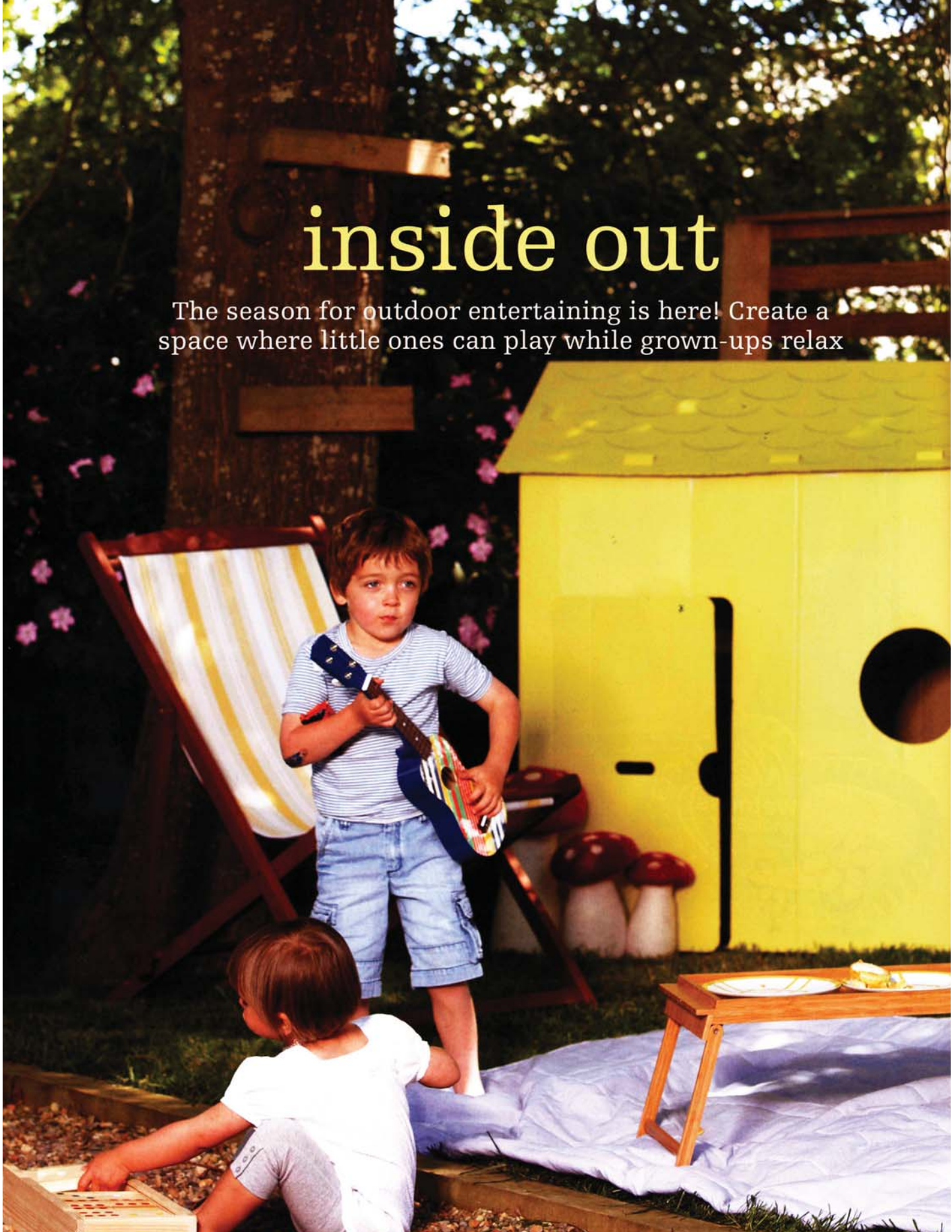


# inside out

The season for outdoor entertaining is here! Create a space where little ones can play while grown-ups relax



**W**e all love the outdoors, especially during the summer months when barbeques and entertaining take full flight. The key to successful entertaining with children in situ is not the amount of space you have, but how you use it, creating an enticing play arena that will occupy their time, not yours!

Whether it is a modest patch of grass or a sprawling acre, a space where your child can jump, play games, or secretly hide away will give you hours of undisturbed social interaction and, needless to say, a few sangrias with friends.

### Sun shades

Shade tops the must-have list for any outdoor occasion, as skin cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in New Zealand. Whether you choose a sun umbrella, sun canopy, or shade sail, ensure it is generous in its shady coverage. Our favourites include Republic's range of retro striped sun umbrellas priced from \$99.99 ([www.republic.co.nz](http://www.republic.co.nz)) or Bunnings' range of affordable shade sails priced from \$45, and aluminium cantilever umbrellas from \$134 ([www.bunnings.co.nz](http://www.bunnings.co.nz)).

### Play pens, tents, playhouses and teepees

Keeping children occupied with toys that require minimal parental involvement is instrumental in both their play development and your sanity! Play pens and tents are handy for little ones who are likely to toddle off. Affordable options include nylon play pens, priced from \$35 ([www.pipsqueaks.co.nz](http://www.pipsqueaks.co.nz)), or [www.outforbaby.co.nz](http://www.outforbaby.co.nz) have wooden ones from \$159.95.

A playhouse or hideout is always a winner. The Cardboard Playhouse (\$77 from [www.kidsplace.co.nz](http://www.kidsplace.co.nz)) is the ultimate in portable options. It is printable, packable and paintable. And for pride of place in any backyard, check out the gorgeous range of tents from [www.kookychoo.com](http://www.kookychoo.com).

### Ride-ons and games

Look for a well-made ride-on that will withstand the rigours of childhood play. We found the perfect combination in the 3-in-1 Walker Wagon from Radio Flyer, a ride-on, stroller and walker in one, at \$129.95. The Classic Red Wagon

is perfect for solitary or interactive play (and also as the toy pick-up utility once your social event ends). Both the wagon (\$269.95) and ride-on are available from Hive of Activity (09) 623 1181.

Oversized games entertain both young and old. Check out [www.thebiggamecompany.co.nz](http://www.thebiggamecompany.co.nz) for great ideas. Our favourite, in the interests of safety and age appropriateness, was the Giant Wooden Domino Set, \$99.



Radio Flyer Classic Red Wagon \$269.95 from Hive of Activity (09) 623 1181. Giant Wooden Domino Set \$99 from [www.thebiggamecompany.co.nz](http://www.thebiggamecompany.co.nz). Plates from \$9.99, see [www.cocoahomeandliving.com](http://www.cocoahomeandliving.com) for stockists. Playhouse \$77 from [www.kidsplace.co.nz](http://www.kidsplace.co.nz). Set of three toadstools \$225 from Smith & Caughey's. Umbrella \$99.99 from Republic.

### Outdoor furniture

Make alfresco meals easy; choose all-weather furniture that can be left outside. It is important that children sit comfortably and with good posture, as a stable sitting position will help facilitate independent eating. Questions to ask before the big purchase include: Are the seats supportive and will they work for your growing family? Will the table fit a regular or portable baby high chair (there is nothing worse than sitting away from your guests while feeding your smallest)? Is the furniture easy-clean, and will it withstand your child leaning, hanging, or swinging from it?

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