

# How To Build a Backyard Barbecue

By Helen Smith

Backyard barbecuing is a favorite summertime tradition for many Americans. There are many popular brands and styles on the market today to suit your needs and fit your pocketbooks, or if you are a little handy and adventurous, you could consider building your own backyard barbecue.

Barbeques can be custom made to fit your space and your needs. If you are considering a simple charcoal or wood fired grill you may be surprised at how quickly and cost effectively it can be done. This type of grill can be constructed with bricks, a masonry book and some pre-made metal parts in as little as an afternoon to a few days work.

## Step One: Planning

In planning your homemade barbecue there are a few basics to consider.

- **Placement** – Think Safety. Build your barbecue where it won't put other structures in danger of fire. Think long term. The grill will most likely be a permanent fixture, so place it where it can stay for years to come.
- **Appearance** – Whether you have a small outdoor living space or a large backyard, follow the design of your home and yard, so that the barbecue is a complement to the surroundings and doesn't appear out of place.
- **Usage** – Think versatility. A well-designed barbecue will be able to serve more than just one purpose. If planned correctly, your grill should be able to be used for cooking, storage and table space as needed.
- **Weather** – Consider the elements specific to your climate and ensure that your barbecue is adequately protected.
- **Maintenance** – Design your barbecue for easy cleaning and repair. It is likely that parts will eventually be replaced, so before you build it, consider how that can be easily accomplished.

There are a few books to help you plan and build a backyard barbecue to help you get started. Check with your local building supply store for additional assistance.

## Step Two: Materials

Once you have decided on the type of grill you want and where you're going to place it, your next step will be getting the supplies to build it. The simplest backyard barbecues can be made from bricks and slabs. To determine how many bricks you'll need measure the square footage of the

planned barbecue and report that number to the building supply store. In addition to bricks, you will also need slabs for shelving, metal trays for charcoal and grilling, ready mix mortar, a trowel, bucket, watering can, level and plumb line. If you have a choice of materials, consider selecting those that blend in with other outdoor structures.

### **Step Three: Building**

If you have ever built a small block or brick wall you will not find this project difficult. Building a barbecue is a good project to practice your block laying skills. If you are not a skilled bricklayer, try to enlist the help of someone who has done it before.

After you are confident you have all the materials you need to build your own barbecue, start by laying your materials out on the existing foundation. Your foundation should be a solid, flat and level area preferably made of concrete.

Lie out your bricks and hose them down with water. This will prevent them from soaking up excess moisture from the mortar. Wait 30 minutes before stacking.

Next, lay out your bricks in a single course along the outside edge of the barbecue, using the metal grills as a guide. Leave a half-inch gap between each brick to account for the mortar. Next mix your mortar. Good mortar should have the consistency of thick mud, but be easy to spread. After applying the mortar, allow the first single layer of bricks to dry for about forty-five minutes before stacking.

Continue to build your barbecue by adding bricks and laying out shelving space in your chosen pattern. Remove excess mortar with the trowel and frequently check the level. Keep a bucket of water on hand and add a few drops the mortar if it begins to lose its consistency.

Allow the mortar to cure for three days, and then saturate your barbecue with water. Use a long handled brush and brick cleaning solution to give the bricks a thorough scrub. Rinse with clean, clear water and your barbecue is ready for use.

### **Step Four: Grilling**

Stock up on charcoal, grilling supplies and all your grilling favorites. Expect that your grill will get lots of use. Once your friends and neighbors know you have one, they'll be expecting an invitation to dinner. Happy grilling!