



Grills Gone Wild

IN SOUTH FLORIDA, "GOING OUT TO EAT" OFTEN MEANS FIRING UP AN OVER-THE-TOP BACKYARD GRILL THAT LOOKS GOOD, LASTS LONGER AND HAS MORE HEAT

By Jason Oliver Cottrell

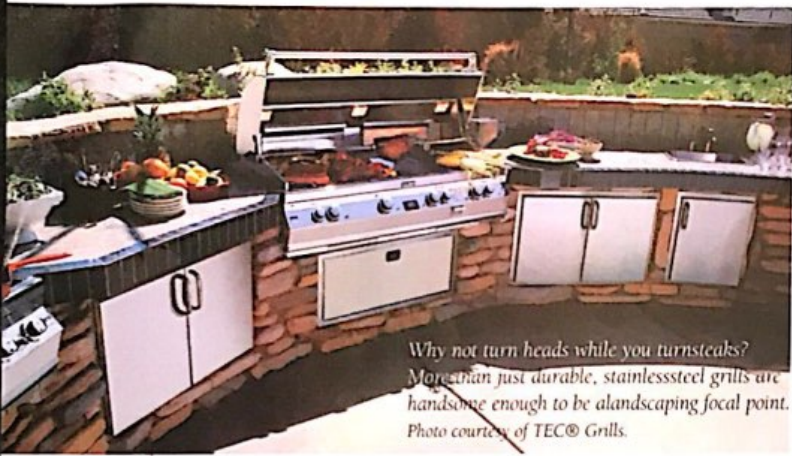
Have you got the chops to be a grade-A grill chef? Then consider joining the ongoing backyard barbecue renaissance – an era in which grilling equipment is limited by only your imagination and finances. Sure T-bills are still a better investment than T-bones, but at least South Florida's year-round outdoor weather guarantees three times the return on your barbecue buck as the poor saps in Buffalo would get. And with Father's Day just around the bend, burning some dough on new grilling gear makes even more sense.

Davie resident Tom Jacob is a true believer. After putting roughly \$20,000 into his outdoor kitchen in the past year, more and more of his family's life centers around his 42" Alfresco grill (with optional Sear Zone) which is

complemented by a tiki hut, countertops, seating and a Keggerator. "It's a second addition to the house really," he said. "We're out there all the time. Even when we're not barbecuing, we're in that area."

Need more convincing? As the rocky real estate market prevents many South Floridians from selling their homes, some are making the best of it by turning the backyard into an oasis. "Especially with the housing [market], people are putting more money into their homes – they're not moving," says Tracy Hollander of The BBQ Depot, the venerable family-owned grill and parts dealer in Hollywood that has been selling, installing and repairing grills for more than 50 years. In recent years, the Hollanders have seen increasing interest in their outdoor kitchens, which can run anywhere from \$15,000 to \$60,000.

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Why not turn heads while you turnsteaks? More than just durable, stainless steel grills are handsome enough to be a landscaping focal point. Photo courtesy of TEC® Grills.

So Easy A Caveman Can Do It

Grilling technology has advanced in the past 30 years perhaps as much as it did in the previous 30,000 years. (Depending on which anthropologist you ask, hominids have been grilling for 400,000 to 1.5 million years.)

One of those advances – stainless steel – seems at first superficial. But it might have changed everything. Grills, of course, are outdoor instruments, and being less susceptible to corrosion helps tremendously. Plus, Hollander points out that the well-made stainless grills tend to have the best warranties. Combined, these two conditions enable the buyer to install one in an outdoor kitchen with confidence.

And the stainless grills look cool. In fact, the manufacturers often sound like they are selling a Corvette rather than a grill. The marketing seems to be working. Jacob, whose stainless grill is priced at about \$4,500, hints at having a little grill lust. "It's a guy thing," he says. "It's a good-looking appliance, and I'm shining it all the time. People walk up and say, 'Wow, what a grill!'"

Under The Hood

Besides looking good and lasting longer, the high-end grills are delivering more heat with less waiting and more control. Hollander says a typical gas grill will reach 400 to 500 degrees. But a high-end stainless grill will deliver 900 degrees with its "blue flame" and up to 1500 with its infrared burners.

Infrared has become ubiquitous. Invented in the early 1980s by Thermal Engineering Corp. (TEC), the technology through the years has spread from the commercial kitchen to the backyard. Grill makers and grill users swear infrared is key to getting steaks to taste like they do in a steakhouse.

Get Cookin'!

Check out the following stores for great grills, custom outdoor kitchens and accessories:

BBQ Depot
5881 Pembroke Rd., Hollywood; (954) 983-0451;
www.thebbqdepot.com

Barbecues Galore
10530 Forest Hills Blvd., Suite C-2, Wellington;
(561) 333-7286; www.bbqgalore.com

Evening's De-Light Inc.
7080 State Road 84, Davie; (786) 629-8154;
www.eveningsdelight.com

Olde Native Trading Company
5407 Haverhill Rd. N, Suite 336, West Palm Beach;
(561) 296-9620; www.oldernative.com

High heat is important to grill chefs because they say the searing locks in flavor and juices. Most of the high-end grill companies offer an infrared portion of a grill on which the chef can sear food and then move it to the blue flame to finish cooking. Alfresco and Outdoor Concepts have "Sear Zones," Lynx has the "ProSear Burner" and TEC offers grills that are 100 percent infrared.

Of course, if all this sounds like too much speed and convenience -- too much of a lifestyle change -- there's always charcoal.

The Cherokee FR is the only 100% infrared portable grill on the market. It weighs in at 28 pounds, runs on liquid propane and being an infrared grill it can achieve high heat fast so, when tailgating, you won't miss kickoff. Photo courtesy of TEC® Grills.

