

Get in on a “cool” trend,
OUTDOOR DINING!

Call it what you want: eating outdoors, outside, al fresco... but in the end it means creating memories for the customer. Dining al fresco gives guests a special experience; it's a time to relax, visit, and laugh with friends and family while enjoying mild weather. I am a huge fan of outdoor dining! To me, it means the chill of spring is gone, the days of summer are long, and life moves at a more relaxed pace.

SETTING THE STAGE

To create an outdoor environment for dining, there are a few considerations to make (see MaineSense insert). I've also got some specific advice to share:

- >> Design a flat surface for the deck/patio that slopes slightly so rainwater doesn't collect
- >> If using existing sidewalks, make sure there are no cracks or flaws that can cause an accident
- >> Plant fast-growing flowers in planter boxes – such as sunflowers, also consider insect-repelling plants like citronella (an easy-to-grow herb), these will look beautiful and create a “buffer” from unsightly parking lots
- >> When choosing furniture, select casual, outdoorsy styles like wicker, wooden benches (like a picnic table), Adirondack and metal chairs, and anything else that says “summer!”
- >> The right lighting is essential: try gas lamps, tiny strings of white lights, and small table lanterns
- >> Don't forget the umbrellas! Essential for shading customers from the harsh midday sun or light rain



ANOTHER NOTE ON THE “SETTING”

Please, do not, I repeat, do not spoil the sense of occasion and ambience you've created by using plastic silverware or disposable place settings. Customers may use plastic at home, but remember, they've come to you for a special evening “out.” That means no disposable napkins, either. By using real china, silverware, metal utensils, and salt/pepper shakers, you are fulfilling a dual purpose: first, real items are heavier than disposable or plastic items and the weight resists the wind. In addition, they will help create that memorable atmosphere!



AN OUTDOOR-INSPIRED MENU

Keep it simple, straightforward and relaxed. Save extravagant menus for your indoor guests, remember this is summer dining and people are eating lighter fare like finger foods, tapas, small plates and salads. Barbecue menu items like grilled chicken, steaks, fish, vegetables and kabobs are always delicious and well-received. If you can, feature some outdoor grilling because the aroma is like scent advertising: Who can resist a gourmet burger when they smell it on the grill (and hear the sizzle)? Cool summer soups such as gazpacho, and desserts made with in-season fruits are also excellent choices for an al fresco menu! Here are menu samples for your consideration....

APPETIZER *Homemade Deck Chips*

A mixture of our homemade Idaho potato and sweet potato chips sprinkled with Cajun Seasoning and served with BBQ sauce.



SALAD *Summer Tossed Cobb Salad*

Fresh greens tossed with your favorite dressing, grilled chicken, crispy bacon, hardboiled egg, tomato, avocado and bleu cheese crumbles.

SANDWICH *Mahi Mahi Masterpiece*

Grilled and served on a multi-grain bun with lettuce, tomato and a side of chipolte ketchup sauce.



ENTREE *Grilled Tenderloin Kabobs*

Grilled beef tenderloin and summer vegetables served over a bed of Tuscan orzo pasta.



GOING TO THE DOGS – PET-FRIENDLY DINING

Like it or not, one of the hottest trends running is outdoor dining with a pet. Although pets are not permitted inside of a dining establishment, many restaurants with outdoor seating will allow people to dine outside with their pets. If you decide to “go to the dogs,” check with your local health department before you move forward. I recently did an internet search on “Dog Friendly Outdoor Restaurants” and I found www.dogfriendly.com, which lists dog-friendly restaurants by state. I found some restaurants that offer Monday night “Yappy Hour” where from 5pm to 8pm owners and their pups can come out to dine (don’t forget a canine menu and plenty of water dishes!). The restaurant often donates some proceeds from the evening to a local pet charity. I have found that pet-friendly restaurants benefit not only on “pet nights,” but their owners are return customers without their pets. Something to consider....

As you can tell, I’m a huge proponent of outdoor dining and its potential to bring increased summer revenue and traffic into your restaurant. It’s all about creating the right setting for your customers so they can create memorable experiences. That way, when the weather gets cold again, they’ll be more likely to choose you for indoor dining! As always, I invite you to contact me if you’d like help setting up a profitable, memorable outdoor dining experience this summer.



106902	1 ea. French round roll	097480	2 oz. Red onion, thinly sliced
300063	2 tsp. Mayonnaise	276132	2 oz. Banana pepper, sliced
304666	1 tsp. Yellow mustard	275665	2 oz. Jalapenos, pickled
060595	5 oz. Roast beef	345029	t.t. Sea salt
097803	3 ea. Tomato, sliced	345631	t.t. Black pepper, café
091671	4 oz. Dill pickle slab sliced		

CHUCK SCHUMER SANDWICH

YIELDS: 1 Serving

DIRECTIONS

1. Open roll and spread mayonnaise on bottom half and mustard on top.
2. On bottom half, layer roast beef, tomato, pickles, onion, banana peppers and jalapenos.
3. Season with salt and pepper and cover with top half.
4. Serve with your favorite side dish.

