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A patio table is an important purchase. If you buy the right one, it will be a center for family memories for years to come. Think about the patio tables you've gathered around during your lifetime. When you were a child, you may have spent summers at the picnic table at your grandparents' lake house. Maybe you had one of those white plastic umbrella tables in your back yard growing up. These were great for building nostalgia, but you will be pleased to know that many patio tables of today far exceed those of 30 years ago in style, durability, color selection, and comfort. Shopping for patio tables is tons of fun. Because you can create an outdoor haven that is reflective of your personal style, it is like bringing a vision to life in the backyard. It's not just an outdoor dining area: You have a whole new room to decorate on the patio, starting with your patio table.

Regardless of the material you choose, if you're shopping high-quality patio tables, there's a good shot they're built to stand up to the weather. For example, patio tables made of plastic resin are often infused with UV inhibitors so whatever color your table comes in won't fade in the harsh sunlight. They're also made to keep out moisture to prevent warping. Hardwoods like teak and cedar make for durable patio furniture as well. In this case, the natural properties of the wood seal out moisture so it won't bend and crack over time. Cedar patio furniture does tend to change color a bit as a result of the elements, but it's a charming weathered look, rather than a tired, worn-out appearance. Wrought-iron patio furniture is one of the hardest options available. It remains unchanged through many seasons of heat, rain, snow and sleet. This is a grand patio furniture option especially if you love lots of intricate detail. And of course, there is rattan wicker, which is wicker furniture treated to resist the weather.

Patio tables constructed of any of these materials are a wise choice, since all have properties that keep them beautiful for many years. And all are made to be as stylish as they are practical. Which material you choose depends solely on what appeals to you most. Aesthetically speaking, of course, you will probably order patio chairs to match your table, so think about your lounging comfort. If you think you'd be most relaxed in an Adirondack dining chair, then a plastic resin Adirondack table is probably for you. If you fancy afternoon tea in cushioned wrought-iron chairs, a matching table is a logical choice. If you love the warm ambiance of hardwood, a teak table is for you.

Other than material, the most important aspect in shopping for the perfect patio table is size. In this case, less is more. Sure, there are times when you're hosting eight to 10 people for dinner outdoors, but that probably doesn't happen more than a couple times per season. Otherwise, a table that comfortably seats five is probably adequate. If you have a larger crowd here and there, create improvised seating around the conversation table. By choosing an outdoor table that's not too large, you will prevent overcrowding. That means you'll have more room to decorate, and more room to live!

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