

Chesneys' new outdoor low-emission stoves make the perfect winter warmers



Baby, It's Cold Outside

But not any more! Here's to Christmas celebrations al fresco, says *Randle Siddeley*

A lot about our world has changed since lockdown, but as we ease back into old patterns our relationship with the outdoors has permanently altered. Being inside for days on end made us crave outside space, however small, and those of us lucky enough to have a garden will never again take it for granted.

Even as chilly nights lengthen, we're busy repurposing our gardens with patio heaters, wood burners and fairy lights, so we can spend more time outside. And let's face it, with soaring fuel prices necessitating a more cautious approach to heating, we might as well be outside as in.

What if someone had found a way of being outside that guaranteed being able to cook while staying warm, dry and comfortable? Well, someone has, and it's no other than film director Guy Ritchie, who's created his Cashmere Caveman range comprised of the WildKitchen and WildTable, one of which featured in his recent movie *The Gentlemen*. Just as Blue Forest came along and gave us the Rolls-Royce of tree houses, Cashmere Caveman has come up with a game-changing concept that will revolutionise al-fresco dining for winter (ccwildkitchens.com). Given the theme of this issue is celebration, I see no reason not to start planning an outdoor Christmas feast.

The beauties of the WildKitchen and WildTable are manifold. The WildTable comes in four sizes to seat 12, eight, six or four. The lights operate from an independent power source or connected to mains electricity, so



Invest in festoon lights and cosy seating

you can erect it anywhere. The structure is reassuringly manual and more akin to a sailing boat than a complicated mod con, with sturdy ropes to lower or raise the canvas sheets by hand. The central firebox doubles as a cooker and has a flue and a glass top, so you are not smoked out and can keep an eye on your food. And the best part is that the firebox is in the centre of the copper or zinc-topped table, so cooking becomes communal, a bit like a very grand fondue. Every detail has been thought through, with cooking utensils, glasses and even holders with paper towels hanging within easy reach from a WildHalo above the firebox. There's even a 'skilt' under the table that keeps thighs and knees warm.

We don't all have generous gardens or a field to accommodate a WildKitchen, but if you have a balcony or small patio and an even tinier budget, save on electricity and gas and invest in a small fire pit or wood burner and then add cheer with festoon lights or lanterns. A string of lights will automatically create a party atmosphere while illuminating your trees and plants – try Garden Trading or Lighting Legends. With the precarious state of our country's gas and electricity supplies this winter, a good supply of candles could become de rigueur. Luckily, there are some good-looking candle lanterns around. Soho Home has tall, handsome burnished copper ones in varying sizes and Sarah Raven stocks pillar candles in pretty colours and lanterns in grey rustic or more decorative Moroccan styles and one with an accompanying crook to hang it from.

Chesneys' new outdoor Heat collection is helping make all-round outdoor living possible with its new Clean Burn lower emission stoves (chesneys.co.uk).



Late-blooming pink anemones will brighten up winter gardens



The WildTable from Cashmere Caveman

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PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES



The juniper berry wreath from Sarah Raven

Otherwise, an iron or steel fire bowl from Crocus, Primrose or Waitrose Garden will transform a tiny yard or roof terrace into a snug, atmospheric entertaining space.

In terms of planting, you should already have put in your spring bulbs, but don't neglect autumn planting. Late blooming, pink-flowered Anemones hupehensis and salvias like 'Phyllis' Fancy' and 'Mulberry Jam' will add plenty of colour till the hard frost starts to bite. There are also some beautiful autumn fruit trees, like the small Sorbus eburnea. Plant it in well-drained soil and you will be rewarded with white berries glowing among dazzling yellow and orange foliage. Or plant the tougher, bigger Rowan 'Olympic Flame' for ferny orange-red foliage and red berries.

Christmas just isn't Christmas without Ilex aquifolium or English holly. Choose a hardy variety like 'J.C. van Tol', which is self-fertilising so doesn't need to be near a male to produce fruit. It has glossy, dark, almost spineless leaves and bright berries. The 'Argentea Marginata' has masses of berries and lustrous, spiny, silver-margined leaves and stems ideal for floral arrangements. It also copes well in cities or coastal towns as it doesn't mind pollution or salty air. You'll need to plant a male holly nearby for it to produce berries, so put in a variegated 'Silver Queen' (male despite the misleading name) that likes the same conditions.

To add a final festive flourish, stick a Christmas tree outside and invest in an outdoor garland or wreath. Go flamboyant and grand with a Wild at Heart cinnamon and orange wreath or more rustic with Sarah Raven's juniper berry wreath (£69.95, sarahraven.com). Then light up your lanterns and fire and enjoy your winter garden.

Randle Siddeley is a leading landscape architect and garden designer. randlesiddeley.co.uk ■