



40 Dallas-Ft. Worth Home/Garden

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You Are Where You Eat

FUN AND FASHIONABLE DINING ROOMS

by Kay Ellis photography by John Rogers



Above: Using some of Mimi Sheraton's furniture, designer David Corley of Ft. Worth has created a dramatic room that is quite versatile.

Left: Dallas designer Craig Roberts adds drama and lots of sophisticated lighting techniques to make his dining room — and his entire house — something very special.

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At its best, it's elegant, glamorous, convivial, romantic, adaptable, relaxing and regularly filled with people who are having a good time. At its worst, it's dull, static, stuffy and seldom used.

It's the dining room! Just because the words conjure up visions of formal rather than casual meals doesn't mean that the decor has to be boring.

Dallas and Fort Worth designers surveyed agree that the dining room can be one of the most exciting — and prettiest — rooms in the entire house. And it shouldn't be reserved for Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners!

"Versatility" is a word that many interior designers like to apply to dining rooms these days.

James Foy Jr., ASID, of Boswell-Foy Associates, Inc., in Fort Worth, thinks that a dining room should be used for more than just meals. He favors an eating area that can double as a library or music room.

In a dining room with a long rectangular or oval table, Foy likes to gather three chairs at one end and place the others against the walls.

"Then put some magazines, a basket of flowers, a pretty piece of sculpture or whatever else appeals to you at that same end of the table, and change the decoration every few days," he says.

Such an arrangement, he believes, will "create an atmosphere where someone will feel free to sit at the table, read a magazine, have a soft drink and enjoy the area at any time of day."

Judy Winger, ASID associate with Paschall-Winger Interiors of Dallas, thinks that versatility in a dining room should mean that the area can be as attractive and comfortable with casual dinnerware and accessories as with formal table settings.

"Of course, people like to have a room nice enough to use their fine china and silver, but they need to remember that there are a lot of gala things you can do with pretty pottery, placemats, wicker baskets and other casual things."

Ms. Winger adds that the ideal dining room "should not be so formal that it forbids use on an everyday basis or so big that it overpowers an intimate dinner for two.

"If a dining room is too overdone, the owner isn't going to think about using the pottery in there for a festive breakfast," she says.

Several interior designers like to achieve versatility in a dining room through the use of several small tables instead of one large one.

Frank H. Guse, ASID, of Frank H. Guse Associates, Inc., in Fort Worth, designed a table for his own home that can be used in two different ways — as a single large rectangle or divided into two smaller squares.

Lighting is an especially important consideration when you plan to vary the location of your tables, reminds Guse.

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Above: Designed by Barbara Vessels; this Dallas dining room is set in the middle of an atrium garden and makes for interesting dining, both at night and during the day.

Right: As in other rooms, carpet and wall-paper patterns can be mixed and matched effectively in the dining room.

Eat (continued)

"You almost have to use recessed lighting in several different parts of the room. You certainly can't plan on a chandelier in the center of the room if you don't always intend to have a table under it."

Fort Worth's Minton-Corley, Inc., recently completed a versatile dining room — using a permanent round table and 12 permanent chairs — for a couple that entertains a great deal. Two round folding tables and a set of handsome lucite folding chairs are added for larger parties. All of the tables are tied together by a wardrobe of matching cloths.

Joe Minton of the design firm thinks that the dining room ought to be one of the most dramatic rooms in the house.

"It's not a room that you stay in for long periods of time, like a bedroom or living room, so it can be a little more glamorous. You can use a lot of color and pattern in the dining room, because you won't be in there enough to get tired of it."

He adds, however, that it's important to coordinate the color and pattern of the dining room decor with the china and other tableware that will be used.

Deborah Rutledge of Trisha Wilson and Associates likes to add drama with exciting dining room walls. Sometimes she uphol-



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Above: Jim and Helen Brockie's dining room, designed by Gay Freeman, has enough space so guests won't feel cramped and there is plenty of room to serve.

Right: Another Minton-Corley dining room in Ft. Worth allows formality without being drab.

"You can use a lot of color and pattern in the dining room, because you won't be in there enough to get tired of it," says Joe Minton of Minton-Corley, Inc.



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sters them, and in other homes she does one wall entirely in mirrors. For high voltage wall effects at low-level prices, she favors a combination of paint and wallcovering divided by a chair rail.

The dining room color scheme should play off the living room tones, she adds, and "a really exciting, dramatic color doesn't cost any more than an ordinary one."

Designer Gene Sparks favors a dining room with an outside view, if possible, because he thinks it adds a relaxing aspect to mealtimes. If the home doesn't already have a pretty view outside the dining room windows, Sparks tries to create one.

He also believes that it's important to design a dining room around how the homeowners plan to use it, down to the specifics of what menus they select and how they serve.

"For example, if the owners like to have seated dinners with French cuisine, they will probably be happiest with a very elegant, formal dining room. If they prefer to entertain with Mexican buffets or Oriental specialties, that may mean an entirely different type of room. I like to know how a room will be used before I start working on it."

Gerald Tomlin, ASID, of Dallas has a per-
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