



Raising the Bar

A do-it-yourselfer builds an outdoor kitchen from reclaimed cinder blocks and wood shelves.

BY PENELOPE O'SULLIVAN PHOTOS MATTHEW BENSON STYLING STACEY KUNSTEL



Until a friend gave them a new grill as a gift, Doug and Donna Morris never considered an outdoor kitchen for their Salisbury, Massachusetts, home. But the grill got them thinking—then building.

Doug designed and built a spacious counter for cooking and dining. Made of recycled wood and cinder blocks, the bar cost almost nothing. By decorating with vibrant containers and planting groundcovers, Doug visually linked the outdoor kitchen and the rest of the garden. “I see the entire garden as my extended living space and the kitchen as part of the garden,” he says.

The counter is now a hub of the Morris household. Doug uses it as a potting bench and for flower arranging and carving pumpkins. But most of all, it’s a casual dining and entertaining space. He cooks on one side, and family and friends congregate on the other. “Everything’s better over food,” Doug says.



COUNTER POINT A baker by trade, Doug Morris built his outdoor kitchen to echo his workplace. “At the bakery, I have tables all around. I wanted the same work space around the grill.”



Reclamation Project

Doug Morris believes in adaptive reuse, the concept of adapting old things for new purposes. "Everything has another use," he says. "It's just a matter of what it's going to be in its next life." Originally, the cinder blocks supporting the weight of the counter were part of a chimney at the back of his home. Decorative painting gave them a pleasing gray patina. The fir countertops were shelves in Doug's bakery. "The shelves were too nice to discard," Doug says. *Note: Never use pressure-treated wood as a dining or food-preparation surface.* ♻️

For buying information see page 236.

BUDGET BREAKDOWN

A well-appointed outdoor kitchen island may cost several thousand dollars. By reusing old materials and buying accessories at discount stores, Doug created one for a small fraction of that cost.

Pillar blocks.....	\$0
Paint for blocks.....	\$55
Wood counter	\$0
Chairs (4)	\$160
Umbrella and stand.....	\$129
Stone dust pavement	\$280
TOTAL	\$624