. "Unfortunately, due to the unpredictability of the weather, most bar owners can only realistically use their outdoor space to its full advantage for around three months of the actual year."





Canopies UK has been working with bars up and down the country to make sure they can still use their space in the winter months. Jason says it's not unheard of for alfresco areas to be open for business in the wind, rain and even in the snow!

"Stop forgetting about your outdoor space the moment winter arrives," he says. "One of the quickest and most effective ways of transforming your outdoor space into an area that appeals to your customers all year round, is by installing an outdoor canopy system."

The owner of Alec's Bar & Grill in Essex contacted Canopies UK because he wanted to put his existing outdoor terrace balcony to better use. As a result of installing the Cantabria retractable system, Alec has created extra dining space from his outdoor area that's fully covered and can now be enjoyed by his customers all year round.

"Canopy systems are an important investment and, as with all important investments, it's essential you do your research and fully explore the options," Jason explains. "Canopies are available in a wide range of dimensions and designs, from fully retractable models, like the Cantabria to roof top systems, which are becoming a popular choice for inner city venues."

"There are also systems that feature glass panels and provide UV protection against the sun's rays and from wind speeds of up to 60km per hour. The possibilities are endless. Take your time, do your homework, as not all systems are designed to work well come wind, rain or shine, or stand the test of time."

MyTent also specialises in turning summer beer gardens into warm and cosy covered winter spaces and the company has recently been working with clients including The Alexandra in Wimbledon.

"Our clients not only love the look of the solution we provide, they can see the increase in sales behind the bar and make an effort not only to cover their outdoor space, but really turn it into something special," says MyTent's sales manager Javier Vidal Breard. "We design and make custom stretch tent canopies which are then expertly fitted over the space. An adaptable, practical and stylish solution for covering areas, it also comes with a management plan so the pub or businesses themselves don't need to lift a finger."

Caravita has introduced a custom-made, professional parasol called Big Ben Freestyle. Big Ben Freestyle shades outdoor dining areas including those with terraces, protruding walls or other obstacles, with the added option of LED lights. There's also a range of colours to choose from as well as additional options including rain gutters, side panels and individual prints.





ALFRESCO DINING

One of the main reasons bars and restaurants extend outside is to take advantage of the summer when BBQ season is in full swing. The surge in popularity of BBQ foods over recent years has taken the casual dining market by storm with US-themed outlets some of the fastest growing brands. Influences from Bodean's BBQ, Red's True Barbecue and The Salt Lick have caught on in the UK, igniting a passion for gourmet comfort food. Caterers can tempt customers by adding a little theatre to their operation using cooking methods such as wood-fired, smoked and slow-cooked to entice diners with a visual and sensory experience.

Using the best accompaniments can elevate your burgers, hot dogs and BBQ fare to a premium level says speciality cheese suppliers Eurilait. It suggests considering trending flavour profiles when deciding your menu and adds that a strong blue cheese is a fine match for a hearty beef or venison burger and the rich, saltiness of barbecued halloumi is a perfect pairing with lightly grilled Mediterranean vegetables.

"It has been exciting to see demand for continental and speciality cheese grow in the last year as consumers are making

more adventurous choices and exploring the cheese fixture beyond cheddar," explains Craig Brayshaw, director of sales.

"Some of the main growth has been in summer cheese such as feta, mozzarella and halloumi, as consumers make cheese a central part of their meals and BBQs."

Eurilait has produced a range of premium quality continental cheeses, which come sliced, grated, crumbed, cubed, and in discs or pearls from a variety of award-winning speciality, continental cheeses such as brie, mozzarella, camembert and goat's cheese.

Marie Medhurst, sales director at Bannisters' Farm says BBQ chefs need to cater for varying dietary choices. "Naturally, a barbecue puts meat centre stage, but a shrewd caterer pays equal attention to the supporting players – the side dishes and meat-free alternatives," explains Maria. "By doing it this way, you can broaden the occasion to include customers with varying dietary choices."

"Offer a gluten-free accompaniment with baked potatoes. Frozen, ready-baked potatoes can go straight on the barbecue – or pop them in the microwave, wrap them in foil and keep them warm on a cooler part of the grill."

"Tempt vegetarian customers out to the



Unbreakable glassware can be stylish

UNBREAKABLE GLASSWARE FOR THE OUTDOORS

Steelite International has launched new additions to the Drinique collection, its range of unbreakable glassware. Now available in blue, clear and opaque white, the elite line is suited to alfresco dining and outdoor beer gardens and comes with a lifetime guarantee against cracks and breakages.

Made from eco-friendly Eastman Tritan Copolyester, Drinique carafes, tumblers, wine glasses and champagne flutes are crafted to look and feel exactly like glass, with no fear of breaking. Dishwasher safe with added heat and chemical resistance to protect against scratching, Drinique products are easy to clean and stackable.

Heather Lovatt, head of marketing at Steelite International, says: "The Drinique range goes from strength to strength, as more and more customers realise the design and functionality benefits of the products – as well as the added safety factor. The new colours come just at the right time for operators and pop-up organisers planning their outdoor drinking and alfresco dining options this summer."



OUTDOORS



Bannisters' Farm cheese and bacon mini filled skins

BBQ with something a little different from the usual veggie sausages and burgers. Loaded skins come ready-filled with moreish, flavour-packed toppings including cheese and jalapeño and cheese and onion. Frozen and ready to pop in the oven or microwave, loaded skins are also perfect for sharing plates."

To differentiate their offer, operators need to constantly innovate and find inspiration in new burger trends. Delivering the next "new foodie experience" appeals to millennials looking for innovation and authenticity says AHDB. The company's latest category report, Focus on Foodservice, highlights the trend for cut-specific burgers. Mincing trim from the rump, chuck or brisket creates distinct taste and texture profiles, and creates a new premium burger experience for consumers.

Hugh Judd, AHDB senior foodservice manager says: "Burgers have moved on from their fast food roots, and the demand for better burgers is showing no signs of slowing. Coarseness of grind, fat to lean content, compactness of patty, and seasoning are all still vital components of the perfect burger. But now, consumers are looking for even more. By offering a cut-specific burger, operators can experiment with texture profiles, and give consumers the premium, quality product they're looking for. Our Gourmet Burger range helps operators to differentiate their offer and stay ahead."

Avoiding breakages when dining outdoors is a common problem for the hospitality industry. Henry Stephenson, managing director at Stephensons, recommends using enamelware for food and premium plastic glasses for drinks to avoid these unwanted breakages.

"Olive wood boards were on trend last year and they are expected to remain popular this summer too," Henry says. "Crocery in the Steelite Craft range is well suited for outdoor dining because it is durable and features Steelite's edge chip warranty. Furthermore, this range is

available in earthy colours that tie in well with the outdoor theme."

Although barbecue season can mean big business, only a few items are necessary to ensure chefs are ready to start cooking. "Outdoor BBQs offer a great potential for an extra revenue stream," says Henry. "A BBQ such as the Kamado Joe ceramic grill can be used both outdoors and in the kitchen ensuring the cooking continues whatever the weather. Barbecue tool sets and condiment bottles are essential accessories, while a hot glove helps ensure the safety of the barbecue master."

It's important to remember that customers sitting in a sunny beer garden will not want to make too many trips back inside to the bar. Groups of friends sitting outside can enjoy a steady flow of drinks by serving themselves from large dispensers such as the Nantucket, which holds 8.5 litres of liquid.

"The Stephensons Beer Bucket with Crown Opener features an attached bottle opener, allowing customers to open drinks at their own pace," says Henry. "To ensure they are not missing out on sales, pubs ought to provide beer and cocktails in two-pint glasses or four-pint jugs as these allow customers to sit outside in the sun for longer without skipping drinks."



Catering Design Group

CATERING DESIGN GROUP'S GEMMA STRONG SHARES HER TOP DESIGN TIPS

1. Dare to be different! By doing something a little unorthodox, you will better engage with your potential customer, capturing their interest and intriguing them to find out more.
2. Be wise to the customer journey. Your identity should be reflected every step of the way – from the moment your customer walks through the door, right through to the furniture they sit on indoors, as well as in any outdoor areas.
3. Pay homage to your outside space. Don't underestimate the potential of this additional floor space, which, with the right attention to detail can provide an all-year-round extension to your bar.
4. It's the small touches that matter; providing blankets or heat sources for chillier times can really make a difference! For larger spaces, showcase your fresh credentials by landscaping the area with the same herbs and vegetables on your menu.
5. Ask an expert to help design your outdoor space. Random pieces of furniture just don't work. The layout and durability should be carefully considered to ensure optimum effect.
6. Make the most of your outdoor space. It's important that your alfresco dining offer mirrors your interior design space. This can easily be achieved through the use of decorative features such as comfortable seating, fire pits, umbrellas, heaters, screening, signage, landscaping and televisions.



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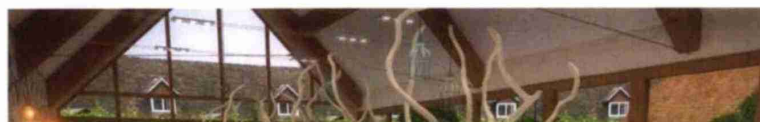
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