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Backyard Resort Complete with an Outdoor Sports Bar

An Orange County landscape architect creates the ultimate resort-style backyard



Project Background

This large property is part of the 2006 La Cima development located in the Turtle Ridge neighborhood of Irvine, CA. The home sits at the end of a cul-de-sac and boasts beautiful ocean and city views from its backyard. Orange County-based landscape architect Drew Sivgals was hired to create a resort-like backyard that complements the high-end home and emphasizes its great views.

Homeowner Requests

The homeowners wanted a space where they could entertain friends and family and spend time outdoors with their kids. "After getting to know the clients I discovered that they had a ranch in Texas," says Sivgals, "and that they had fond memories of roasting marshmallows around their fire pit there."

This was used as inspiration for the landscape design along with the knowledge that the husband was a big sports fan. Sivgals designed and created a covered outdoor sports bar with multiple screens and an electronic ticker tape so he would never miss a play.

The family also requested that mature plants be used because they didn't want to wait for young plants to fill in. "We craned in some coast live oaks to give the yard a mature look," explains Sivgals. He used the trees to provide a natural ceiling for areas of the yard that weren't covered with a structure. Evergreen hedging was also used to frame and define the pool.

Design Philosophy

On all of his projects Sivgals strives to create a resort-like setting. "When my clients step out their backdoor I want them to feel as if they are on vacation," he says. The swimming pool, veneered throughout with over \$100,000 worth of 5/8" blue mosaic tile, features a Baja shelf large enough for two chaise lounges and rivals any tropical resort. The covered sports bar features five plasma screens, a high-end sound system, heaters and a full restroom. "A good resort has many activity options and places to hang out," says Sivgals, "This yard works the same way - there are many different destinations to choose from."

Another of Sivgals' design philosophies is to tie the outdoor space to the home's architecture and interiors. "A backyard should look and feel like an extension of the house," he states. For this project, Sivgals created a series of outdoor rooms with well-defined areas, particular purposes and distinct relationships to other rooms in the yard. For example, the spa, fire pit and sports bar are configured in a triangle so that people enjoying the warm, relaxing water can easily see and interact with those at the fire pit or bar.



This Orange County backyard was designed to look and feel like a resort.



Project Highlights:

- **Location:** Irvine, CA
- **Budget:** \$1,500,000
- **Property size:** 21,600 sq. ft.
- **Landscape design:** [AMS Landscape Design Studios](#)
- **Features:** Pool & spa, covered kitchen/sports bar, fireplace, fire pit, fountain and outdoor restroom

Benefits of a Solid Roof:

When constructing an outdoor cook center Sivgals prefers solid roofs over open patio covers. One reason is that they provide complete protection from sun and rain. Find out all the benefits of a [covered outdoor kitchen](#).

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Additionally, the granite countertops and wood cabinetry used in the sports bar match the finishes in the indoor kitchen. Sivgals explains, "This strengthens the relationship between the interior and exterior as well as brings indoor luxuries and comforts to the backyard."

Layout & Sightlines

When it came to the layout of this project, Sivgals was very detailed. The home had a circular breakfast nook at the rear which he chose to center his design around. "In order to provide good sightlines from inside the house, I centered the pool on the nook and then centered the fireplace and sports bar on either side of the pool," Sivgals explains. He then worked with the space that was left to incorporate a fire pit and lounge patio, dining patio and large turf area.

When designing an outdoor space, it is essential to consider how it will look from inside your home. Sivgals design provides a pleasant view from the nook window that is balanced and draws the eye out toward the impressive views.

Project Challenges

The first challenge Sivgals had to address was the placement of the sports bar and fireplace. "In my original plan, I had these reversed; however city setback requirements made it so the sports bar structure could not go that close to the property line," he recalls. The city was treating the structure as a livable space because of its solid roof, plumbing and full restroom. Sivgals decided to do a direct swap of the two features and now admits that things worked out for the best.

A second challenge came with the construction of the restroom at the rear of the sports bar. The homeowner's association had a limit on the roof size of detached structures. At first, Sivgals thought it seemed impossible to fit a full bathroom under the small roof. "I came up with the idea of doing an open beam roof with a glass cover for the restroom," he says. Now natural light floods into the space and the stars twinkle above at night and they didn't have to sacrifice any of the space for the sports bar.

The Final Touches

In keeping with the style of the house, Sivgals decided to go with a Mediterranean theme. He selected light colored stone to use throughout the project. Quartzite pavers provide a luxurious finish yet are still earthy and casual. They also have excellent grip, making them good for use around a swimming pool. The precast concrete columns used for the construction of the covered sports bar also add to the Mediterranean feel of the yard.

"We incorporated bright blue pottery throughout the design in order to create a balance with the strong color of the pool," says Sivgals. He likens the pots to a woman's favorite accessories, possibly a pair of earrings or a necklace. Three fountains were also included in the yard. The two placed on either side of the pool's Baja shelf are statue fountains reminiscent of Greece. Another fountain near the dining patio was created using the blue pottery.

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Don't Dominate the Design:

Lowering a large feature below grade will decrease its profile and reduce its overall mass. Both the fireplace seating area and sports bar are sunken 12 inches below grade. This keeps them from dominating the yard's design.

Create a Quiet Area:

In an activity-based yard, where fun and entertaining are the priority, it is a good idea to include a quiet retreat area. On this property, the dining patio is tucked away and screened from the rest of the property with fruit trees growing in pots. Sivgals says that the women can socialize in this spot while the men watch the game at the sports bar.

