

# FROM HOME SWEET HOME

## Dining room furniture caters to many styles and budgets

The traditional dining room has been around for years, and there is little evidence that it will disappear soon. Many families enjoy entertaining friends and relatives in a formal dining room setting, separate from other rooms in the house.

But in recent years, the role of the dining room has undergone a radical shift. New furniture designs have been introduced to a public that seems eager to embrace a more eclectic range of furniture options. In some cases, dining rooms have been eliminated altogether from some condominium and house designs, in favour of more living room space.

### WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Nowadays, a more casual elegant style of dining room furniture is finding acceptance in all types of homes. This shift has a lot to do with lifestyle changes where people are entertaining and spending more time at home.

There is a growing segment of the market that is interested in the country or casual style of dining room furniture. This trend reflects a more casual attitude in general towards formal dining, and a greater willingness to use dining rooms for less formal occasions.

Casual dining is one of the biggest growth areas of the furniture business. Casual dining rooms get more everyday use because the furniture is more relaxed and accessible. People aren't afraid to use it.

For those who still want a more formal dining room, many excellent solid wood or veneer finish dining room suites are available. A traditional dining room of solid mahogany and cherry veneers is sure to bring eighteenth century elegance to your home. You could also add a pedestal dining table, hand-carved upholstered chairs and coordinating buffet and hutch, depending on your personal preference.

The traditional dining room has typically been furnished by a table, a set of chairs, a hutch and a buffet. This type of furniture is characterized by the Queen Ann style and is still being manufactured.

While furniture purchases are on the wane, some people take months - or longer - deciding how to decorate their dining rooms. People generally don't have to own a dining room set right away, but once people make the decision to buy, many home owners will spend a little extra on quality furniture that will last.

### FUNCTION SHOULD DETERMINE STYLE

When choosing any type of dining room furniture, it's important to know how the room will be used. Will it be off-limits most of the time, reserved for special occasions such as Thanksgiving or Christmas? Or will it be used on a frequent basis? Will children be eating in the room? Whatever you decide, dining tables, serving tables, chairs, hutches and buffets are available in many different styles, colours and materials.

The centre piece of dining room furniture is usually the table. From a strictly practical standpoint, the shape and texture of the table will determine most of the other design elements of the room. Traditional dining tables are available in round, oval, square or rectangular shapes. But they are also available in unique shapes such as hexagons, octagons and rectangular with cut-out corners or scalloped edges.

Construction materials are fairly eclectic. The range of materials for most dining room furniture is either wood or metal. Solid wood is typically more expensive, but veneer wood finishes may be more decorative and ornate, and they can be added to a wooden piece.

More eclectic materials include tables with a natural or cast stone base, and a glass top. Metals such as copper or stainless steel, though durable, are also available but are not very common.

Once you've chosen your material, the next step is

deciding on a finish. Any kind of wood will stand out with the proper care and finish.

Stains come in a variety of tones, which vary depending on the type of wood. For instance, a stain applied to oak will accent the prominent grain patterns, and stains for cherry wood will highlight the wood's warm natural colouring.

Any furniture that has a thin coat of varnish to seal the wood will not have the same quality as a piece that has been hand polished to a smooth surface.

When checking the furniture, make sure that the

hardware is secure and strong, with no sharp or rough edges. Any functional hardware should be made of solid brass, which is strong and durable.

And make sure that the leave fits neatly into place, and that the grain and finish of the leave matches that of the table.

Whichever camp you fall into - formal diners or casual diners - shop around, talk to experts and read widely before you make a purchase. The more you know about your subject, the more informed a decision you'll make.



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