

Damon Lang



Creates outdoor magic in a tiny space for the Food Network's All-Star Kitchen Makeover with Bobby Flay

When David Gomez, a Broadway dancer, and Pamela Stivers, his jazz-singing fiancée, left New York City for a new start in Las Vegas, they hit the jackpot when they won Food Network's All-Star Kitchen Makeover with Bobby Flay for their home. The show hired designer and landscape contractor Damon Lang to transform the tiny backyard area and create a complete outdoor kitchen. Damon, a New York native with a culinary arts background, used Viking outdoor appliances in his transformation.

Rising to the challenge

Damon was asked to transform what was a small backyard dominated by an existing swimming pool. Space was a major factor, as was functionality.

"We were asked to create a complete outdoor kitchen so the owners could cook and entertain outdoors without ever having to go inside," says Damon. "Space was tight. We were working in a 12' x 32' area between the house and the pool. It was challenging to design a traffic flow so that people wouldn't

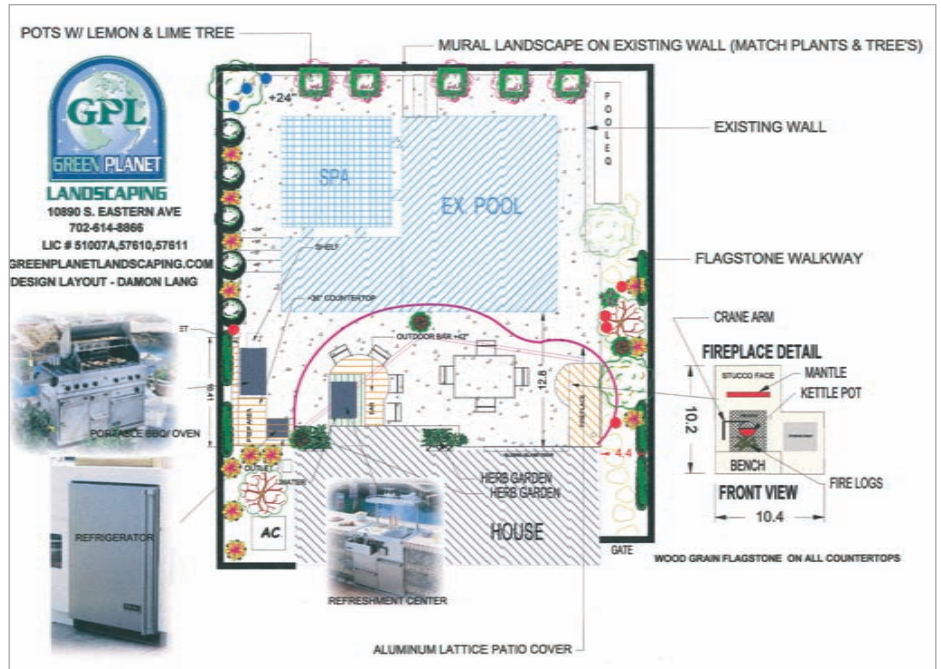
accidentally fall in the pool."

It's no surprise that after meeting with the show's producers, Damon planned this outdoor kitchen around Viking appliances. As someone creating upscale outdoor living environments, he values the quality and style they bring to any project. As a former culinary professional, he has personally experienced the control the Viking gas range and oven give the cook — indoors or outdoors. The centerpiece of the project is the 53" wide Viking outdoor range with side burners, a gas oven and an infrared rotisserie. He also specified a 24" wide Viking undercounter freestanding refrigerated beverage center, as well as a 41" wide Viking outdoor refreshment center, with cold water sink and professional style faucet.

A proper work space is essential to any great grilling setup, but often overlooked by cooks. People tend to forget they'll need a place to put the food after it has finished cooking. That's why the work space in the project is so essential.

An outdoor fireplace keeps dishes warm while finishing up others. A swim-up bar adds functionality and a visual center of interest to the pool. An aluminum lattice roof is both open and provides relief from the relentless Las Vegas sun. Since the view over the patio walls is lacking in greenery, a *trompe l'oeil* mural helps to warm up the space with bright, vibrant colors. Magnolia trees, Carolina laurel cherries, climbing vines, cooking herbs, and other plants were also





PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE FOOD NETWORK AND DAMON LANG

spread throughout the space to help the mural come to life.

The project was completed at a pace geared to the demands of television. “This project took a lot of preparation and scheduling,” says Damon. “Once the network arrived, we did about three weeks worth of work in eight days (and nights), with lots of interruptions, so they could shoot all the different steps.”

Carving out a unique niche in Las Vegas

Damon always enjoyed drawing but started out with restaurant work by attending culinary college and becoming a chef. Nearly 13 years ago, he got tired of New York winters and

moved to Las Vegas. He was working in a restaurant there when he started talking with a local landscaper. A long conversation led to a career change and a job offer. After picking up work experience and his contractor’s license, Damon started Green Planet Landscaping about six years ago. The firm’s focus is “to realize our customers’ personal desires to improve their quality of life by improving their environment.” He soon began specializing in outdoor living environments, and has participated in the outdoor kitchen boom firsthand. Green Planet Landscaping grew rapidly and now has 42 employees.

Damon concentrates on the design end,

basing his designs on discussions with his clients. “I always look at their kitchen first,” says Damon. “Chances are, if they have Viking indoors, they’ll want it outdoors.”

Whether or not they have Viking indoors, he finds many high-end clients receptive to hearing about Viking’s outdoor features. For some, the infrared rotisserie is the icing on the cake. For others, it’s the wok/cooker.

Given his earlier restaurant experience, it’s not surprising that he has Viking appliances in his own kitchen, and his enthusiasm is contagious. “The control a Viking range gives the cook, the construction, the accessories — you just can’t beat it.”