

A Matter of Taste

Five essential ingredients for a fabulous yet functional dining room | BY LISA PECK, ASID



We are not born with a sophisticated sense of taste. Just think of the baby-food aisle at the grocery store — puréed beets, anyone? No, a refined palate is something we develop over time, right after we outgrow our unexplainable cravings for Doritos and Mountain Dew.

The same goes for our sense of aesthetic. Recognizing design that's great versus just good enough takes time, fearlessness and experimentation.

Take the dining room for example. This is the room where every special relationship can be celebrated with gatherings from romantic candlelit dinners to large holiday meals. Anyone who sits in a perfectly designed dining room will want to linger long after the dishes have been cleared.

But before we try to run, let's begin to crawl. Start with the basics: walls, floor, ceiling, furnishings and lighting. Consider these five baby steps first while paying close attention to the mood and emotion you want to create. Doing so will whet your appetite for more substantial designs in the future. **A**

1. Wrap it in warmth.

A warm color and subtle pattern on the walls create a soft background while encouraging lively conversation.

2. Lay a strong foundation.

Eye-catching patterns or colors in a perfectly placed area rug define the table as a space within a space.

3. Don't underestimate overhead.

Often an overlooked opportunity, ceilings can create interest, sparkle and elegance. Avoid a white ceiling at all costs.

4. Keep it fabulous yet functional.

The table should be simple and elegant, and allow for a changing tablescape. A buffet provides extra space and creates an uninterrupted flow to your meal. Dining chairs should be comfortable and classic. Reserve a lively pattern for the chair back and pair it with a texture on the inside of the chair.

5. Become illuminated.

The table can be emphasized as the destination point simply by shining some light on the situation. Avoid glare by featuring soft, ambient light at the edge of the room.

Lisa Peck is owner and principal designer of LiLu Interiors, a boutique interior-design firm based in Minneapolis. For more than 20 years, she has provided custom design, project management, space planning and construction oversight services to homeowners across the Twin Cities and wherever projects may take her.



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