

Pergola Paradise



By Kate O'Connor

Photography by Rimas Zailskas

“It’s all about the people,” says Linda Constable.

“My husband and I are gatherers—we love to gather friends together.” And what better place to do that than around the generously sized tables sheltered beneath a pergola at their North Buncombe home?

The space was once dedicated to more solitary pursuits; Linda’s husband, Blair Jones, used the garage and adjoining cement slab to restore vintage automobiles. “But,” says Linda, “we evolved into other interests.” The couple saw the potential to convert the



Best friends Rocco and Jeanne Meeker gather under the pergola, the site of many outdoor meals. The pergola has abundant containers of flowering plants and herbs. Behind the large handmade-hinged doors is a spacious "jam" room, always set up for the many musical friends who drop by to play.



The depression era farm cottage went through a lengthy renovation, returning its charm. Two porches add to entertaining and resting places.

area into a multipurpose indoor/outdoor space that would embrace their love of good food, good music and good company.

"We were out there one day with our landscaper, Katherine Carter, and we said 'Let's build a pergola!'" she recalls. The inspiration was realized with a metalwork grid, supported by metal posts encased in wood and embellished with ornamental ironwork corners. The sturdy construction was designed to support the wisteria, roses and grapes (from a transplanted 80-year-old vine) that have been planted at its base. "I'm crazy about vines," notes Linda, "and the pergola can handle the weight. Eventually, it will be completely blanketed."

Linda, a designer with Ambiance Interiors, brought her 30-plus years of experience to bear in creating the outdoor kitchen and dining area that are tucked beneath the canopy. She engaged master woodworker Chris Perryman to fashion several movable prep and serving stations from weather-resistant cypress, including a custom cook station designed to accommodate the couple's Big Green Egg: a combination smoker and grill. There are also three ample tables—each more than eight feet in length—that

can comfortably seat more than a dozen guests.

While friends dine on smoked fish or dry-rubbed pork fragrant with fresh herbs from the ceramic pots nearby, they can enjoy the evening's entertainment. The former workshop is now a "jam" room (complete with chandelier and patterned carpets) where Blair—a bass player— and a revolving roster of fellow musician friends are center-stage in this open-air theater, thanks to a series of folding doors that open to the patio area.

As the candles burn down and the music and talk draw everyone into a sense of contentment and ease, Linda finds a deep appreciation for this gathering place. "They say that there's some old Indian vibe about the place. We're true to that. At night, there's something magical about being there in the moonlight, with the stars and the shadows in the pergola," she says with a sigh. "It's truly paradise."





Linda applies the finishing touch to dinner. Beneath the pergola are two custom tables, one of which is home to "the Big Green Egg," a combination smoker and grill.