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Chris Talbot, cookout expert at Town 'n' Country, self-proclaimed as "Michigan's Largest Grill Shop," in Garden City, said that lump charcoal can light with the touch of a match and there are many ways to light briquettes.

He can show you how to use a chimney device to set the briquettes burning, and there are fire-starting tablets and electric fire starters. Some charcoal grills have built-in propane-fed fire starters.

Working well beyond the average patio grill, Talbot's company builds outdoor kitchens. He said they recently completed an \$8,400 installation.

"There's no limit," he said. "You could spend \$20-\$30,000 without trying hard. An island grill of your choice built into a tile and stucco counter. Tiffany lighting, refrigerator, side burners, fireplaces, stereos and more."

Is the food better in a \$30,000 outdoor kitchen?

"It's the basic barbecue," Talbot said, "but they're doing it with more style."

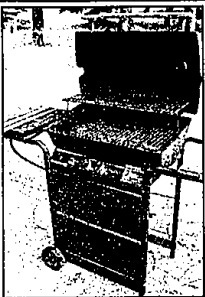
Talbot also can show you smokers, which he describes as "outdoor convection ovens" providing extended low-heat cooking.

And outdoor deep fryers, which he said can be used for anything that can be cooked in oil — turkey to potatoes — and also can be filled with water to boil lobsters and other seafood.

New regulation

If you go with propane, you ought to know that a new safety regulation requires use of a tank with a valve which prevents "overfilling," limiting content to what is considered a non-hazardous quantity. If you have an older tank without the new safety valve, you'll have to modify it or replace it.

Dennis Wright of Wright Hardware in Livonia said tanks



STORY PHOTO BY TOM HOFFMANN

Something old, something new: An Overfilling Prevention Device is now required on propane tanks used for barbecue grills, such as this one.

made since October 1997 meet the requirements. He isn't allowed to fill tanks made before that date. An older tank, he said, can be fitted with a new valve "at a nominal cost" and re-certified for five years' use.

"A new tank is set up for 12 years and costs about \$29,"

A refill, Wright said, giving 20 to 25 burning hours, is about \$12.

Gas

Gas grills are the specialty of Michigan Fireplace and Barbecue in Troy, said Michael Super, store manager. Half of his sales are propane, half are natural gas, he said.

Gas, he said, offers "the convenience of getting ready to cook quicker. As little as three minutes compared to 25 minutes to heat the charcoal."

In cooking time, Super said,

You'll be OK with an OPD

An Overfilling Prevention Device is now required on propane tanks used for barbecue grills. This is a new provision of the existing safety code developed by the National Fire Protection Association.

According to information from NFPA, "the OPD shuts off the flow of gas into a cylinder when 80-percent capacity has been reached. This limits the potential for release of gas when the cylinder is heated, averting a fire hazard or personal injury."

NFPA advises that "many filling outlets have the capacity to retrofit or recycle obsolete cylinders."

If your cylinder has either a round or star-shaped hand-wheel, it doesn't have the required valve. A new OPD valve has a triangular hand-wheel, according to the NFPA information, although early production OPD cylinders weren't triangular but were stamped "OPD" on the brass valve body.

charcoal has an advantage over propane.

"Charcoal heats to 800 degrees and gas to 650. Infrared heats to 1,600."

Natural gas, Super said, eliminates the need to refill tanks.

"You can hook up a natural gas grill on a cart with a quick-disconnect hose at a wall outlet so you can store the grill in the garage and take it when you move."

At Super's store, propane grills range from a basic model at \$300 up to a completely stainless steel infrared unit at \$6,000.

"You could serve 80 or more with no trouble," he said.

It's possible, he said, to run up the cost of the \$300 grill with accessories.

"Sideburners are nice to have. Warm the beers or the stucco. Cook the corn. You can get a griddle for pancakes and eggs. Deep fryers, steamers, woks. You can get an electric rotisserie for \$45. A cast-iron dish to hold damp wood chips under the cooking grids."

But consider how much money you'll save buying a gas grill because you won't have time for wine.

Springtime is clean-up time at home

Spring is here and it is an excellent time to take a fresh look at what you have and what you want in your home. Getting organized and doing some spring-cleaning can bring a sense of renewal into your home, so here are seven tips to help you start the season off right.

■ **Make a checklist.** Write a list of all the springtime jobs that you only do once or twice a year. Type it on your computer and save it for years to come, instead of writing a new list

every year. Some examples could include: check the smoke detectors; move and clean under heavy appliances and furniture; shampoo carpet, rugs and upholstery; wash blinds and shades.

■ **If you have a lot you want to do, give yourself an entire week to clean.** Start on a Saturday and do one task per day: Sorting and de-cluttering, dusting and polishing, vacuuming and sweeping, washing and scrubbing, organizing and rearranging, laundry and ironing,

decorating.

■ **Get all of your tools together.** Put all of your cleaning supplies in a bucket or caddy, and carry it with you from room to room so you don't have to keep running back and forth to get what you need.

■ **Clear the clutter.** Be ruthless when sorting through your stuff. If you don't love it or don't use it, it's clutter. Remember, the less you have, the less you have to dust or clean and the easier it will be to find something when you need it.

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can be used with an umbrella stand or in dining tables, and many are made with wind vents to withstand breezy days.

"Market umbrellas have been very popular for the past eight or 10 years," Chila said. "It always comes up with fashion."

Added Krawczyk: "They are now made with sunblocker rather than just sun filters to protect against skin cancer."

Chila and his family own the 21-year-old Casual Concepts and see many fast fads. What was considered "in" a while back has now become the "in" thing again.

"They are reverting to the classic looks," Chila said. "Cost aluminum furniture has been very popular in the past few years. It doesn't rust. It's almost like toothpaste. It's hollow in the middle and lightweight. People want something lightweight that they can move around."

Krawczyk said brighter colors are popular too. The classic hunter green and black iron furniture is still stylish, but shoppers are looking for brighter colors like silver, light green and taupe in that material. For slings and cushions bright colors and patterns are replacing solid patterns and beige tones. Sling-back style recliners that are LazyBoy style, complete with ottomans are a new fun trend, Krawczyk said. Consider them the modern-day hammock.

The other trend Krawczyk noticed is that because the



Indoors or out: This year's summer fad has a tropical traditional look that should stick around for seasons. It's all about lighter color.

backyard is a cherished sanctuary for today's family, people are willing to spend a little extra money on the furniture. Quality intricate tables with faux slate, or even real slate

tops, aluminum mesh, rattan, and other materials aren't necessarily cheap. "People aren't looking to replace their furniture every two years," said Krawczyk.

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