

The spirit of *Summer*

We asked the design community for creative, beautiful ways to blur the line between indoors and outdoors when decorating, living and entertaining, and we were graced with ideas that can make any space or event sing of summer.

JENNIFER QUAIL

Eileen Johnson | FlowerSchool New York | NY | flowerschoolny.com

I see summer as a time of relaxation – a pause from formality, stress or artificiality of any kind. Flowers should follow suit. They should be locally raised, loose, and not cultivated or too precious. It's a time when one should throw pretense to the wind, and let colors and textures clash without regard to rules and restrictions. Find flowers on the roadside and use wild flowers as much as possible – just make sure to use clean cold water in the containers and refresh the water often. Don't expect the wild and seasonal flowers to last for a long time. Like the season, summer flowers are ephemeral and to be cherished and embraced in the moment.

Richard Cherry | New Growth Designs | Greenville, NC | newgrowthdesigns.com

The New Growth Designs crew has been a little obsessed with simple arrangements of flowering branches this season. There's something about the contrast of the branches and blossoms that conveys a rustic elegance without being too cloying or precious. As with everything else, editing goes a long way. I don't like anything too fancy or over-stylized; arrangements that look freshly picked from the garden are always the best. There are many branches that work beautifully – forsythia, cherry blossom, viburnum – but in my mind, there's nothing better than gorgeous blooms of lilac branches in a simple glass vase. They bloom right at the onset of the season with lush hues of purple, violet and mauve, and the scent is the embodiment of early summer evenings when the warm light effuses the air with a silvery shimmer.

Kati Curtis | Kati Curtis Design | NYC/LA | katicurtisdesign.com

With our Los Angeles clients, it's certainly a lot easier to bring the outdoors in. We often carve living rooms, kitchens and bathrooms out of outdoor spaces that can be used year round. But even in the Northeast, there are many ways we create a sense of connection to the outdoors at all times of the year. On all of our projects, we start with inspirational cues from the environment around us – whether it's a view of the surrounding buildings, Central Park or the Hamptons shoreline. In New York City, we often enclose outdoor terrace spaces that can be used for outdoor entertaining. Whatever we're designing, we approach windows like pieces of art, so the views must be taken into consideration at all times and in all seasons. Not an easy thing to do, but we feel strongly about it. In the suburbs, we often have spectacular water views that we don't want to contend with, so the interior design must compliment the ever-changing colors and varying light. We'll opt for softer patterns and colors that compliment nature's handiwork in these areas. For me, it's all about discovering those small details that give a home character.

Lucy Harris | Lucy Harris Studio | NYC | lucyharrisstudio.com

My interiors are all-season; I pick colors, textures and natural materials that will feel cozy in the winter and fresh in the summer. What makes an interior fresh in the summer is how you live in it – the food you eat, the clothes you wear, and the time you take to recharge and kick back. When I'm in Brooklyn, I go to our Saturday Brooklyn farmers market to buy white peonies, fish and tomatoes to grill, and lots of summer berries and cream for dessert. In Maine, we pick wild blueberries, gather mussels from the rocks for dinner and walk in the pine woods. I throw open the doors and windows, and I cut and arrange a lot of branches, greens and flowers from the garden. In August, I go to Italy or Greece. The saltwater, sun, fresh food and air make me come back with fresh, creative energy!

Virginia Newman Yocum | Pennoyer Newman, LLC | NYC | pennoyernewman.com

Some of my most memorable summer experiences have been the beautiful outdoor dinners we've had on the pea gravel driveways of our friends' and family's homes – setting up long tables with candelabras and garden pots, napkins tied with natural raffia and twigs, and fig leaves used as parchment on wooden cheese boards. I grew up in Wisconsin in a converted horse barn that created the constant blur between indoors and outdoors, so it has always been a part of my natural state of mind. I've been lucky enough to partner with Cecily Pennoyer, whose pastime is vegetable gardening and whose favorite spot is her home in Locust Valley, NY, where every piece of garden, field and woods is also a source of great inspiration for our business. It includes a garden that grows every ingredient needed to make homemade gazpacho, served cold for lunch throughout the summer months. Without question, our deepest roots are in the outdoors. That's exactly where we get our energy and our inspiration.

Christine Bolton | Town & Country kitchen and bath | Red Bank | rckbdesigns.com

The warm summers at the Jersey Shore provide us the opportunity to design fun and inventive outdoor kitchens that truly erase the walls separating indoor and out. Deep blue skies become ceilings, with the sun serving as a single vibrant fixture or the nighttime stars as tiny shimmering downlights. Organic products like granite combine with engineered materials such as stainless steel cabinetry, transforming everyday patios into outdoor sculleries. Gardens and backyards convert into living spaces where families gather and make everlasting memories. People are naturally more relaxed cooking and dining outdoors, as if the fresh air just drives the stress away. It's our favorite time of year!