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style

Three-season Wonder

A state-of-the-art outdoor kitchen allows this couple to enjoy the best of both worlds.

By Connie Adair | Photography by Sandy MacKay

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The 600-square-foot outdoor kitchen features a triangular-shaped island topped with polished granite. It comfortably seats 10 guests.

When Rob Bell was a child, he loved to go to his grandparents' cottage and enjoy a barbecue. So when he and his wife Maria bought a house high on a hill in Duntroon, near Collingwood, Ontario, he couldn't wait to do some outdoor cooking. But there was one problem. The patio was in full sun all day, so the space was virtually unusable.

To provide relief from the rays and rain, the Bells decided to add a roof over the patio. From there, the project snowballed. "We started imagining what the perfect three-season room would be to us," Maria says. "It needed to be big but maintain an inviting, cosy, comfortable and relaxing feel. It also had to have enormous screens so we could feel like we were still part of the outdoors but protected from bugs and the elements, which is why we later added the large glass windows."

They also wanted the room to have a high ceiling with wood beams, a floor-to-ceiling stone fireplace and a television. The room also had to look as if it was part of the original part of the house, not an addition.

The original stone patio was demolished to make way for the new outdoor kitchen, which has a poured concrete floor

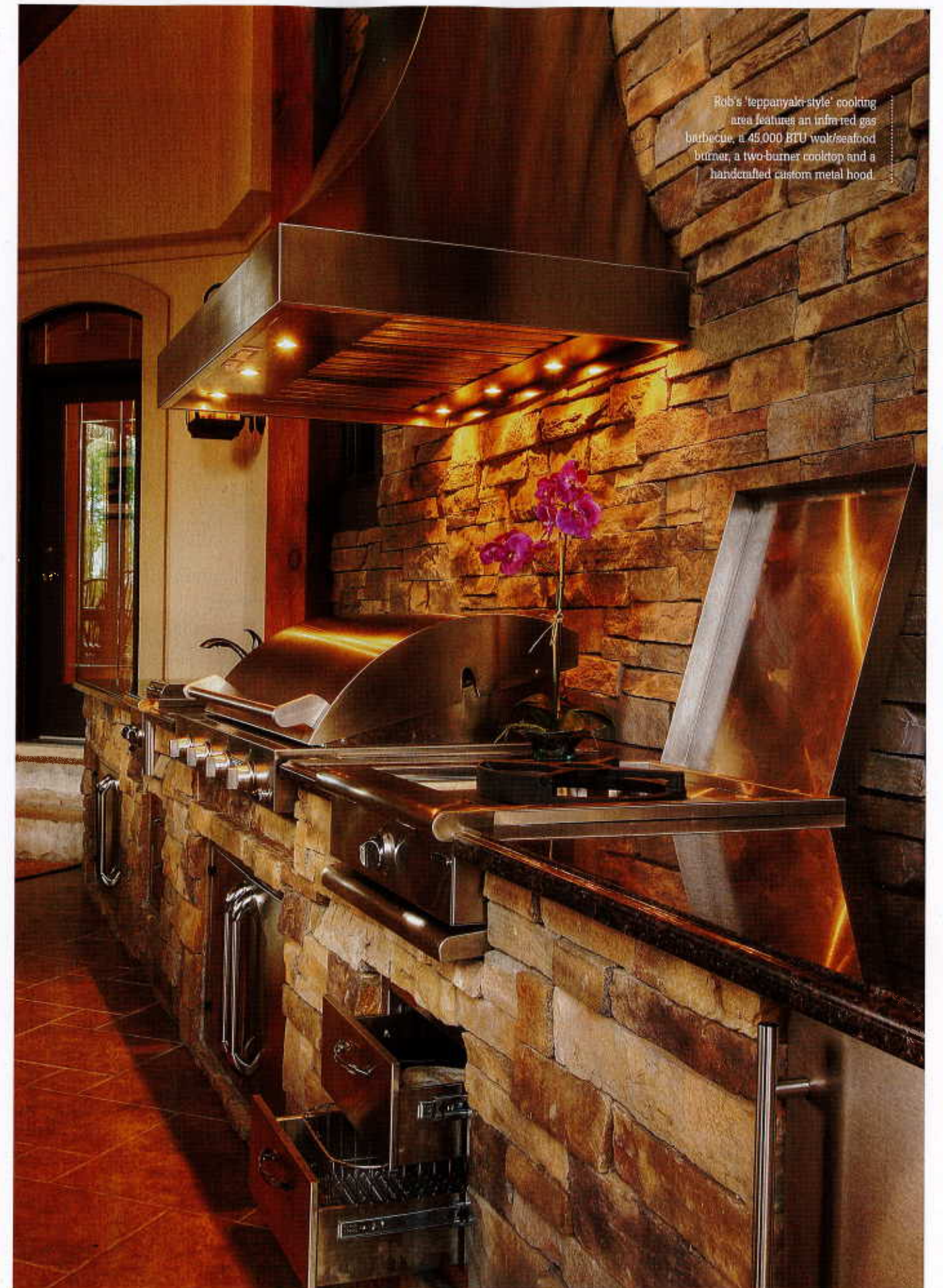
topped with ceramic tiles. The vaulted ceiling features handmade B.C. timber beams supported at one end by a stone wall and on the other side by a floor-to-ceiling stone fireplace. The couple chose stone rather than brick to add to the room's outdoor feel.

Walls of picture windows are framed with B.C. timber, which was also used for the fireplace mantel. Designed by Service Excellence, a window installer who worked on the CN Tower, the windows pivot on a series of pins so they open flat against each other, Rob says.

The windows consist of 12-millimetre bronze-tempered safety glass and commercial-grade anodized aluminum. The glass door also has a commercial-type frame with concealed hardware for the closer and central hung pivots.

The windows are outfitted with special wind screens made by Suncoast Screen Enclosures. The screens prevent 90 per cent of wind, as well as rain and snow, from passing through, Rob says.

For a long while, the couple struggled with a design that would provide comfortable seating in front of the fireplace,



Rob's 'teppanyaki-style' cooling area features an infrared gas barbecue, a 45,000 BTU wok/seafood burner, a two-burner cooktop and a handcrafted custom metal hood.

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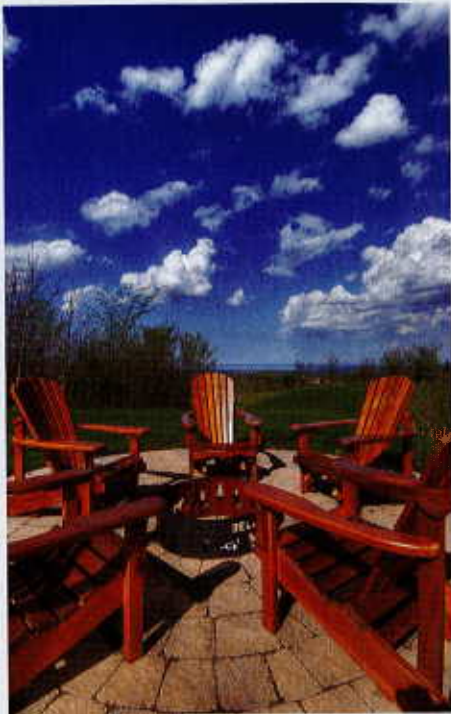
ABOVE: The renovated indoor kitchen incorporates space previously taken up by a 200-square-foot three-season room.

RIGHT: Outdoor landscaping was altered to create a natural transition between the newly-created outdoor kitchen and the gardens.



Granite and cabinetry was matched from the existing kitchen to seamlessly incorporate the space taken from the old three-season room.

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“We added more stone work outside and made an outdoor fire pit, surrounded by Muskoka chairs”

but also accommodate a large dining table. They experimented with possible layouts for the placement of a table but nothing seemed to work. The round, oval, rectangular or square table didn't look right, Maria says.

“One day Rob and I were sitting with his Mom going over our dilemma. She too couldn't figure out how to make the table work with the space. She kept saying, ‘It's an odd-shaped room.’ That's when it hit me. It is an odd shape. It's a triangle. It's going to need an odd shaped table – a triangle. We finally had the missing piece of the puzzle.”

Instead of a table, the couple decided on an island, topped with granite to match the countertops and a base made out of the same stone as the fireplace.

The island, which comfortably seats 10, has a flat side parallel to a stone wall that acts as a backdrop to top-of-the-line appliances and provides Rob with a ‘teppanyaki-style’ cooking area, where he can prepare meals in front of guests.

The 600-square-foot outdoor kitchen was put together with the help of friend and contractor Dan Morris. “Dan took our drawings and made it happen,” Maria says.

When it was built, landscaping had to be altered to create a natural transition from the outdoor room to a fully-fenced saltwater pool. “We added more stone work outside and made an outdoor fire pit, surrounded by Muskoka chairs,” Rob says.

When planning the outdoor kitchen, the couple realized they no longer needed an existing 200-square-foot three-season room off the kitchen. They decided to renovate their kitchen and incorporate the space taken up by the old three-season room.

Through clever design they were able to re-use a good chunk of the existing kitchen's features; the original manufacturer was used to extend the cupboards with matching ones, and the granite was also matched. “Looking at the room now, you would never know it was done that way,” Rob says.

The Bells designed both kitchens, with Collingwood interior designer Marylyn Joel helping to draw up the design for the indoor kitchen. Nine months of hard work later, the couple were delighted with their new kitchens. “The final outcome was even more spectacular than we imagined,” says Maria.

There's no question that the outdoor kitchen is the Bells' favourite room, and they get to enjoy the space often for business and pleasure; the couple both work from home.

The couple has three sons: Justin, 24, Ryan, 15, and Jason, 14. The younger boys use the three-season room regularly for sleepovers with friends. “They build a fire, roast marshmallows and hot dogs, and sleep on the couches,” Rob says. “It's not uncommon for them to see deer, and at night the howls of coyotes can be heard.”

Maria calls the kitchens the heart of their home, and says a great many moments are shared with family and friends there.

Rob says he hasn't seen an outdoor kitchen quite like theirs. “It has an outdoor feel but is protected from the elements. We accomplished everything we wanted to. It's the perfect room.” **HC**