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# Six Trends in Deck and Porch Design

## Building/Remodeling Industry Trends

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Until recently, Jeff Wilson's deck was an 8-foot-by-20-foot rectangle in the backyard of his 65-year-old home near Columbus, Ohio. Like many decks, it was small, in need of repair.

But Wilson set out to change that with an 18-month backyard renovation. The result, a 400-square-foot, tri-level outdoor entertaining space, is nothing short of deck euphoria. It features an outdoor kitchen with a grill, a sink, a beer tap and a wood-burning bread oven, not to mention a covered dining area, an enclosed porch and built-in storage, including a custom-built potting table.

"Really, it's very practical," says Wilson, who built the entire deck himself. A television host for HGTV and DIY Network, as well as a consultant for the Thompson Company, Wilson wanted a place where he could entertain, so he built one. "My wife and I bought a 1,000-square-foot kit home. We love to have people over, but it's really too small. Now, with our deck, we can have 15 people sitting down to dinner outside."

Wilson isn't alone. The number of U.S. homes with decks hit an all-time high in 2007, reaching 49 percent versus 36 percent in 2002, according to independent research conducted for The Thompson's Company, makers of [Thompson's Water Seal](#) brand waterproofers, stains and cleaners. The number of homes with patios is also up, which increased to 53 percent in 2007, compared to 46 percent in 2002.

Driving deck and patio growth are trends in outdoor entertaining that have homeowners craving spaces that are more creative, attractive and functional than ever before, says Michael Beaudry, executive vice president of the North American Deck and Railing Association, based in Quakertown, Pa. "Whether it's decks or patio pavers, arbors or pools, the outdoor living arena is booming," he says.

In order to take advantage of the blossoming deck business, builders should focus on selling not only outdoor spaces but also an outdoor lifestyle. Create a backyard oasis with

these trends.

### **1. Outdoor Living Spaces**

More homeowners are bringing the indoors outside. “Instead of just having a deck where you sit and maybe grill, you’ll have separate spaces,” Wilson says. “You’ll have a seating area, for instance, that’s kind of like a living room, with end tables, couches and even outdoor rugs and standing lamps.”

To take advantage of this, consider building multi-level decks with unique floor plans that include distinct spaces for cooking, eating, lounging and entertaining—just like inside the home.

### **2. Outdoor Kitchens**

Perhaps the most popular outdoor living space is the outdoor kitchen, according to Beaudry. “It’s not your grandfather’s deck anymore,” he says. “Instead of having a grill off to the side all by itself, we’re creating outdoor kitchen areas where Dad can be cooking on his kick-butt outdoor kitchen grill, then turn around and see a circular bar behind him where all his boys are drinking.”

While standard kitchen features, such as a grill, a sink, a food prep counter and a refrigerator, are popular, other options include a bar, a stone fireplace or a fire pit, as well as unique amenities like Wilson’s beer tap and bread oven.

### **3. Mixed Media**

Although wood is the most trendy decking material, more diverse materials are quickly becoming popular, Wilson says. Among them are composites and hardwoods, including ipe, as well as colored stains and deck brighteners.

Glass, aluminum and wrought iron, are also popular and are quickly turning into decorative replacements for wooden railings and balusters, Beaudry says.

Natural stone is another option, says Mark Fernandes, chairman of the Natural Stone Council. “Stone may be used both as the primary material, as well as a decorative addition to the deck, patio or porch,” he says.

### **4. Sustainable Lumber**

Homeowners also are more frequently requesting responsibly sourced materials, Wilson says. Grown and harvested in sustainable forests, then certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, sustainable wood offers builders a means for capitalizing on two trends, green building and outdoor living, at once.

“People are willing to pay a little more for green design,” Wilson says. “A lot of pine today is sustainably harvested.”

### **5. Deck-cessories**

Decks themselves aren’t the only things getting more sophisticated. Deck accessories are, too, Wilson says. Popular options include outfitting one’s deck with outdoor furniture, low-voltage lighting, sound systems and even outdoor movie projectors, not to mention pergolas, awnings, mosquito netting, spas and more.

### **6. Customization**

Builders who truly want to wow homeowners should offer them custom deck features, such as built-in storage and unique architectural elements, as well as distinctive features such as gardening stations, horseshoe pits and water features, depending on their clients' interests.

No matter what you do to your deck, the key is making them special. "To create a vacation at home for themselves, people are looking to enhance their exteriors and create outdoor living spaces with a variety of amenities," Ferrnandes says.