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Festive AND FUNCTIONAL DINING ROOMS

The dining area is somewhat of a conundrum.

In many newer homes, it has been swallowed up by the open-concept main floor, with cooking, dining and living combined. Meanwhile, in older homes, the formal dining room often goes unused except for the occasional birthday, anniversary or holiday, when it gets dusted off and dressed to impress. I love the indulgence of a dedicated, stylish dining area, both in terms of the space itself and all that it brings. Whether yours is a dedicated room or a designated nook, here are some tips to ensure it's ready for company, both during the holidays and every other day of the year! *Continued on page 58*





DINING ROOM LAYOUTS FOR A FUNCTIONAL AND FABULOUS SPACE

A great dining area starts with the layout, to ensure the room can handle the hustle and bustle while still providing a comfortable and inviting atmosphere. If yours is an open-plan home, position your dining table in a way that naturally flows from the kitchen or living area. This setup allows for easy movement between cooking and socializing, ensuring you can stay engaged with guests while preparing meals.

In homes with separate dining rooms, focus on creating a balanced space. Place the dining table centrally, allowing enough room around it for chairs to be pulled out comfortably. Ensure there is ample space to accommodate traffic, especially if the space will include a buffet or serving area.

A rectangular or oval table can accommodate more guests, while a round table can create a more intimate setting. If you frequently host large gatherings, consider an extendable table or add a second smaller table to accommodate extra guests.

A sideboard or buffet table along one wall can serve as a dedicated area for food and drinks. This keeps the main dining table clutter-free and allows guests to help themselves without disrupting the flow of conversation. And when you're not hosting, it serves as storage space.

Place chairs or benches around the table with a mix of seating options to cater to different preferences and to create a more dynamic and inviting arrangement. If space allows, create a separate seating area with comfortable chairs or a small sofa for guests to relax before or after the meal.

FOCUS!

A well-chosen focal point not only draws the eye but also sets the tone and mood, making it a more enjoyable place for meals and gatherings. It can help define the style and personality of the space, whether it's modern, traditional or eclectic. To create an effective focal point, start by identifying the most prominent area in the room, such as the wall facing the entrance or the ceiling above the dining table. Consider adding a bold piece of art, which is a wonderful way to add non-committal colour and a dramatic effect. Simply swapping out the artwork can transform the entire room's ambience when you're ready for a change.

I love the element of surprise in a room, so think beyond the usual, like a bold ceiling. Draw the eye upward with an eye-catching colour or a graphic paper to add texture and dimension. Incorporating architectural elements such as coffered ceilings, exposed beams or tray ceilings can also add a sense of grandeur and elegance.

Balance is key, so ensure that the focal point complements the overall décor without overwhelming it.



LIGHTING

Lighting has a three-fold purpose in the dining area: to illuminate for function, to act as a focal point and to set the mood. In this space, it can be bright and joyful, warm and romantic, dark and dramatic, or it can alternate between all three, depending on the function. For this reason, dimmers and layers of lighting are a must.

A statement chandelier or pendant light above the dining table serves as a focal point, adding a touch of elegance and festivity. Wall sconces or floor and table lamps can provide additional illumination, highlighting different areas of the room and adding depth. Candles or string lights added to the tabletop or buffet create a cosy, enchanting atmosphere.

Whether hosting large gatherings on festive occasions or casual everyday dinners, having a dedicated dining area also helps to carve out a time and a place to indulge in good food and great company, without any distractions. **OH**

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