

RTA Outdoor Living on What Dads Actually Want This Father's Day

As Father's Day spending hits a record \$24 billion, families are rethinking what celebration actually looks like, including the Gronkowskis

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Americans will spend a record \$24 billion on Father's Day this year, according to the National Retail Federation, averaging nearly \$200 per person. Yet surveys suggest many dads may be looking for something that can't be wrapped.



A YouGov survey of 500 U.S. fathers found that nearly one-third say they don't want gifts for Father's Day at all. Another survey found that more than a third of dads have faked enthusiasm over disappointing presents like ties, socks and novelty mugs.

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Instead, many fathers say they value time spent with family and shared experiences.

For one well-known family, that's exactly what Father's Day became.

Rob Gronkowski and his brother Dan recently spent the day installing an outdoor kitchen at their father Gordon's Boca Raton, Florida home, turning what could have been a simple home improvement project into a day of building, cooking and celebrating together.

"Some of my best memories growing up happened outside with family," said Rob Gronkowski. "Building this kitchen for my dad was really about creating a place where we can keep making those memories for years to come."

"The best part wasn't getting a new outdoor kitchen," said Gordon Gronkowski. "It was having my sons there helping build it and spending the day together. That's what Father's Day is really about."

Watch the Gronkowski family's Father's Day outdoor kitchen build:

<https://youtu.be/5kMGd9Z06iM>

The Gronkowski family's experience reflects a broader shift in how many Americans are celebrating Father's Day. While spending continues to rise, consumers are increasingly prioritizing experiences over physical gifts. According to the NRF, special outings now represent the largest Father's Day spending category at \$4.8 billion, surpassing clothing, gift cards and electronics. Thirty percent of consumers plan to give an experience this year, up from 23% in 2019.

Academic research has been making the case for many years that experiential gifts create stronger relationships and more lasting happiness than material ones, because they become part of how people remember time spent together.

For many families, those experiences are increasingly happening outdoors. Outdoor kitchens have become one of the fastest-growing categories in home improvement, not simply because people want a better place to cook, but because they want a place to gather. The U.S. market is now valued at approximately \$9.5 billion and projected to more than double by 2033.

A 2025 survey by the International Casual Furnishings Association found that 77% of Americans say they don't spend as much time outside at home as they'd like. After improving their outdoor spaces, the activities people most want to do more often include relaxing, spending time with family and friends, eating together and entertaining.

"The dads we talk to aren't looking for another gadget or gift card," said James King, VP of Design at RTA Outdoor Living. "They want a place where family naturally comes together. That's what outdoor kitchens tend to become."



RTA Outdoor Living, which designs and manufactures custom prefabricated outdoor kitchen systems engineered for durability across all climates, has seen this pattern play out across thousands of installations. Projects that begin as a home improvement investment often become the center of family gatherings, holiday celebrations and everyday outdoor living.

Research supports the broader appeal. Studies consistently show that spending time outdoors can reduce stress, support physical activity and strengthen social connection. These outcomes happen naturally when families have a functional, inviting space that draws them outside together.

"The best Father's Day gifts are the ones that keep paying off," said King. "An outdoor kitchen isn't just something you use on the holiday. It changes how you use your home and how often people come together."

For families looking to give something that lasts beyond a single day, RTA Outdoor Living offers a range of outdoor kitchen systems designed to fit different spaces, climates and budgets, along with planning and design tools to help homeowners create outdoor spaces that support the way they actually live.

About RTA Outdoor Living

RTA Outdoor Living is a leading provider of custom prefab outdoor kitchen solutions, designed to make high-quality outdoor living accessible and easy to implement. With a focus on streamlined design, durable materials, and a digital-first, virtual approach, RTA helps homeowners create outdoor spaces that are both functional and built for everyday use. For more information, visit rtaoutdoorliving.com.

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