

# functional dining rooms

learn about  
the **latest**  
and **greatest**  
features

By Karen Appold



Above: Custom Woodworking's Wellington Collection is handcrafted in solid wood and has hand rubbed finishes. Individual pieces shown here can be purchased separately.

Left: The Provencal Estates table from European Home Collection features a classic French carved apron and a beautiful carving on the cabriole legs. It extends to 134 inches and can seat 12.

Today's dining rooms are in a state of transformation. They're designed to be comfortable, accommodate large groups and serve multiple uses.

H&H interviewed area dining room retailers to learn more. Participants include Sue Beddia, public relations manager, Domain Home Fashions; Jere Bradwell, senior designer, European Home Collection; Jennifer Doan, owner, Newport Furnishings of Philadelphia; and Ron Sulpizio, interior designer and industry partner ASID, Le Montage.

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These richly upholstered chairs by designer Raymond Waites complement the small oval dining table at European Home Collection.



Newport Furnishings sells this dining vignette that features the use of mixed wood finishes.

## Q What are some new trends in dining room furniture?

**A** Doan: Dining room pieces need to provide seating, a serving area and storage. However, comfort must also be considered to entice people to linger over dessert.

Infrequently used formal dining rooms are being replaced by more casual and comfortable informal dining spaces that are used daily. Informal dining spaces can also be elegant and beautiful.

Bradwell: We are seeing a need for longer dining tables because clients are using their homes to host holiday and family affairs that require lots of seating.

Beddia: Today's consumers want custom options so they can design a look that fits their needs, design scheme and room size. That's why Domain introduced new European inspired tables available in three styles and 20 different finishes: painted, natural or a combination of both. Marsala is a single-pedestal round table offered in 40- or 54-inches across with a 20-inch leaf. Brennan is a 76-inch oval table with a double pedestal base and two 20-inch leaves. The Lancaster offers a more traditional look with fluted legs and two 24-

**"Today's consumers want custom options so they can design a look that fits their needs, design scheme and room size."**

**-Sue Beddia,  
public relations manager, Domain Home Fashions**

inch leaves that open to 127 inches. Alternative, less traditional, seating styles that complement instead of match a table are the new styles of choice. Domain paired custom dining tables with a selection of micro fiber side chairs, leather arm chairs and slip-covered parsons chairs. These exclusive pieces give customers many options to create a look that's unpredictable, fresh and uniquely their own.

For individuals who desire something different and somewhat contemporary, counter height tables are now popular. They're typically 6 inches higher

than an average dining table and are often paired with space saving stools for seating, obviously a less traditional option for dining rooms. Domain's new Eastgate collection features this contemporary look.

Many customers choose an eclectic scheme for their dining room because it does double duty as an office, study or library. They want to mix chair styles and have a versatile table with unique sideboards to hide non-traditional dining items such as office supplies, books and games.

## Q How do you advise customers on adding new pieces to existing furniture?

**A** Bradwell: One of our favorite techniques is to add new upholstered host and hostess chairs at the ends of a table. This is a chance to add elegant fabric and color. We also suggest recovering chair seats of the remaining dining chairs with a coordinating or perhaps the same fabric as the new host chairs.

Beddia: We always feel comfortable suggesting the addition of painted pieces because they can complement many wood tones and create a special



Le Montage Interior Design offers this double pedestal empire dining table in Provence gold with intricately carved inlaid ash burl veneers and four hinged aprons with two center support legs. The table extends to 174 inches with four 20-inch leaves.



Shown in Provence gold with inlaid marquetry and ash burl finish, this empire side chair and armchair are just two of the many unique choices recommended by Le Montage Interior Design that provide comfort and style to an elegant setting.

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## DINING ROOMS

focal point for a room. Domain's Pavia console has been popular as a sideboard and for its hand-painted design and generous storage.

A less expensive option to upholstered chairs for the hosts are simple slipcovers that can be used for special occasions. Painted chairs also work well with many table finishes.

Doan: The primary focus of the dining room should be the table and chairs. These pieces set the tone of the space. Any other pieces incorporated into the space should complement, not compete, with the table and chairs.

Storage is also important to store serving pieces and provide additional serving space. Most dining spaces include a buffet with or without a hutch or sideboard.

**"One of our favorite techniques is to add new upholstered host and hostess chairs at the ends of a table."**

**-Jere Bradwell,  
senior designer, European Home Collection**

**A** Sulpizio: Good space planning calls for suitable room to get up and down and easily walk around. A seated adult occupies a depth of approximately 20 inches, but needs 12 to 16 inches more to pull back the chair and stand up.

Placing chairs at angles to the wall can save a few inches, but you'll need either a round or square table for this strategy. Rectangular tables require 24 inches per person and 32 to 36 inches of clearance between the table and wall. On the serving side, the table to wall distance should be at least 44 inches.

To properly apply this mathematics to your seating arrangement, measure the entire space. Include the locations of walls, windows and doors, projecting sills, electrical receptacles, light switches, vents and thermostats.

Keep in mind that most furniture will sit 2 or 3 inches from the wall. All of these elements will be important to consider when creating your floor plan.

**Q How do you help clients determine what pieces they need?**

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## customers' common questions

Sue Beddia, public relations manager, Domain Home Fashions and Jere Bradwell, senior designer, European Home Collection, tackle your questions.

### How many chairs do I need?

Bradwell: Have enough for comfortable seating for an average dinner party that you might host this year. Most homes will need more seating for holidays, but you can pull in extra chairs for the special event rather than try to have all the extra chairs throughout the year.

### What types of chairs should I use?

Bradwell: Beautiful upholstered chairs look great around a classic wood table.

The softness of the upholstery against the heavy wood is a nice contrast and a good way to bring color and comfort and drama to a room.

### How many people will a table seat?

Beddia: Most table leaves are 16 inches, so you need two to sit another guest comfortably. You need a full 20 inches for a place setting. Domain's new custom dining tables come with generous 20-inch and 24-inch leaves to offer maximized seating capacity.

-Compiled by Karen Appold



The Wesley dining room from Domain Home Fashions.

“If you use your dining room daily, be practical and play it safe with your design.”

-Ron Sulpizio,  
interior designer and industry partner ASID, Le Montage

A floor plan is a necessary tool for properly placing furniture. It is a diagram of a room as seen from above. Floor plans are typically done in 1/4-inch scale. This means that a 1/4-inch on the floor plan is equal to 1 foot in your room.

Each piece of furniture is also represented in this scale and moved around on the floor plan to be accurately imagined. Once the appropriate size and proper placement of furniture is determined, a rendering can be sketched. With all of these design tools in place, you will achieve what you have always dreamed for your new dining space.

Beddia: Domain offers a complimentary design service. Trained design consultants will visit your home to understand your style, how you want to use the space, take measurements, make suggestions, and work with you to select the right pieces to go with existing furniture or create a new look.

Bradwell: We ask clients how they want to use the dining area. Do they host a lot of family for the holidays? Do they want to display favorite crystal or serving ware?

Doan: The size of the dining room or space will dictate the scale of the furniture. A beautiful sideboard or dining table that does not fit the space simply will not work. As with any room, a customer should measure the room and sketch a simple layout prior to shopping for furniture. This will make space planning simple.

Check leg placement on any table that will be used for seating. A leg at or near each corner, a center pedestal, multiple pedestals or trestles are stable and common. Dining chairs should have fairly upright backs so that diners can sit comfortably close to the table and still have the support of the chair back. Slide chairs up to the table. The chairs and table should fit easily. Arms should be low enough so that the chairs slide under the tabletop.

## Q How do you help customers design their dining rooms?

A Sulpizio: If you use your dining room daily, be practical and play it safe with your design. But if you only use it a handful of times during the year, you can be a little more daring.

The dining room often opens to the living room, kitchen or foyer, so the style and colors should coordinate with those spaces. The dining room can take on a more formal look if the family eats primarily in the kitchen. In fact, most interior designers and homeowners like to create a showstopping dining room for entertaining and special occasions.

The focal point of a dining room is often the table itself or an interest-



Top: This Nelson leather tufted arm chair also comes in a side chair. Sold at Domain Home Fashions.

ing hutch, depending on the furniture’s placement and the doorway’s orientation. If a hutch is too large for the room, replace it with a buffet topped with a colorful painting or enlarged photograph.

A chandelier or hanging fixture should hang above the center of the table even if it isn’t in the center of the room. In a dining room with an 8-foot ceiling, install the fixture so that its bottom is 27 to 36 inches above the table. Raise the fixture 3 inches for every additional foot of ceiling height.

A crystal chandelier will look great in a formal, elegant dining room, while a ceiling light and wall sconces can add charm to a well-dressed transitional space. Whether you coordinate your design with the present surroundings or change existing pieces to match a new vision, be sure to make a plan before starting to fill the space.

“The size of the dining room or space will dictate the scale of the furniture.”

-Jennifer Doan, owner,  
Newport Furnishings of Philadelphia

Doan: To get a sense of your personal decorating style, use a favorite restaurant, a friend’s home, magazines or catalogs for inspiration in decorating and choosing pieces. Don’t choose what others like or what is popular. Trust your instincts.

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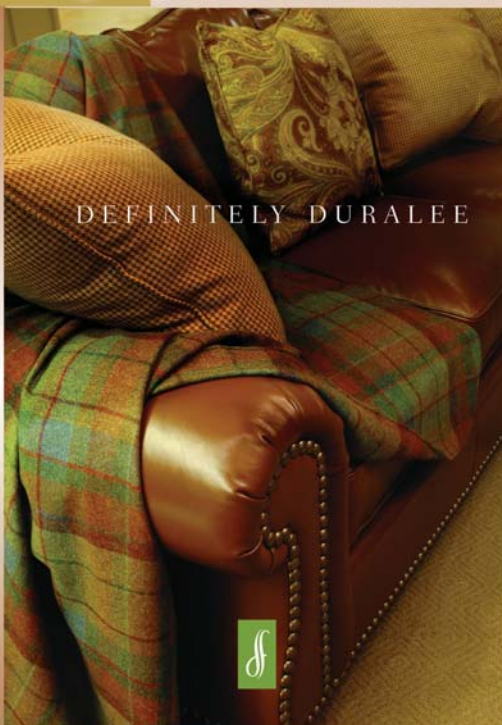
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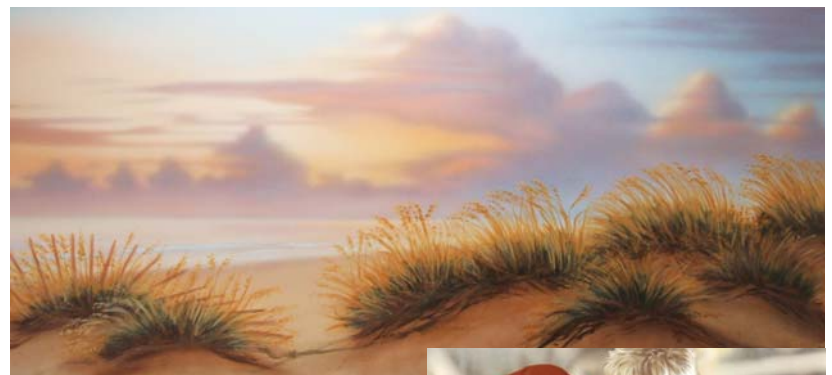
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