



Decorating and Dining 101

Tips to make your special gathering place shine

By Candice Adler

No longer is the dining room reserved for formal dinners or just holiday celebrations. In fact, many homeowners prefer to skip a formal dining room altogether, and just combine a large seating area along with the kitchen or great room. Whether you spend weekly dinners with your family, or possibly are hosting a dinner party, the dining area is ultimately where people come together. Because the dining area and kitchen are the heart of your home, it's important it reflects your style and clearly functions on a daily basis to fit your specific needs. From traditional to modern styles, there are many options available. Think about what colors and style appeal to you when planning your dining area. If you're not sure, visit a website, such as Houzz, and you will get stimulated very easily, even possibly addicted.

First, I usually ask my clients how they plan to use the dining area. Will it be for formal entertaining or rather a more casual, relaxed space used often. Generally, a formal dining space may be darker and dramatic. It will include possibly ornate wallpaper and decadent chandeliers. As I have always said, lighting will set the tone for the atmosphere you are creating. If you are more casual, I suggest lighter colors on the walls and maybe a fun wallpaper pattern. Some interesting furniture and track lighting will work perfectly. By adding an eclectic mix of unique collectibles or an assortment of candles on your table rather than a traditional floral centerpiece, the space will feel more relaxed and easy.

The table in your dining room is like the sofa in your den. I would say it's very important to get it right when selecting, as it will anchor your room. Please consider size, color, and durability when selecting the table. Once the finish has been selected, all the other elements that play in the room come together. Upholstery on the chairs, the carpet, and the curtains are what makes the story come alive. I always say, it's like a story. I just ask my clients which story appeals to them the most and we go from there. Materials do not always need to match exactly. They will carry a similar style and weight, but it's always more interesting to pull together several elements to make the space unique.

If you choose to include a hutch to display tableware, have it lit up so in the evening hours it is a focal point and adds ambiance while dining. Use the surface of a credenza as a display spot for some of your favorite accents. I tend to like a symmetrical arrangements on a sideboard, with a pair of lamps or a possible organic arrangements to feel natural. If possible, a mirror above the credenza reflecting your chandelier would be ideal.

The perfect lighting plan would combine natural and artificial light if possible. Always put your overhead lighting on dimmers. Your hanging lighting should hang 30" from the surface of your table to the bottom of

your fixture. By having it on a dimmer, you will reduce the chance of having a glare. Wall sconces always add an elegant touch. If you decide to use candlelight on the table while entertaining, soft lighting by the lamps on a sideboard will create low ambient light for your guests. Your chandelier will sparkle if you use clear bulbs. If using pendants rather than one fixed light, make sure there is at least 12" on either side of the table to maximize effective lighting and reduce unwanted glares. Think of the lighting priority — as a function as well as the decorative appeal — that not only needs to look amazing, but ultimately perform just as well. Lastly, consider the amount of natural sunlight that comes in the space for entertaining at all times of the day. You want your lighting to be energy efficient and stylish at the same time.

Now comes the fun part; texture, layers, color. We add all these fun elements with our rugs, window treatments, and upholstery. You can never go wrong with long panel sheers framing your windows. They can let in the daylight, while having no problem taking a key role at night. A sizable rug will give the perfect layered effect of texture while anchoring the underfoot space. Choose something that will wash easily and be durable enough when

chairs are dragged back and forth on the surface. If using an area rug, it is without question that when the chair is pulled back it still rests in its entirety on the area rug. You never want half the chair resting on the rug while the back legs of the chair are on a hard surface. To determine you have the correct measurements, measure the width of your table and add 4 feet. You can experiment with different shapes depending on the size of the dining area and the shape of your table.

I believe what makes your home ideal are the personal touches you add that are unique to you. The

dining room is a perfect setting to show your personality with the objects you choose to display. If there is a mantel in the room, it will be perfect to show off some great accents that are meaningful to you. Create a wall of old family photos that everyone will enjoy over the years. I even had a client start the tradition of each year at holidays taking pictures of everyone at the dinner and frame them to build on each holiday. It's so nice to see how everyone grows and changes over the years. Let your walls do the talking with an unexpected wall color or paper. Whatever you decide, the centerpiece should be eye-catching, something dramatic even if you don't necessarily use it. As long as the elements are all to scale, you will easily create the harmonious balance you are seeking. ■

I hope you enjoy my tips to make your home the one you love. If you have any design questions, please feel free to reach out. Visit my website at www.candiceadlerdesign.com for inspirational photos and ideas.



Photo by Alex Anton