



Jon-Richard Little set up a restaurant-quality mobile kitchen inside a used semitrailer that he bought for \$2,000.

Semi-Trailer Turned Into Mobile Kitchen

Jon-Richard Little has a lot of friends and they like to do things together, like attend the Burning Man festival each year in Nevada. After years of cooking big meals out in the open, he decided to put together a restaurant-quality mobile kitchen.

"I bought a semitrailer for \$2,000 and then started going to restaurant auctions," explains Little. "I've put about \$20,000 into it, mostly in commercial cooking equipment and stainless steel shelving and fixtures."

The self-contained commercial grade kitchen has 3 ovens, 10 burners, a griddle and a stockpot cooker, all running on propane. It also has a commercial size cooler, dishwashing station, hand washing sink, and a shower. Power is distributed through multiple outlet banks, each with its own breaker.

Three 400-gal. totes provide drinking, cooking and cleaning water for a week.

Wastewater drops into a sump for pumping to a tote. A propane tank for the kitchen and the stand-alone generator are set up outside. Inside, there is substantial free space for all the camping gear and supplies needed for a group of about 80 on a week-long adventure.

"I used the largest possible trailer so there is room for a dolly to run down the center aisle for loading and unloading supplies and gear," explains Little. "At the rear of the trailer the water totes are secured under a deck with room for storing gear and supplies. A second deck clicks in place over part of the kitchen area while in transit, providing more storage."

Even the large cooler can be used for storage. It has load bar doors that can be popped off, and 2 pallets of supplies can be wheeled inside.

A number of the trailer's features are designed to keep things running smooth



Self-contained commercial grade kitchen has 3 ovens, 10 burners, a griddle and a stockpot cooker, all running on propane. "I've put \$20,000 into it," says Little.

and clean. He has a water tank level visible near the showers to encourage conservative water use. Shower users enter through a side door, keeping them out of the kitchen. Water pressure for the shower is on a 10-min. timer, and the water is on a hand release garden hose head. Little also built a swamp cooler to hang on the side of the trailer when on site. Air pulled through it helps cool the kitchen area. A hand sink is at the entrance to the kitchen area.

"There is no reason for anyone with dirty hands to be in my kitchen," he says.

He says the investment in time and money was well worth it. He highly recommends doing something similar if large family or friend groups get away to remote areas or festivals once a year or more.

"Hopefully I can rent it out a few times a year to get my money back," says Little. "Even so, it paid for itself in less time setting

up a kitchen tent and being able to shut the doors when the wind kicks up."

Little considered using a fifth wheel trailer but is glad he settled on a semi-trailer.

"I contract with a transport company to deliver it to the site. I don't have to worry about a transmission going out or other problems. Commercial delivery guarantees it will get there and everyone will be fed."

Little says he would be happy to help someone else set up a similar trailer or do it for them. "The neat thing is you can put anything in there you need, bathrooms, a garbage compactor, flat screen TVs or specialty cooking equipment," he says.

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Outdoor solar collector consists of a by 3-ft. wooden box with a slanted metal roof. A pair of insulated 4-in. dryer vent pipes run from box into house.



Simple Outdoor Solar Heater

Robert Jacobi's simple outdoor solar collector consists of a 5-ft. long by 3-ft. wide wooden box with a slanted metal roof. A 46-in. long by 20-in. wide window skylight fits into an opening cut into the roof. A pair of insulated 4-in. dryer vent pipes run from the box into the house. One pipe takes in air from the basement's cold air return. A small 6-in. dia. fan is connected to the other pipe and blows the heated air into the house's front room. A thermostat is hooked to the fan.

"Even when the temperature gets down to 20 degrees the collector will raise the indoor temperature 6 to 8 degrees," says Jacobi.

"This unit doesn't work in temperatures below zero because the sun's angle is too low, so I use it mainly starting in mid-February. When the weather warms up enough that I no longer need heat, I use a Styrofoam sheet to cover the window and hold it down with bungee cords.

"I painted the metal roof black to help melt snow. I've never had to brush any snow off the unit."

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A 6-in. dia. fan with thermostat connects to one of the pipes and blows heated air into house's front room.



Window-Mounted Solar Heater

This new window-mounted solar "room warmer" provides the heat of a 150 to 500-watt electric heater, depending on the daytime sun and cloud cover.

The solar heated collector measures 48 in. long, 18 in. wide, and 2 in. thick and comes with a solar-powered fan that moves the heated air into the room. You simply hang or set the collector against the inside of a south-facing window; the fan draws indoor air through aluminum collectors heated by the sun and then recirculates the warmed air back into the room. The fan's speed control is used to adjust the air temperature. The system comes equipped with an AC adapter if there's not enough sunlight to power the fan.

"It's designed for interior installation behind a single pane window for best efficiency. Double pane, low-E, argon, and triple pane windows will reduce the efficiency to less than 40 to 65 percent," says Cam Mackay, Solar Infra Systems, Surrey, B.C. "The unit's open design still allows most of the window sunlight into the room."

The unit is available from Northern Tool, Mid States Distributing, Home Depot, and Amazon. It retails for \$249 on Amazon.com.

The company also sells solar heaters designed for commercial businesses such as greenhouses. One system uses 40-ft. shipping containers that hold 14,000 gal. of water. The containers can be stacked together for large capacity systems.

"We're reducing the natural gas used to heat a greenhouse. We can save a 100,000 sq. ft. greenhouse up to \$140,000 per year compared to using natural gas," says Mackay.



Window-mounted solar "room warmer" is fitted with a solar-powered fan that moves heated air into the room.

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