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Outdoor Entertaining Goes *High-End, Hassle-Free*

By Barbara Thau

Outdoor entertaining, be it barbecuing, picnicking or tailgating, has gone upscale and is comfort-driven.

Kitchenware suppliers are rolling out items that reflect a nod to fashion trends, such as runway-inspired picnic coolers, and take the hassle out of alfresco activities such as portable outdoor grills designed for “glamping,” shorthand for “glamorous camping.”

Glamping is camping outdoors with all the comforts of home, said Anna Bevens, marketing coordinator for Picnic Time.

“While glamping started in oversized canvas tents or yurts [portable dwellings], the experience has considerably broadened in scope. You can now glamp in RVs, luxury campgrounds or even wild animal parks,” she said.

“What started the trend were people who wanted the camping experience without the discomfort



Sausalito Collection

by Rosanna

877-343-3779

www.rosannainc.com

Rosanna's entertaining sets are designed to go throughout the house and onto the deck. The natural beauty of Sausalito, Calif., inspires this new Sausalito Collection of porcelain mugs and bowls, the company says. The organic shapes and nature-inspired palate are complemented by rich metallic gold. Cup and saucer are boxed together, while bowls are boxed individually.

MSRP: \$18 for small bowls; \$36 for mugs and saucers; \$48 for large bowls



Piccadilly Anthology Collection Picnic Basket

by Picnic Time

888-742-6429

www.picnictime.com

The Piccadilly Picnic Basket from Picnic Time's new Anthology collection evokes an era when picnics were grand affairs. This fully lined pattern basket includes an easy-access double-lid design with service for two. Included are two solid-white plates, two wineglasses, two 18/0 stainless steel forks, knives and spoons, and a stainless steel waiter-style corkscrew. The basket also features a roll-up flatware pouch and leatherette accents.

MSRP: \$84.95

Outdoor Entertaining (cont'd)

associated with it. They wanted to stay amongst the redwoods without using nature as a bathroom, sleep in a bed or at least a mattress instead of a sleeping bag on the ground, and have a traditional breakfast repast instead of power bars and fire-brewed coffee."

Picnic Time's new Anthology, Pixels and Waves collections "add to the glamping atmosphere, while providing the practical camping necessities," she said.

These lines, which will hit the retail market this spring, include items such as deluxe insulated picnic coolers tricked out with all the serveware for an outdoor feast for two, from melamine plates and stainless steel forks to knives, tumblers, a cutting board and

cheese knives – not to mention a waiter-style corkscrew – that can also be used at the beach or an outdoor concert.

What's more, Picnic Time's portable outdoor grills are designed for "glampers who need a compact, multifunctional, easy-to-use, high-quality way to entertain outdoors. Space is at a premium for glampers," Bevens said.

Social-media-generated word-of-mouth promotion initiated by retailers is integral to the sale of these products. "Glampers are particularly likely to follow the advice of family and friends for products, locations and services, and the higher approval that retailers receive through social media channels lead to an increase in sales," she said.

Convenience Rules

Suppliers are getting the message that consumer demand for kitchenware products that simplify home cooking and dining tasks has spread from their indoor spaces to outdoor leisure activities.

"We believe consumers have never been more in love with convenience than they are now," said Jeff Norling, director of product development and marketing for Fox Run Brands.

"This doesn't mean pre-packaged and pre-portioned foods as it did just 10 years ago. It is now about [outdoor] accessories that pull double duty, are easy to understand and use, and made of materials that will withstand the punishment strewn at them by the consumer," he said.

"Most of our introductions over the past two years have been run through this filter before we tool and produce," such as a shaker basket for a grill-top to use with meats, vegetables and even popcorn.

In addition, an interest in global cuisine has "expanded out of the traditional kitchen into the backyard and patio," which is driving Fox Run Brand's product assortment, he said.

In turn, the kitchenware company has launched a number of "ethnic

Outdoor Entertaining

Outset Quesadilla Basket ▼

by Fox Run Brands
888-269-1339

www.foxrunbrands.com

This Quesadilla Basket for the grill, made of chromed steel and rosewood, comes with an easy lock/unlock clasp that allows the basket to be emptied and refilled in a few moments. The basket's handle is thin enough to allow the grill cover to easily close while the handle sits outside the grill surface.

MSRP: \$9.99



Outdoor Entertaining (cont'd)

centric" items over the past few years and is expanding on those assortments, such as a quesadilla basket for the grill, "as different culinary hot zones become more mainstream."

Fox Run Brands has also found that grilling, for one, is increasingly moving from a seasonal to a year-round business on the retail floor. "This shift in the retail presence of these products is fundamentally a result of the continuing trend of more and bigger outdoor living spaces," Norling said.

"Many retailers have moved to a permanent grilling section, even if it is smaller during the fall and winter months. Those who can't afford the real estate are oftentimes expanding the season too, as early as February on shelf and as late as Labor Day."

In a bid to reinterpret traditional

The Plasket ▼

by French Bull
212-317-9646

www.frenchbull.com

This hand-woven melamine basket is perfect for fruits, breads and other food. The Plasket evokes the look of wicker, and comes in a set of two nesting baskets for easy storage: large (11 inches by 4.5 inches) and medium (9 inches by 3.75 inches). They are BPA-free, and dishwasher- and microwave-safe.

MSRP: \$28 for a set of two



products for outdoor use, French Bull has reinvented the wicker basket to create the "Plasket."

It's made of melamine, but looks like a wooden wicker basket that can be used outdoors while maintaining its aesthetic appearance amid the elements.

The Plasket is one expression of French Bull's aim to adopt the tenets of mid-century modern design. "Their big thinking at the time was [creating products for a] modern lifestyle," said

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Outdoor Entertaining

Cast Iron Oyster Pan ►

by Fox Run Brands

888-269-1339

www.foxrunbrands.com

This oyster pan from Fox Run Brands is manufactured from durable, pre-seasoned cast iron for lasting quality. It features deep individual oyster wells that are designed for an endless variety of grilled oyster recipes. The pan is made to grill oysters in the half-shell or fully shucked.

MSRP: \$39.99



Outdoor Entertaining (cont'd)


Gary Kane, sales director. For today's consumer, the reusable Plasket reflects the movement toward reusable products, he said.

Runway to the Picnic Table

Picnic at Ascot designs its products with the style-conscious outdoor enthusiasts in mind – therein lies its sweet spot in the market. “We create an elegant picnic setting ready to go,” said Karen Burke, national sales manager. “We have always seen a niche market of consumers that want to enjoy the outdoors and outdoor activities – like picnics, tailgating, concerts – conveniently, but also with style.”

Picnic at Ascot targets the middle-to-higher-end consumer market with its coolers and baskets, which take pattern and color cues from what's trending in fashion. “Geometric prints and citrus orange colors are trendy now,” reflected in its new Diamond Collection, Burke said.

The company has spotted a trend toward bringing colors, prints and materials found in other aspects of consumers' life to their outdoor activities and entertaining. “This has driven the introduction of our new bamboo serving sets, and slate cheese boards and trays,” she said.

And 'tis the season for it. “Spring is here, and many of our retailers introduce new products in April as they prepare for Mother's Day displays, wedding registries and a great variety of gifting occasions throughout the year,” Burke said. 

Vienna Transforming Cheese Set ▼

by Picnic at Ascot

800-248-1987

www.picnicatascot.com

Picnic at Ascot's Vienna Transforming Cheese Set is a bamboo board that transforms from a wedge into a circular, multi-level cheese board with three stainless steel tools in a pullout drawer. Featuring a lifetime warranty, this set is designed for outdoor/indoor entertaining and also makes for a unique, upscale gift.

MSRP: \$79.99

