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Kitchens Alfresco

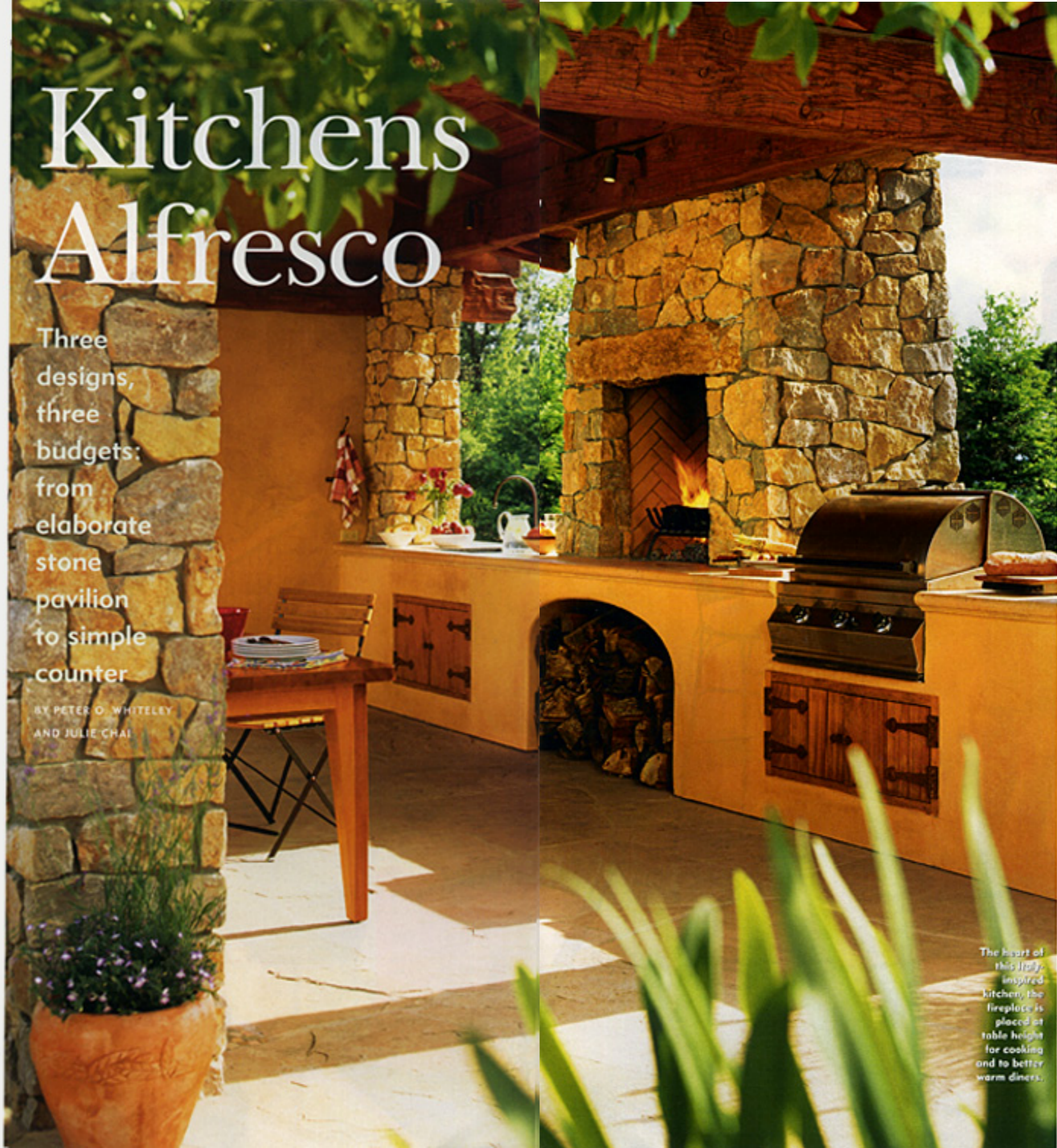
Three designs, three budgets: from elaborate stone pavilion to simple counter

BY PETER O. WHITELEY
AND JULIE CHAI

Cooking and dining outside for much of the year is one of the great traditions of living in the West. But no time is more sublime to do it than summer, when warm days stretch into balmy evenings. On nights like this, we can't imagine turning on the oven. This is where the outdoor kitchen comes in: An icon of Western living, it's the ultimate barbecue fantasy, one that almost every homeowner has daydreamed about.

The outdoor kitchen means so much more than a barbecue with a prep sink. There are pizza ovens, griddles, infrared rotisseries, built-in woks, deep-fryers—you can customize your outdoor kitchen to suit the food you cook and the way you want to entertain. From fireplaces to pop-up thin-screen televisions, the features are limited only by your budget.

Here are three alfresco kitchens that represent a range of options, yet share one common purpose: to bring families together for good times in a beautiful setting.



The heart of this Italy-inspired kitchen, the fireplace is placed at table height for cooking and to better warm diners.

LARGE BUDGET

Country retreat

It's Tuscan and it's timeless. Mary Prchal and Jacque Ducharme's Healdsburg, California, outdoor kitchen is a casual but elegant environment for year-round dining—they even have Thanksgiving dinner here.

The look is defined by the materials: stone columns, flagstone pavers, hand-hewn wood beams, terra-cotta roof tiles, and warm-toned plaster walls. But the focal point of the 16- by 22-foot kitchen space is an elevated, wide-mouthed fireplace that rises from the tawny concrete counter. Having the fire at table height is as practical as it is romantic: The fire not only warms a late-evening meal and bathes the space in flickering light, it also serves as a place to cook pizza (using a gridlike Tuscan grill).

Situated between two columns, the fireplace is flanked by a large soapstone sink on one side and a gas-fired barbecue with a side burner on the other; a cubby for wood storage is beneath. A pantry contains a full-size refrigerator, trash containers, and shelves and drawers for kitchenware. The 1,008-square-foot total structure, which also houses a bathroom with a shower and a sauna room for eight, truly is deluxe. It was built for approximately \$250 per square foot.

DESIGN: Pamela Dreyfuss Interior Design, Santa Rosa, CA (707/525-1044); Exteriors Landscape Architecture, Santa Rosa (707/528-8696)

