



David Tutera added black tie style to a backyard barbecue with decorative flourishes such as elegant black-and-white-checked chair covers.

Carolyn Roehm creates a dramatic summer soiree with bold black and white stripes and vibrant sunflowers.



By Marc Cadiente

Design Alfresco

The latest in outdoor living and entertaining heat up those endless summer days and nights.

As days get longer and temperatures get warmer, we can finally celebrate the end of our winter hibernation and turn our attention outdoors. Of course, heading outside for a little summer R&R these days isn't just about a few lawn chairs, an inflatable pool and a grill. Design-savvy consumers want to add style to their outdoor spaces with the conveniences and luxuries of indoors. And when it comes to alfresco entertaining, it's all about raising the tented roofs with panache.

The consumer interest in bringing style outside has made outdoor living, that ubiquitous catchphrase, a popular and ever-growing market in recent years. Furniture manufacturers have expanded their lines to include weatherproof pieces and new umbrella and tent designs for

finding shelter from the sun. And designers have stepped into the market with new notions of entertaining and creative ideas for bringing the "indoors" outside.

The desire for versatile environments that seamlessly connect indoor and outdoor environments has inspired a new genre of furniture referred to as versatile, indoor/outdoor, casual, or leisure.

Call it what you will, but one thing is certain — gone are the days of limited and uninspired outdoor design. Innovations in manufacturing techniques and finishes allow furniture to be nearly weatherproof without conjuring up images of the lanai on *The Golden Girls*.

Kravet, for example, recently introduced the Kravet Soleil Furniture Collection, a durable ensemble of furniture made from finely crafted wood with cushions that allow the rain to run through and dry quickly. Outdoor fabrics, including those from pioneer company Sunbrella, are more bold, colorful and softer than ever before. And specialty outdoor furniture manufacturers like Janus et Cie and Dedon are becoming more fashionable, contributing avant-garde and modern pieces that can maximize a cool outdoor experience.

Party people

With the advancements in outdoor living design, what better way to showcase them than with a party? And, really, who doesn't like a good party? Carlyne Roehm is a former fashion designer, model and self-described "tastemaker, trendsetter, and lifestyle expert," who has also devoted her multi-talents to floral, garden, interior and entertaining design. For Roehm, conceiving a party is a festive extension of her design style.

"I have always loved the fantasy of a party. For me, entertaining is one of the most complete expressions of my style as a designer and hostess," Roehm writes in her latest book, *A Passion for Parties*. "All of [summer's] wonders — the tastes, textures, and sights — of the beach at sunset, the roadside stands and local farmers' markets filled with flowers and an abundant harvest of fresh produce, and the sound of the waves rolling in — all of summer's images are intoxicating enough to delight and energize us to throw a party."

Roehm creates whimsically-designed outdoor spaces for all occasions. For a birthday party she produced, she used bold stripes and dazzling sunflowers as the simple yet elegant design motif, resulting in a dramatic and fun setting. While the black-and-white tented cabana provided partygoers some relief from the sun, the striped cushions and tablecloth — a nod to and a modern twist on the nautical navy blue-and-white stripe — offered cool comfort. And for parties that go well into the night, Roehm offers an illuminating tip: "Always use lots of candles on your table. We all like to look glamorous, so no overhead lighting."

A prime location between two ponds was the setting for Roehm's chic yet casual Fourth of July picnic. At once simple and beautiful, Roehm's design was dictated by the occasion. The outdoor space was drenched in red, white and blue, offering her guests a patriotic oasis from the summer heat. Classic white-painted Lutyens benches flanked the pathway to simple picnic tables that were grouped together, allowing guests to converse easily.

Like Carlyne Roehm, David Tuter has made a name for himself planning events and designing spaces for special occasions. The host of his own television show, *The Party Planner* with David Tuter on the *Discovery Home Channel*, he is also the author of five books. From his latest book, *Big Birthdays*, Tuter created a "lively but 'proper' dinner" party space in an untarnished field. Inspired by the celebrant's joy for grilling, Tuter used sleek black Kettle grills filled with lush fern to add ambience to the party space. The dining area was punctuated with black-and-white checked chair covers—reminiscent of traditional red-checked picnic tablecloths, and accented with red trim, while deep red roses climbed their way up to "enchanted umbrella chandeliers."

When it comes to venues, Tuter has a preference. He writes in his book *A Passion for Parties*: "To me, a tented party offers a blank canvas. If given a choice between a ballroom and a tented space, I'll always go for the tent. The ability to create a more customized look and feel is much greater with a tented space because you start from the ground up — literally." Sure enough, tents for summer parties are more frequently making appearances. No longer reserved for weddings only, elaborately designed tents are becoming a staple of outdoor living and stylish events, providing a whimsical refuge to a backyard, beach, meadow and even rooftop.

Gimme shelter

The tent is in high demand by party planners, designers and homeowners alike because it provides shelter that is both versatile and mobile. That in itself is the tent's long history and has made it the preferred mode of accommodation for centuries — from nomadic living to the circus big top. The earliest recorded account of the tent is 72 A.D. when it was used during hunting expeditions and war campaigns. Glamorous? Not a bit, but fast-forward several centuries, when the tent takes on other roles. Recall the "crossing-over" ceremony of Maria Antonia from the Austrian/French border to become Marie Antoinette. And remember the fanciful and lavish outdoor soirees the queen held, complete with gauzy panels lightly fluttering in the wind and crystal chandeliers sensually flickering. That sounds more like what we imagine when we think of today's outdoor parties. And why not? A party, as Carlyne Roehm says, "Allows imagination to venture into a reality that is outside of everyday life."

Like the new lines of outdoor furniture available, today's tents are better crafted and more beautiful than their past counterparts. With the wave of better-looking tents comes the small group of specialty retailers offering them. One such company is the Pavilion Tent Company. During a trip to India in 2004, founders Simon and Juliet Teakle discovered the artistry of Rajasthani tents. They purchased "a proper Indian souvenir" to take home with them: the Raj tent with duck-egg blue interior, hand-blocked with elephants and tigers, hung with tassels, muslin curtains and hand-turned wood finials atop a bamboo frame.

Stateside, the Raj tent became the couple's summer room for entertaining, and covetous friends began inquiring how they could acquire one. After several individual orders, the factory in India asked Juliet if she would consider becoming their agent in the United States, and the Pavilion Tent Company was born. The demand for tents was picking up, and the Teakles were on top of the trend. The company offers the tents — made using traditional Rajasthani techniques and designs that date back hundreds of years — in a range of sizes, from the grand and opulent Maharaja that can comfortably seat 60 people for dinner to the Raj, which can hold up to 20. Whatever the size, the tents offer the bones for designing an outdoor space for the perfect party.

The outdoor design scene is definitely heating up as the mercury rises. So whether tent-hopping across the perfect party scene or kicking back in your own super-stylish backyard, make sure to enjoy those endless summer day and nights in style.

Marc Cadiante lives, learns and works in New York City.

“
Summer's images
are intoxicating
enough to delight
and energize us to
throw a party.
— Carlyne Roehm

The celeste blue interior of the Raj tent provides a heavenly canopy for the festivities.



Raj and Maharaja tents, designed and made in Rajasthan for The Pavilion Tent Company, created a backdrop of relaxed elegance for a beach party in Watch Hill, Rhode Island.

