



LIVING AL FRESCO

Regardless of groundhog predictions, most realistic Canadians should know the folly of believing winter ends before May. Yet at the first signs of warmth, we unearth the patio furniture and troll the streets for the nearest café patio, to take in every bit of outdoor living we can before the summer swelter takes over.

At home, spring gets an early start with the KitHaus by New York's Design Within Reach. Bridging the worlds of indoors and out, the prefab kit takes the humble gazebo to a whole new level. It combines large window views with decklike wooden flooring, and shades with canopies to guard from the elements, making it an ideal space for anything from a yoga den to a home office.

Cafés can adapt to sporadic patches of warmth with easily stackable patio chairs and tables. But even the simple stacking chair has attracted some big-name attention: Philippe Starck's Pip-e for Diade is a bright addition to any concrete patio, while Karim Rashid's geometric Poly chair for Bonaldo looks like a deconstructed piece of organic.

A hammock is fine for casual relaxation, but extra-luxe lounging requires something more substantial. The Asian-inspired design of Dedon's Spa Recliner has a subtle upturned curve, and a lever for adjusting the level of sprawl. For a more modernist look, Spain's Gandia Blasco and Belgium's Six Inch offer sculptural chaises that would look equally sleek indoors.

Life in the great outdoors wouldn't be complete without a dose of playful humour, gladly supplied by designers whose outdoor accoutrements border on artworks. "Dear, I forgot the tablecloth..." by France's 5.5 Designers is a spin on the ubiquitous red-and-white checkered tablecloth, cast in mosaic tile. And Mindscape's Paddy series employs real greenery as a seating pad, making it possible to run your fingers through the lawn while in perfect repose.

SHANNON ANDERSON

For an extra room without the hassle of a redo, the prefab KitHaus by Design Within Reach ships flat and assembles easily for a new indoor/outdoor space. The designer shelter measures nearly three by four metres, with high-thermal dual-glazed windows and doors, ipe hardwood flooring, and a slat wall system for mounting anything from shelves to garden tools. www.drw.com