

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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Fire Pits and Fiery Tables: The New Hot Items for the Back Yard

By Cathy Tyson



Jeannette and Jim Baird's dining patio with wood burning fireplace.

Photo provided

While Lamorindans enjoy the last of our glorious fall weather, what better way to enjoy a slightly cool evening than to gather around a fire with friends and family? Nothing says ambiance like flames, or a marshmallow roasted to golden gooey deliciousness. From a simple pit to elaborate fireplace patio installations to fiery tables, homeowners and one local Country Club have successfully played with fire – with amazing results.

This past Friday the Moraga Country Club (MCC) celebrated the grand opening of its newest

arrivals – a pair of substantial table-style fire pits with the second of two Fiery Friday Nights events. MCC Assistant General Manager Kathe Foster said they wanted another casual gathering place for the many members playing couples-tennis and golfers who have wrapped up 18 holes - ready for an adult beverage after a long week – or for families to enjoy the view. With a portable bar and food service available it's a lovely way to relax in the outdoor space. The sturdy tables each have a generous apron – wide enough to accommodate plates and

glasses. Foster calls the fire tables the Club's "new toys" complete with cozy chairs and the addition of portable heaters in case the fog rolls in.

Other locals have warmed to the idea of accessorizing their own outdoor spaces with fire pits and fireplaces. Homeowner Jeannette Baird grew up just a few blocks away from her and husband Jim Baird's current home on the edge of Lafayette. She describes their outdoor room as "Italian inspired." An artist herself, Baird found magazine pictures of exactly what she wanted, showed them to her contractor and – voila! – a dining patio was born. The family loves the wood burning fireplace and has hosted many parties, book club get-togethers and even a Christmas brunch in front of the dramatic wood burning fireplace. The only downside is the squirrels that enjoy the grape vines winding their way up a column and onto the pergola, managing to nibble their way through the original strings of lights. The charming fixtures have since been replaced with commercial grade, squirrel-proof illumination.

Tucked onto a ridge in Orinda is Ellen Osmondson and John Allenberg's contemporary gas fire pit designed in partnership with Richard Sullivan and Shari Bashin of Enchanting Planting in Orinda. Ample seating is provided by cleverly incorporating a small retaining wall to address the sloping yard around the square stone fire pit. A Jacuzzi and barbecue area complete the upper portion of hardscape, in addition a welcoming patio with lounge chairs anchors the lower level of the home.

... continued on page D4