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Q & A sid



Susan Wesley, ASID

BY SUSAN FRIEDMAN

Susan Wesley, ASID, of Coto De Caza-based Wesley Design Inc. is a certified California interior designer - with a keen sense for creating elegantly livable spaces inside and out. She's been in the interior design business since the mid-1980s. A graduate of the Parsons School of Design in Los Angeles, where one of her mentors was the inimitable Frank Gehry, her initial foray was in retail and commercial design. Shortly after, she says she found she "could do it all" and effortlessly segued into the residential arena. It's a decision she's more than content with. Today, with her associate by her side, she keeps plenty busy. "I work hard," she laughs. While her portfolio is proof positive of her seasoned design sense, perhaps her tagline states it best, "Interior design for a life well lived."

Orange Coast asked Susan to share her ideas for summer living alfresco, specifically what's new on the lanai.

Q. What are a few primary "living on the lanai" trends for summer?

A. Furnishings are pulling away from heavy Tuscan styles (often with wrought iron detailing) to having a more carefree feeling in general. Flexibility is critical. It's important to be able to move things around depending on what's going on. If the furniture is heavy, you're less inclined to do so. Less maintenance translates well to wicker. It's manufactured today to be durable and rust-resistant, thanks to new resin-like materials. I especially like wicker in large sectionals, which are great for entertaining. Textiles continue to improve with chenille and plush outdoor fabrics, so you'll be seeing more, especially in warm hues. I like to use draperies outdoors to section off areas and to use as a shield from the sun.

While candles, tikki and string lighting are still great; I also can see incorporating standing lamps and table lamps with Sunbrella fabrics on the lampshades. It warms up the space and it's a perfect example of how the indoor ambience continues to move outdoors.

Q. Where does color fit in?

A. Color is wonderful! Warm colors are "it" for summer. According to the Pantone Color Institute, the number one color for summer 2009 is a hot yellow called "Mimosa." It even has a bit of orange in it. You can begin to incorporate color with cushions and pillows and rugs. I always put rugs on the patio for the summer season. Durability is key, so look for fibers that resist mold and mildew.

Q. What's the latest design in outdoor kitchens?

A. Today's outdoor kitchens are now fully stocked for the upscale entertaining lifestyle. In particular, they aren't being built so they're exposed to the elements anymore. Design-savvy roofed pavilions are a current and much needed element, especially for anyone wanting an outdoor kitchen that's equivalent to the one found indoors. A built-in or portable brick pizza oven is a fun new culinary addition to any outdoor kitchen space.

Q. What are some fun/interactive aspects of today's lanai lifestyle?

A. I'm seeing more inflatable movie screens getting attention. Taking a lead from the waterproof flat screen TV, these create more reason to spend time outdoors. Essentially it's a home entertainment center. Homeowners could have a pool party (ideally floating on a lounge in the pool) and watch a movie! Homeowners could also utilize a roofed pavilion (like the one for their outdoor kitchen) as a place for a pool table. The outdoor lifestyle should be able to translate to nighttime as well. Under a pavilion that's well lit, you could play pool at any time of the day. Without the pavilion, natural daytime lighting would also cast shadows. As a semi-pro pool player, I'd suggest a 4x8 Brunswick table. It's important to keep the table covered too, if the cloth on the table ages, it changes the speed at which the ball travels or the direction it veers.

For more information on Susan Wesley, go to wesleydesigninc.com.