

Taste of the outdoors

If we ever get the sunshine – or at least no rain – there's no better way to enjoy food with friends and family than eating 'al fresco'. Sandie Walker, of Powder Grey, discusses how to create the mood for the perfect outdoor dining experience

What makes the perfect summer? Apart from the weather, of course, I love outdoor entertaining. Good, simple food that you can pick away on and, most of all, chilling out and unwinding with your close ones or with friends – maybe with the odd glass of wine, or two, for good measure. Create that mix and you have the perfect recipe for al fresco entertaining.

So, take yourself away, grab your flip flops, and chill... For the look, keep it simple – don't put too much thought or effort into how to display everything, or worry if things don't match, remember it's all about food, the company and, above all, relaxing.

With this in mind, the most important things are to make sure your seating is comfortable and that the table area can hold all of the amenities. If not, use a trolley to carry all of the essentials so you aren't constantly popping in and out – try and keep everything to hand. If required, have a portable parasol close-by to keep you shaded (though judging by the summer we've had so far this seems like wishful thinking). The use of easily accessible fold-up furniture is ideal. Not only can it be stored away when the season is finished but it can also be packed away on rainy days.

Lighting creates the mood. Once the natural daylight begins to diminish, you can deploy candles, or outdoor string/rope lights – they look amazing in a tree if you are fortunate to have



Metal folding table, £149



Tall t-lite vase,
£35

Candle holder
set, £19

one close by the dining area. Similarly, putting lights under the table can really provide that wow factor – in the past I have used antique unframed mirrors as coaster mats in the centre of the table, which is another effective way to reflect the light from candles.

Later on, as the evening begins to close in and the air becomes more chilly, have throws and blankets available, or use an open fire/chiminea, or heating lamps – at this point everyone will be relaxed and well fed – and making the most of those seemingly rare, rain-free Scottish summer nights.

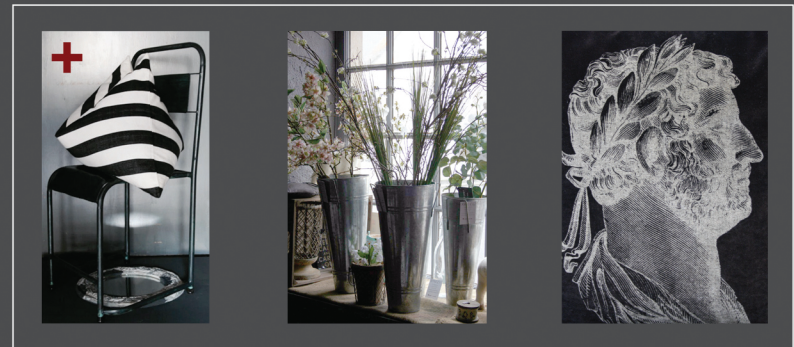
www.powdergrey.com

Metal trolley, £135



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