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# Feature Home

( ON THE COVER )

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Tim and Ava Green have been designing homes for others for decades. Now it was their turn. They totally gutted the 1200 square foot lake cottage and then renovated it, adding an additional 1440 square feet.



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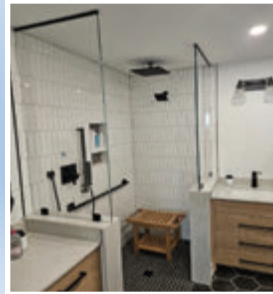




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# Mini Quiche

Photography by Linda Hoard

These Cheesy Egg Muffins are a delicious and protein-packed option for breakfast or a quick snack. Made with fluffy eggs, creamy sour cream, and a blend of melted Monterey Jack and cheddar cheese, they bake up light, rich, and satisfying. You can customize them by adding your favorite sautéed vegetables or a touch of mild spice for extra flavor. Baked in muffin tins for easy portioning, they're perfect for meal prep, brunch, or a grab-and-go breakfast. Serve them warm or store them for a quick and nutritious bite anytime!

## Ingredients:

12 large eggs  
1 cup sour cream  
4 cups shredded Monterey Jack and cheddar cheese blend  
1 (17-ounce) can diced green chilies (optional)  
1 cup sautéed vegetables (optional – bell peppers, onions, mushrooms, or spinach work well)  
1 teaspoon salt  
½ teaspoon garlic powder (optional)  
½ teaspoon smoked paprika (optional)

## Directions:

**Preheat Oven:** Set your oven to 400°F. Grease a muffin tin or line with silicone baking cups.

**Mix Ingredients:** In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs and sour cream until smooth. Stir in the shredded cheese, diced green chilies, and sautéed vegetables (if using). Add salt, pepper, and seasonings.

**Muffin Tins:** Divide the mixture evenly among the muffin cups, filling each about 3/4 full.

**Bake:** Place in the preheated oven and bake for 20-25 minutes, or until the egg muffins are set and slightly golden on top.

**Cool & Serve:** Let the muffins cool for a few minutes before removing them from the tin. Serve warm, or let cool completely and refrigerate for meal prep.

## Options:

### More Flavor & Seasoning Options

**Fresh herbs:** Chopped cilantro, chives, or parsley for brightness.

**Spices:** Cumin or chili powder to enhance the green chilies. Hot sauce or red pepper flakes if you like a little spice.

### Make it Heartier

Add cooked crumbled sausage, bacon, or chorizo for extra protein.

Swap some of the cheese for pepper jack to add more heat.



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# Kitchen Trends and Equipment

By Mike Wenninger

Photo Courtesy of Hannapel

A kitchen is where we cook, and for many of us it's also where we dine and where we naturally gather with guests and friends. In many homes it's the most important room.

"Your kitchen is the No. 1 selling point of a home. If somebody goes house shopping, that's one of the first things they look at because it's a big investment if you have to remodel," says Terri Yore, a longtime designer for Hannapel Kitchen | Bath | Window | Door. This retail business has eight stores in southwest Michigan including one at 370 N. 9th St. in Kalamazoo and another at 8800 Shaver Rd. in Portage. The other six are in South Haven, St. Joseph, Dowagiac, Niles, Bridgman and Sturgis.

So what's happening with kitchen décor and equipment in early 2025? Yore, who deals mainly with cabinetry and countertops at the South Haven Hannapel store, says, "Deep-colored greens are what's coming for cabinets. And also deep blues. Blues have been around for a bit so the newer colors are bold green." As examples, she mentions Evergreen Green and Midnight Blue.

"Also, there're a lot of two-tone kitchens," Yore says. "There's light color on top and a dark rich color down below. But stay with a pretty neutral countertop to keep it light and airy so the light reflects off the countertop."

In finishes for natural woods, light to mid colors are coming back. And oak, in the Shaker style, has made a return.

Yore points out, "If you use neutral-color cabinets you can put whatever you want behind for wall color."

But what do you do if you're happy with your mostly white kitchen? Just keep it. "The classic white will be forever; that's still a popular choice," Yore says. "I've been doing this for over 30 years and white was popular when I started and it's still popular today."

Cabinet doors and drawers have knobs and pulls that Yore says are very important in the décor. "Hardware is like the jewelry of the kitchen; it just tops it off. It finishes

it off nicely," she says. Recommended are brushed chrome, brushed brass, and black.

For countertops, quartz remains the most popular material. "We sell mostly quartz tops these days for the kitchen, bathroom and laundry. It's not indestructible but it is the strongest top on the market," Yore says.

For most of Hannapel's customers, kitchen lighting is not changing; "Typically it's can lights and then you get your pendants or whatever over your island," Yore says. "Can lights have been popular for quite some time. For under-cabinet lighting, usually that's some kind of rope lighting or incandescent lighting.

"Stainless-steel sinks are still the most popular," she says. "We do have quartz as an option, which is more of a composite-type sink. In my opinion, it's a little more durable but your colors are not as uniform like a stainless would be."

If you want the décor throughout your kitchen to be uniform, there are options like making the stove hood match your cabinets. "There're wood hoods that still have the metal insert but the hood surface matches the cabinetry," Yore says. "Most of ours are either a wood hood that matches the cabinetry or a stainless-steel hood. It's more that people want to match the uniformity of the cabinetry by having it the same color."

However, you can take an opposite approach and choose a color that makes the hood an accent in your kitchen.

Yore says it's important to consider what your kitchen is used for the most. "Maybe the kitchen is used more for entertaining so you want a bigger island with nothing in it so you can put hors d'oeuvres on it or use it for the kids' homework and things like that. That's evolving--the way that families use their kitchens," she says. "An island is like the main hub so if everybody gathers around there, you don't want to put a sink right in the middle of your island. Or you might want to put a secondary sink in, maybe at the



bar area off to the side with an undercabinet refrigerator. People can be gathering around the island, they can make their drinks at the bar and come back and sit down.

"It's about sitting and having places to congregate in the kitchen because a lot of folks these days don't have a dining room table anymore. They use their island for everyday eating. So that's very big—to have seating and things around your island."

When your basic kitchen is ready, it's time to think about appliances—large and small. An expert on this subject is Mark Wrench, founder of bos kitchens in downtown Kalamazoo at 633 W. Michigan Ave.

He notes that one kitchen standard—a full double wall oven—is changing in favor of putting either a steam oven or a speed oven over the top of a single wall oven. "The value of the speed oven is that it acts as a convection oven but also as a microwave. So if you want to get a microwave off of a countertop, this is that opportunity," Wrench says. "The steam oven does convection style cooking but also it has a steam aspect for those who like to bake that way."

"Also gaining popularity is the warming drawer. It has its own heating element. People put their food in there to have everything come to the table nice and warm. They'll warm up plates in there."

Simple design changes for appliances can make a big difference. Wrench cites a Bosch wall oven that has a swing door instead of the usual pull-down door. "People are really liking that because they don't have that long reach over the top of a door that's come down horizontally," he says.

Manufacturers keep increasing the capability of coffeemakers. Wrench comments as he points to models

of the several brands in his store: "Depending on which model you get, it will grind your beans to your desired texture of your coffee. . . . This is a built-in coffee machine. It will do 14 or 15 different styles of coffee. It can be hard plumbed for water. . . . This one has probably 50 different setting capabilities."

Other appliance changes include, "There're more drawer-style microwaves built into islands or even around the kitchen's perimeter."

Wrench says, "The induction cooktop is something that's gaining a lot of popularity." They have smooth glass tops like electric stoves but what heats pots and pans is an electromagnetic field. This results in faster boiling and steadier simmering. As with anything magnetic, induction cooktops require using cookware that has some iron in it.

Wrench comments, "If I were to put an inch of water in this pan, I will bring that to a boil in under one minute. It's that responsive."

There's a big change in the appearance of refrigerators, Wrench says. "More and more manufacturers are stepping away from the water and ice dispenser on the outside. Instead, they have a water dispenser on an inside side wall. Some of the bigger repair service requirements were for those ice and water dispensers on the outside."

Refrigerators also can be made to blend into kitchen décor by installing front panels that match cabinets, even natural woods.

Toaster manufacturers continue to offer innovations. Wrench points out a top-loaded, two-slice toaster that's unusually long. "That's to accommodate a long bread slice when somebody doesn't necessarily want to cut it in half to fit into a traditional toaster."



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# Quiet Luxury

By Mike Wenninger

Photos Courtesy of ADIDA, LLC

A style that is becoming more popular in interior decorating is labeled quiet luxury. It's a transplant from the fashion industry where it caught on a couple of years ago.

A magazine called Chic Style Collective wrote this about the clothing trend: "The quiet luxury style is all about subtle elegance and refined sophistication. It focuses on high-quality materials and impeccable craftsmanship rather than flashy logos or bold branding. . . . Subtle elegance, the hallmark of quiet luxury fashion, captivates with its understated charm and timeless allure."

Three interior decorators in the Kalamazoo area say the trendy style in their business actually isn't new. Valentina Velkova, owner and president of ADIDA, says quiet luxury goes back to the 18th and 19th centuries, at least in Europe. She is a native of Bulgaria, where she completed her formal education.

Dian Latora, owner of Cork Lane Decorating Center, who has been in the business for 47 years, says, "I call it simple elegance. It's been my term for years. You've been out in the world all day working and it's a nice quiet home to come home to. It's just very simple and cozy."

Jessica McGure, owner of Flair Interiors comments, "I think it is something people have been doing for a long time without saying that term."

ADIDA's Velkova comments further, "It gives you this warm, soothing and relaxing feeling when you're in this space created in this style. It's called luxury because it uses very high quality materials, very high quality style, timeless clean design."

Jessica McGuire at Flair Interiors says, "It's supposed to be a lived-in style but kind of like an effortless but elegant

look, not overly designed looking but intentional, and also high quality materials for the bigger pieces. It's definitely more popular in kitchens and bathrooms. You want them more neutral and with good quality so you're not going to change it."

WHAT SPECIFICALLY MAKES QUIET LUXURY? THE THREE DECORATORS HAVE MANY ANSWERS.

Valentina Velkova, who also is an architect, says it creates soothing, sophisticated space using lots of natural light and soft warm colors, and a lot of art is incorporated in the interior design as well. "This trend uses high quality natural materials like stone and wood and textiles like linen and silk and natural stones like granite and travertine and marble," she says.

Paint colors are neutral. "They provide tranquility, they're earthy tones, very warm, very soft colors, very sophisticated like whites, cream, soft beige, taupe, warm gray. We also could use accent colors on one wall. Let's say you have a fireplace with a wall around it or bookshelves or windows; we could use accent colors like olive or charcoal or dark blue colors, something like that."

"Furniture is clean with timeless lines and shapes, and most of the time could be custom-designed pieces that are very well built using natural woods and soft-color fabrics. It's quality over quantity."

"Another feature of this style is bringing in lots of natural light, many windows, tall windows. And the light fixtures have clean design in chandeliers, sconces, or table lamps that give you soothing light. Also, if you have custom-made bookcases or other built-ins, you could



incorporate lights in them that give you extra luxury and extra quality."

Velkova continues, "Accessories need to be simple and elegant and high quality. Also, they could be personal like old pictures of the family with beautiful frames. Also, lots of art pieces—good art that you are not going to be tired to look at it for many, many years. Paintings, sculptures, pieces that last forever."

Dian Latora, whose first business was only window treatments, comments, "With windows quiet luxury works really well because we are doing a lot of plantation shutters. With that you can just put a shutter on the inside of your window and you can go with the large louvres which give you that less busy look. With a shutter or with a blind, you can add the softening of a side panel. So if your shutter is white and you're working with the linen colors, you could do a long side panel in the neutral linen. It gives you that warm cozy feel but it's less at your window and it's not a lot of color."

"For floors, I do a lot of luxury vinyl plank. It's the look of wood only in the waterproof vinyl. That sleek, wood, clean floor works well. You can just bring in an area rug for where you want it a little cozier. It's easier to take care of, a lot easier than carpet all the way through."

"Wallpaper's really made a way back into wall décor, but in simple tone-on-tone colors and maybe just one wall. It's become an accent wall rather than the whole room being papered. It's being done with wallpaper or with wood planks, also a lot of shiplap. You can put a stone feature on one wall. In bedrooms we do a lot of making the headboard wall an accent. You can tie in all your bedding with it, get a lot of bang for your buck there."



"Paint colors have a lot of white and off-white trim. You know gray was huge all through the early 2000s up to 2020, but now grays definitely are taking a back seat to the warmer tones. People like a natural looking floor and so with that you want a natural, more earth tone in your wall, so not so gray any more. It's warming up with the beiges and the linens."

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For accessories she suggests “a lot of natural greenery. Plants, ferns. Maybe one large piece on a dining room table. You just don’t want a lot of little pieces anymore. You want pieces larger. Just keep with that less-is-more concept.”

“Area rugs have more texture. You want to layer texture, so if you’ve got a textured sofa, like a small linen sofa, you want a larger, chunkier, maybe textured rug. You’re just layering lots of different textures in kind of a tone-on-tone color palette. That creates that beautiful simple elegance, or quiet luxury.”

Jessica McGuire, whose Flair Interiors will be 40 years old in April, says, “People want better quality furniture that’s going to hold up and that falls into this quiet luxury category because it’s usually more neutral. It doesn’t have to be totally plain color but they do want something that can last them a long time so they can change other patterns in the room. You can redo the room without having to change everything in it.”

Flooring materials are wood, luxury vinyl, faux wood and some tile. “People aren’t carpeting their whole house much; it’s usually bedrooms, basements.”

WINDOWS HAVE TEXTURES,  
WOVEN WOOD FOR EXAMPLE.

“For counters, it’s definitely popular to go lighter. What’s probably the most popular is white with any sort of veining through it, like white with gray marbling. There’s more like tan marbling in white for a warm look. There’s also navy blue in white, which looks really cool. There’re some golds mixed in there, too.”

For lighting, McGuire says, “It used to be that you would get one collection of lighting and do that throughout your house. Now it’s a lot more mix and match, like in your kitchen if you have pendant lights they don’t necessarily have to match exactly the light for your island. There’s a lot more different lighting.”

“Brass is really big again. Gold and brass are super big again. Blacks and golds are really popular right now.”



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## Renovating with Flair

By Zinta Aistars

Feature Photography by Jim Schuon Photography

**T**im and Ava Green have been designing homes for others for decades, but now—it was their turn. Long-time owners of Flair Interiors at 427 West Cork Street in Kalamazoo, the couple have now passed the business on to their daughter and son-in-law, Jessica and Adam McGuire. The Greens are taking their designer skills to their own home.

"We purchased what we wanted to be our forever home in 2023," says Tim Green. "Renovation started in May 2023 and took about a year. It was more of a cottage, built in 1957, with about 1,200 square feet, so we pretty much gutted it and then added another 1,440 square feet onto it with a second floor."

After owning several lakefront homes, the Greens were not about to give up that pleasure, even at the cost of a property with narrow boundary lines. Their new home is located on West Lake.

"So we built up," Green says. "We turned it into a two-story home. It could be tricky from the design aspect to work around the property lines, so we had to massage the new floor plan to fit. We were legally able to use no more than 30 percent of the lot size, which is 7,400 square feet, so we added our two-car garage in front and put in a lift so that our golf cart could be lifted up above the garage."

What was once the kitchen on the main floor became the walk-in closet to the master suite in addition to

new dining and living rooms. The second floor adds a family room and an additional bedroom and bunk room for grandchildren—the Greens have 18 grandchildren.

"Our kitchen now is what was once the living room," Green says. "The new kitchen is galley style with a walk-through to the pantry and laundry room. Galley style isn't always popular, but it works for us. We included a seating area with two café tables and a breakfast area."

The Greens went bold in their color choices, with kitchen cabinetry in navy blue with white appliances, granite countertops and backsplash, and a custom range hood over the gas stove. Flooring in the kitchen and throughout are a light hickory luxury vinyl plank. A sloped ceiling with three skylights over the kitchen bring plenty of light and a feeling of spaciousness.

"Initially, I thought the navy-blue cabinetry might be overstated, but you know, it works," Green adds. "Wallpaper is making a comeback, too, and we used a grass cloth wallpaper in our kitchen, too."

The master bedroom, decorated in a neutral color scheme, has a slider window overlooking the lake. The room has a sitting area under a tray ceiling. The master en suite has a walk-in shower with dual shower heads and echoes the navy-blue colors of the kitchen.

"There's a walk-through closet in there that connects to the laundry room and pantry, so you can sneak through









Before - Courtesy of Tim and Ava Green











there at night for a midnight snack," Green chuckles. "We used wallpaper in the closet, too, with a floral print."

The main floor living room centers on a gas fireplace and custom cabinetry. The adjacent dining room includes a bar and a half bath to the side. The rooms have access to the outdoors to enjoy the lake view.

"And then there is the second floor, where we created it to give family visiting to have private space," Green says. "A catwalk opens the second floor to the main floor, but they have a separate family room with a kitchenette and what we call a friendship table where the kids can play. The main bedroom there has two queen beds, and the bunk room is for the grandkids. They have a full bath and a view over the lake that is even more gorgeous from up there."

With such an enticing outdoor area open to the lake, the Greens have given their outdoor space even more attention. A poured aggregate patio borders on stairs to the waterfront with a dock system and boathouse with a deck on top to catch the lake breezes.

"The boathouse on the water was grandfathered in," Green says. "Can't build that close to the water anymore, but we do enjoy it. Ava and I love to spend time outdoors, so we worked on creating a lawn that does not require mowing. We did the landscaping ourselves. It's a garden on stone, with a water feature of a waterfall with plantings around it."

The home is surrounded by mature trees, maples and crabapples that add color and springtime bloom. An outdoor kitchen includes a grill and outdoor refrigerator to keep those summertime drinks chilled. A second refrigerator is located in the boathouse.

The exterior of the home is finished in two shades with a woodgrain LP smart siding painted in eye-catching teal and horizontal cedar shakes.

"We hired college guys to do a lot of the work in this renovation," Green says. "Some with experience, some with no experience at all. It's fun to teach young people a new trade. And being in the design business all our lives, Ava and I now greatly enjoy being consultants to our daughter and son-in-law. Now, that's fun!"

Flair Interiors, originally known as Draperies on Wheels, was established in 1985. They have since expanded to offer custom window treatments, upholstered furniture, and interior design services. Clients are invited to view their showroom and meet with a team of designers, installers, and floral experts. They can be reached at (269) 372-0110, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., or by appointment on evenings and weekends.







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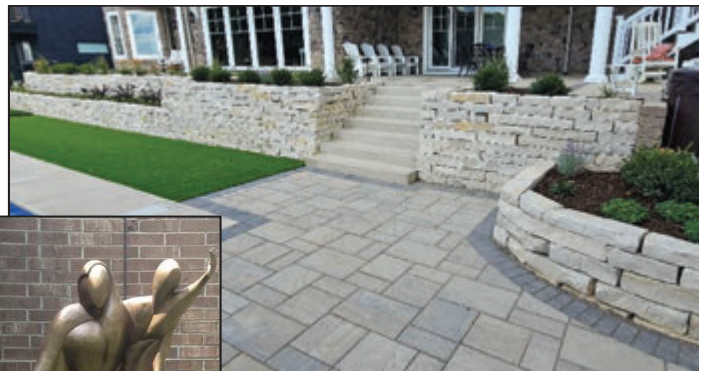
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Photo courtesy of Sandstone Creation

# Making Your Outdoor Space Extraordinary

By Mike Wenninger

Most homes have outdoor spaces that could be used for enjoyment, and ways to use them are almost unlimited.

The founder of Sandstone Creation, Jim Garrison, says, "A patio is always going to be popular. It's often like the beginning of the process to carve out and create your outdoor space. From there it's like, 'Do we want to put a firepit here, an outdoor fireplace, a kitchen, a pergola?'"

Common patio materials are concrete, brick and stone. "There's some beautiful brick on the market these days," says Ken Murray, who founded Murray Landscaping 34 years ago. For stone patios, bluestone is the most popular, he says.

Garrison comments, "We put in a lot of outdoor kitchens. They are probably one of the most customized things out there because everybody has their own cooking interests. Some people want to cook with charcoal or wood pellets or they like to smoke meats or they want to use natural gas. There're just a lot of options."

Ken Murray says, "Anything a house kitchen can have, an outdoor kitchen can have as well."

Manufactured outdoor kitchen islands can be a good investment, says Mark Wrench, owner for 24 years of Fireplace & Grill Shoppe in downtown Kalamazoo at 645 W. Michigan Ave. The islands can be bare bones or they can have the works: grill, refrigerator, sink, storage spaces and more.

"What I like about the islands is that they are more cost effective for the homeowner. If you were to build something on the site it becomes a permanent asset for the residence and you can't pick it up and move it when you do move. That's more expensive than a portable island. A lot

of people are making the choice for an island. It's essentially everything that you want to have outdoors. It's moving your indoor kitchen outdoors."

Another popular use of outdoor space is to install a firepit. Jim Garrison says, "Firepits are huge. There are a lot of materials that can be used. We've built firepits out of stone and brick, and a lot of manufacturers offer firepit kits made out of different concrete blocks."

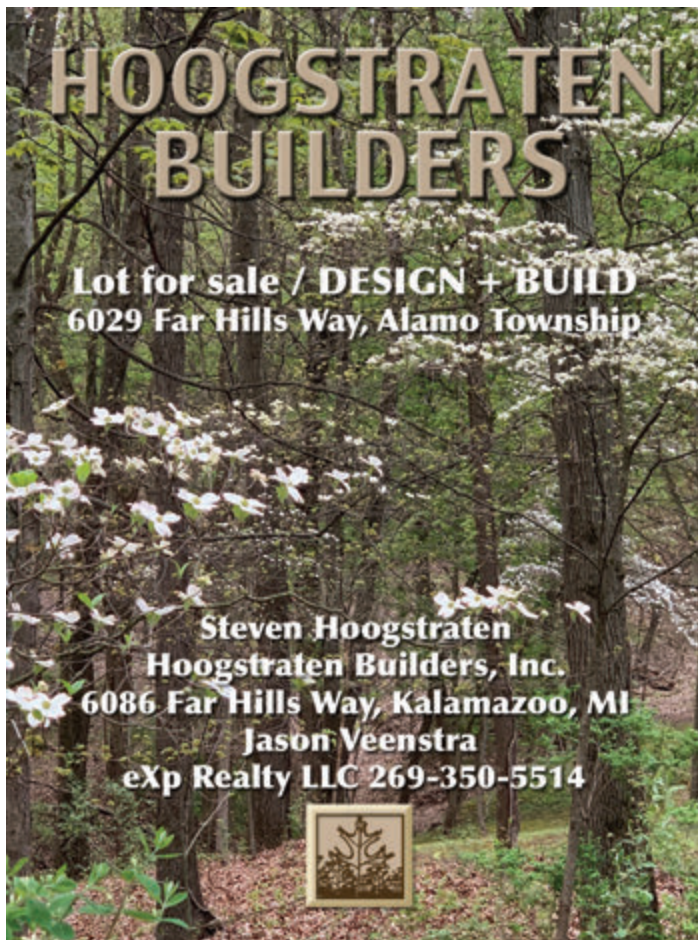
Both Garrison and Murray say wood is the most preferred fuel for firepits, but a fair number of customers prefer natural gas because there's no smoke and the flames start instantly. "We've done quite a few gas firepits that make for a really easy way to entertain," Garrison says.

And Mark Wrench says his Fireplace & Grill Shoppe sells more gas firepits. His store even stocks several kinds of unmounted gas burners that can be installed in a custom-made fire pit. "These come in a number of different shapes and configurations," he says. "For example, a person has a block retaining wall on their property and they want their firepit to match that so we'll provide them with the appropriate size burner system. Just get gas to that and all of a sudden you're in business."

Wrench says something else that's gaining popularity is electric fireplaces. For outdoor use they usually don't produce heat but they make very attractive flame images. "Lots of them are going outdoors," he says. "As long as you can protect it from the elements, this is gaining a lot of popularity. It's just that ambience look that a customer is going after."

Wrench points to a \$2,600 model and comments, "It's the simplicity. You literally take it out of the box; you put it






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Photo courtesy of Hoogstraten Builders

in the hole that you've built in a wall, and you plug it in and it's going. But if this were a linear (horizontal) gas-burning fireplace, that's \$10,000 or \$11,000."

What is done to use natural features around patios and outdoor kitchens and entertainment centers? Jim Garrison comments, "We install planting beds almost always with our patios or retaining walls. We try to go simple with the plantings so we don't create a lot of maintenance headaches. Planting beds generally tie the outdoor space into the surroundings and offer a place for shrubs, ornamental grasses, perennial flowers and outdoor lighting."

Murray Landscaping operates its own tree nursery. "We sell 500 trees a year," says Ken Murray. "Evergreens are popular."

He notes that other outdoor structures preferred by homeowners are pergolas, gazebos and pavilions. Gazebos once seemed to be everywhere but Murray says now pergolas are more popular.

Water features always are desirable. "The sound of water is always nice. It's soothing, bubbling rocks or waterfalls, that kind of thing," Murray says.

Of course, not every homeowner wants outdoor kitchens, firepits, etc. so how do they just make their residence more attractive? Jim Garrison says, "We can put a small planting bed all around the house for shrubs, grasses and perennials. Maybe add some big rocks loosely placed in the bed and install landscape lighting. We can put in ornamental trees. Sometimes we can make a hillside more usable by terracing it."

For outdoor lighting, Ken Murray praises 12-volt systems. "Almost everything we do is 12 volt. There're some beautiful 12-volt light systems out there. They're easy,

they're safe, they're kid friendly, they're dog friendly-and they just work."

There are homeowners able to have almost anything they want outdoors. Steve Hoogstraten, head of Hoogstraten Builders, completed such a dream project last fall. He designed and built a 16-by-20-foot outdoor kitchen attached to a large house.

"There were a bunch of existing pavers in the area. It was an old patio and the pavers were all worn out so we removed all of that and put down stamped (patterned) and stained concrete.

"The customer had his wish list of appliances that he wanted out there and my job was to figure out how to fit them in. This kitchen is open air but it has a roof over it so they can enjoy it in inclement weather."

There are a built-in, stainless-steel sink and several steel cabinets. "The built-in sink has got work trays and condiment containers that can be removed," Hoogstraten says. "There's a pullout, two-bin trash door next to that. Then there's a good-size undercounter refrigerator. Then there's a 42-inch Alfresco grill. It's gas but it has the ability to smoke food using wood chips. It has a rotisserie.

"Next to that is a medium-size Kamado Joe grill; it uses charcoal and wood chips. It can be WiFi controlled. You can program it so it will smoke when it needs to, it will vent when it needs to, just do different things."

This kitchen also has an ALFA 42-inch, metal, Italian-style pizza oven that uses wood or natural gas. And the finishing touch is a Solo Stove stainless-steel firepit. "There are very few things that you cannot do in that kitchen," Hoogstraten says.







By Barbara Fisher

The 300 acre Cheff Therapeutic Riding Center (Augusta, Michigan) holds the distinction of being the first center built in North America for the purpose of offering therapeutic horseback riding for persons with physical, emotional, behavioral or cognitive disabilities. Established in 1969 through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. P.T. Cheff, the Cheff Foundation had been seeking a way to combine the Foundation's purpose (helping children) with the Cheffs' passion (horses). The result was the Cheff Center.

The Center provides year round short-term and long-term services for persons of all ages. Offers Morgan Meulman, Cheff Center Administrative Team member, "the Center offers therapeutic techniques in a less clinical setting while building client connections and confidence". In 2024, the age range of clients was 3 to 73 years; children as young as 13 months and as mature as 80 have used the unique services offered by the Center. The majority (two-thirds) of clients are under the age of 18; however, over 200 adults used the service in 2024. Addressing anxiety, ADD/ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, depression and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder were the most prevalent reasons individuals sought services from the Center this past year. Individuals with other life altering diagnoses such as hearing or visual impairments, Cerebral Palsy, Muscular Dystrophy, Addiction/Recovery, Multiple Sclerosis, etc., also benefit from Cheff Center services. Over 30 veterans used the Center in the past year.

The Cheff Center is supported by an enthusiastic annual volunteer force (approaching 200) that offered close to 6,000 hours of their time last year alone. Ms. Meulman explained that volunteers have an opportunity to make a "major difference in the lives of our Cheff Center riders. Volunteers learn about disabilities and horse management, as well as enjoy the physical fitness and social benefits of volunteering." She adds there are many non-horse related opportunities for volunteers in the program and that no previous experience with horses is needed. Interested in volunteering? There's an application online at [www.cheffcenter.org](http://www.cheffcenter.org). Training is provided! Oh yes, there are 17 equine assistants.

How can riding and horsemanship promote therapeutic outcomes? Integrating alternative services into an individual's care has gained acceptance as part of a wholistic approach to treatment, especially in the last decade. Ms. Meulman notes that a special bond is created between the individual, the volunteers and horse that is transformative emotionally and physically.

Outcomes include improved mood and confidence, improved social skills, while improving balance, coordination and muscle strength.

Ms. Meulman reviewed the four major specialties that comprise the Cheff Center.

- Therapeutic riding provides healthy exercise for individuals with physical or mental health needs in a success-oriented environment.
- Ground programs include unmounted opportunities from one-on-one horsemanship to one-time school group visits.
- Hippotherapy (hippo is Greek for horse) uses horseback riding as a therapeutic or rehabilitative therapy to improve coordination, balance and strength. The horse is used as a unique treatment modality in conjunction with traditional therapies.
- The Center offers workshops, apprenticeships, internships and mentoring through its Cheff University - Industry Education service.

Did you know that on Christmas Eve 2000, the roof on the main building collapsed, likely due to snow load? Because it was a holiday, no human life was lost; however, two of the Center's therapy horses perished. The remaining therapy horses were temporarily housed at the neighboring Battle Creek Hunt Club and the Club's indoor arena made it possible for some of the Center's classes to continue. Construction of the new building commenced a year later. In addition to the indoor arena, the new space included offices, classrooms, meeting and therapy rooms. Less than a year later, in 2002, the Center reopened, hosting an Open House which included students demonstrating their riding skills. In addition to the 100x200 foot indoor arena, the Center also has an 80x100 foot outdoor arena.

Might you know someone with special needs who could benefit from equine assisted activities and therapies? To ensure a positive fit for all involved, the Cheff Center uses a multi-step intake process beginning with a phone call to talk about the referral's situation, whether the referral qualifies for services and, if so, which program would be most suitable. From there, there is some paperwork to complete prior to an onsite assessment and tour being scheduled.

The Center rents out some of its space, from renting the arena to hosting a multi-day horse show! Additional information may be found at [www.cheffcenter.org](http://www.cheffcenter.org).

Persons interested in services for themselves, making a referral, volunteering or renting may call the Cheff Center at 269.732.4471. ❖





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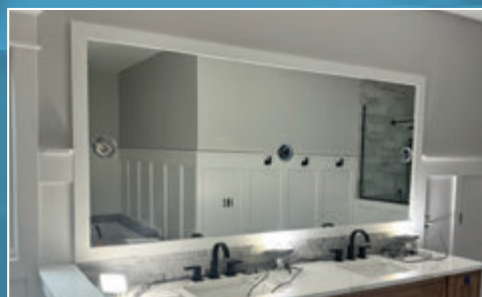
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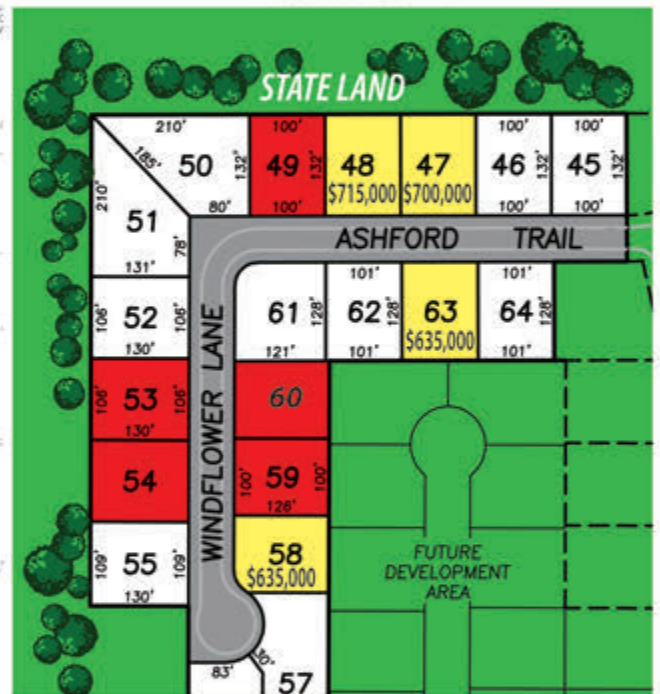
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