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MAGAZINE

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The Chef Has Left the Building

Now he's cooking with gas—not to mention a wood-fired oven. Art Smith's warm and welcoming backyard kitchen is the toast of his Chicago neighborhood. Amy Goldwasser takes a seat at his table.

"I don't cook inside in the summer," says Art Smith, who shares his well-equipped outdoor kitchen with neighbors in his condominium complex.



IF YOU'RE AT CHEF ART SMITH'S CHICAGO home, you're probably in the kitchen watching him cook. "Bringing people to the table is one of the most beautiful things we can do," he says. "The more time we spend at the table, the deeper our relationships. Everything tastes better, feels better, when shared."


"Bringing people to the table is one of the most beautiful things we can do," Art says. "Everything tastes better, feels better, when shared."

And if you're lucky enough to be at Art's home between mid-May and late October, you're probably watching him cook in the backyard, in an outdoor kitchen he built after grilling food outside at Oprah's California home. "I got back to Chicago and thought, *I want to be just like Oprah.*"

Art, however, must deal with a climate that's different from Southern California's, and his 500-square-foot, poured-cement backyard is shared by everyone in the 14-unit Hyde Park condominium. But Art, who sees dinner company and new friends where others see potential roadblocks, assessed the situation with typical exuberance: "We just took over!"

At first, he wanted only a simple cooking area. "Then I thought, *Wouldn't it be great to have a wood-fired oven?*" He eventually added a gas grill and a wok/cooker by Viking, a Wood Stone tandoor, a John Boos hardwood workstation, a sink, a porch with a fountain, a pond with 15 koi, a deck, three birch trees, seating for 16, and a

vegetable garden. "There's just something special about cooking and eating outside," he says. "I don't care if it's just a hot dog: If you make it outside, it tastes better."

Last summer, he and his longtime partner, J sus Ramon Salgueiro, added flower boxes for their neighbors in the condo building. "People who never had a place to grow anything really got into the spirit," Art says. "The amazing thing is, this space, which was built for our own personal party overflow, is now a community garden. People are drawn to this lovely garden, are delighted to find themselves among all the ingredients, and often end up cooking something." (No, he doesn't mind if neighbors use his outdoor kitchen, "as long as they clean up after themselves.") "Sometimes, I think maybe we should get a bigger house," Art says, "just so we could have a bigger yard—and a bigger outdoor kitchen." 

ABOVE, LEFT: Potted rosemary, thyme, basil, and tomato plants grow near Art's Viking wok/cooker.

ABOVE, RIGHT: Art found this outdoor sink, which is made from a block of travertine, at a closeout sale.

RIGHT: Brickwork and stone provide a built-in frame for the Viking grill and a base for limestone countertops.






ART SMITH'S MARGHERITA PIZZA

(Makes one 9-inch pizza)

- 1 recipe Art's Easy Pizza Dough (for recipe, see oprah.com/artsmithpizza), or purchased pizza dough
- 3 Tbsp. Art's Basic Tomato Sauce (for recipe, see oprah.com/artsmithpizza), or bottled marinara
- 4 slices fresh salted mozzarella (not packed in water)
- 4 fresh basil leaves, chopped
- 2 thin slices prosciutto
- ½ cup chopped arugula
- Freshly ground pepper

1. Place a pizza stone in lower third of oven and preheat to 440°.
2. Roll out the dough on a lightly floured surface to a 9-inch round. Place on a lightly floured pizza peel or rimless baking sheet and top with the sauce, mozzarella, and basil.
3. Slide the pizza onto the hot stone and bake until crust is brown, about 20 minutes. Remove from oven and top with the prosciutto and arugula; season with pepper. Slice and serve immediately. 

ABOVE: "I have great memories of spending time with people over pizza," Art says as he makes his Margherita pie.

BELOW: "When I go outside, it's like, 'Business is open,'" Art says. "Whether I'm preparing food for a few friends or for a large party, people come and sit at the table while I cook." For details, see *Shop Guide*.



This Summer's Hottest Gas Barbecue Grills

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Great for the first-time griller, this affordable unit ignites with the push and turn of a button. Its porcelain-coated cast-iron grates resist rust, too. (Permasteel four-burner, stainless-steel gas grill, BJ's Wholesale Club; 800-257-2582; bjs.com)



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Here's a grill worthy of barbecue diehards, with a style that's both futuristic and classic. Multiple cooking options—charcoal, gas, infrared, or a combination—ensure you'll never be without heat (or go hungry). (Fuego 01, Frontgate; 888-263-9850; frontgate.com)