



DESIGN IDEAS

Fine dining

Dining areas should have a special ambience,
whether for cosy lunches or elegant dinner parties

CREATE JOY

A dining space should bring joy to any mealtime, believes Kit Kemp, creative director of Firmdale Hotels. 'In the apartment I designed in a house in Chelsea, the chairs, covered in a mix of ticking stripes by Robert Kime and Penny Morrison, are each distinguished by different coloured handle tops,' says Kit. Above the table is a Buoy pendant by Akiko Hirai and Claire Norcross and on the wall is a painting by Andrew Johnston. 'Don't be too tempted to have every book standing up on a shelf,' she adds. Horizontal stacks or leaning books diagonally adds more character. 'For a touch of fun, a plaster lion's head peeks out from the bookcase.'

FEATURE ARABELLA YOUNGS



PHOTOGRAPH ALEXANDER JAMES

SOUND DECISION

Something that's not always considered when planning a dining room within a large space is acoustics. One of the fastest ways to undermine visual atmosphere is if sound bounces uncomfortably off lots of flat surfaces rendering conversations difficult. A clever way to address this is by using texture. Curtains are a time-honoured technique, but another trick is to use fabric walling. In this London project by Studio Peake, founder Sarah Peake opted for a linen wallpaper in terracotta. 'We wanted to instil a warm, cosy atmosphere, and the weave and tone of the linen combines with the soft furnishings and hard finishes to create an understated but luxuriously comfortable room,' she says. →



OLD AND NEW

Balancing modern and traditional elements in a manner which feels natural rather than forced is often a challenge but not in the hands of Henriette von Stockhausen, creative director of VSP Interiors. This country house dining room uses saturated colour and modern art with dramatic results. 'This is a rather cool dining room we recently finished,' says Henriette. 'We asked a team of specialist painters to use a soft dragged glaze on the panelling and pick out the edges in distressed gilding. It adds definition to the panels. Then we brought in beautiful leather chairs by Soane Britain, lots of antiques and modern art resulting in a space that will hopefully play host to many fun evenings for our clients.'



SEPARATE WAYS

While there are many arguments for having a kitchen/dining arrangement that will become the central point in a house, there is something special about retreating from the energy and distractions of a kitchen into a separate civilised dining area. Here, antique dealer and designer Max Rollitt has restored the dining room of a 17th-century farmhouse using an oak refectory table as the centrepiece. The room captures the essence of classic country style. On the Jacobean-style panelling hangs a portrait of a Maltese knight. The chairs have been covered in a French 18th-century fabric by Watts of Westminster; the flame stitch pattern and bold colours add a more contemporary note to the scheme.

CONVIVIAL COLOUR

Using a palette of colours from the same tonal family is a sure-fire way to create a room that will always feel welcoming – and will encourage guests to linger long into the night. This is the home of UK-based Australian interior designer Lisa Burdus. ‘The inspiration for the design of this dining room started with the strong colours in the rug,’ explains Lisa. ‘I wanted the warmth of Farrow & Ball Fox Red on the walls and then layered it with various shades of chartreuse and greens. The chartreuse plates were bought while holidaying in Hydra, Greece – I bought them for the fabulous colour – and the plates at the top are antiques, expensive ones, which I sourced in Ravello, Italy. I think of them as an alternative to art, which helps to justify the price!’ →





ROUND UP

There are two elements which will quickly become a problem when trying to fit a dining table into a small room: chair legs and table corners. One way to overcome this is by opting for a round table – a convivial way to eat together – and reducing the number of chairs by swapping in a bench. This is the route that Nicole Salvesen and Mary Graham of Salvesen Graham took when it came to creating this kitchen-diner for American clients in London.

NATURAL CHOICE

Pale greens and blues make a link to outdoors and help liven up a neutral palette. It sets the scene for an inviting space. 'This room was formerly a swimming pool, but it has been transformed into a multi-purpose space for family entertainment,' says Louise Wicksteed, design director of Sims Hilditch who decorated this house for clients in Jersey. 'We took advantage of the room's wall of glazing to bring the outdoors in, using natural materials and tones.'

IN THE CLUB

Pattern on pattern and tented ceilings are not the most conventional choices when it comes to dining spaces but the impact can be magical. Decorator Nina Litchfield was asked by her client to create something reminiscent of the London private members' club 5 Hertford Street for this London home. 'The starting point was the Andrew Martin safari fabric. He brought it to me and I loved the idea,' she says. 'Once we had the layout defined, we decided on a dark vibrant green for the woodwork. I suggested the red and white striped banquette.'

PHOTOGRAPHS (ROUND UP) CHRIS HORWOOD; (IN THE CLUB) DEAN HEARNE; (ONE OFF) ALEXANDER JAMES



ONE OFF

Houses should be entirely personal to their owners, so says Katie Glaister, co-founder of K&H Design. She has used this mantra for her own house in south London where her double-height kitchen dining room acts as a canvas to display some of her favourite things, many of which were made by talented craftspeople. The result creates a series of talking points for guests in whichever direction they look. 'My old refectory table was hand-painted by Rosie Tatham and decorated with flowers from the garden,' explains Katie. 'Resin jewels on the spindles of the banister and mezzanine rail were handmade in London by Margit Wittig.' →



MODERN MANNERS

Finding a midpoint between a very traditional setting and contemporary style is a delicate balancing act. Carefully chosen fabric will go a long way to bridging the gap. 'This property is set in beautiful countryside and it is from there we drew our inspiration and chose the leafy Lee Jofa Arley fabric for the window treatments,' says Liv Wallers, co-founder of interior design studio Yellow London who designed this scheme. 'The floor, table and chairs were very dark oak, so we chose to pull out the aqua and gold yellows from the fabric and bring them into the chair upholstery. This helped brighten the room and make the chairs pop and, with the aid of the geometric fabric, give a more modern feel.'

PHOTOGRAPH MATT CLAYTON



SIT DOWN

A well-made dining table will happily wear the marks of family life through countless suppers and celebrations, homework and home moves. It will evolve as a record for the next generations to remember loved ones and make their own history for the future, so believes interior designer Nicola Harding. This dining area is located off the kitchen in a country house project she recently completed. The natural oak 'Tuck In' dining table and pendant lighting fixture are part of her new range of furniture and furnishings, Nix by Nicola Harding. 'We like to create impact and interest by using pairs of pendant lights over dining tables,' says Nicola. 'It creates softer lighting when in use, and a design statement during the day.'

ALL-PURPOSE

Dispensing with a traditional dining room table will help create that multi-purpose space so many houses require. 'We created this dining space in the often-overlooked rear reception room of this Victorian villa in Hove,' says interior designer Emma Milne. 'The aim was to provide a flexible space that could be used for intimate dining, but also games afternoons, cocktail hour and long lazy lunches.' She describes the high ceilings, fireplace and bay window as 'an architectural gift'. So, she focused on mood using lighting, texture in the flooring and soft furnishings, and comfortable but classic furniture. 'My favourite element is the antique cupboard we sourced from Battersea Antiques Fair,' she adds. 'It's used to house the drinks tray and table mats.' →





FAMILY TIME

Kitchen-diners in family homes are the hardest working of spaces given they need to cater for so many needs. Keeping the design simple but elegant means it can be upgraded with decorative tableware for special occasions but can also be swept clear for homework and family dinners. This home in London was designed by Studio Ashby in collaboration with architectural studio Cousins & Cousins.

BROKEN PLAN

After years of open-plan living, there has been some noticeable creep of a trend to section off kitchen areas to hide clutter. Where a separate pantry is not possible, glazing is a good solution. 'In this London home, we wanted a subtle separation between pantry and kitchen,' says Claire Sa, co-founder of De Rosee Sa. 'We kept colours and materials the same so the kitchen and pantry read as one, but general paraphernalia could be kept out of the main space.'

HARMONIOUS MIX

Mixing and matching periods of furniture and art can create interest without a room shouting too loudly. This is what interior decorator Veere Grenney conjures in this room for a 1970s house in London. The bespoke table, which was designed in house, is a take on a Maison Jansen original. To this, he's added Regency chairs with pleated skirts in a stripe by VGA. The 1960s Stilnovo pendant is by Gaetano Sciolari. There is a banquette in Veere's Verandah fabric. The walls and ceiling have been painted in different colours and finishes (gloss on the walls, matt on the ceiling) which adds to the layered feel.

PHOTOGRAPHS (FAMILY TIME) KENSINGTON LEVERNE, STYLING OLIVIA GREGORY;
(BROKEN PLAN) ASTRID TEMPLER



PHOTOGRAPH MAX BURKHALTER

BLUE SKY

Baby blue isn't the first colour that comes to mind for a dining room but in this 1980s apartment in Manhattan it strikes a perfect note. Inspired by the views of the sky from the windows of the tall building, interior decorator Rachel Chudley brought some of those colours and themes into the room itself using an almost dreamy cloudy colour on the walls with the pale marble on the table. 'I would call this style modern baroque,' says Rachel, referencing the baroque-style shape of the table and chairs; these are covered in Schumacher's Beaufort Awning Stripe fabric. 'I love drama and narrative. Experimenting with interesting combinations, playing with contrasts and bringing unexpected touches.' →



SIMPLY SOPHISTICATED

Industrial meets refined luxury in a deceptively simple scheme by Banda which uses natural materials such as leather, linen and mohair to add softness. 'In this West Village apartment, the dining space forms the heart of the design,' says Nicola Sherbon, head of design. 'Our brief was a scheme that was in keeping with the location and industrial heritage of the building hence we kept the exposed ceiling and metal-framed windows. The Apparatus Lariat light gives a wonderfully organic and industrial look and draws the eye into the concrete coffer volume as does the Love House New York custom Downing Street dining table.' Around the table are Spanish Fredericia chairs in a smoked oak finish.

Insider insight

Experts share tips for creating inviting dining spaces

DINING ROOM EVOLUTION Some have heralded the end of the dining room as social lives become less formal. Others believe there remains a place for decanting to a room that's only used for special occasions. In this scenario, think about adding a bar area to the room. There are other options, too. 'A formal dining room is not needed but having different places around the house and garden where you can dine adds so much to a dinner party,' says interior designer Octavia Dickinson. 'Be it moving everything off your hall table and using that for an evening with lots of candles, or a secret part of your garden.'

ROUND OR RECTANGLE When it comes to deciding between a round, rectangle or lozenge-shaped dining table, it's a question of taste and space, believes Simon Temprell, interior design manager at Neptune. 'Round tables are better for conversation, but they take up more space. Rectangular tables make better use of space but make sure you allow a minimum of 70cm around the table to push back dining chairs,' he says. 'Round tables create a lovely sense of unity providing the amount of people matches the scale of the table,' adds furniture designer Alfred Newall. 'Bigger isn't always better. You want to be close enough to your friends or guests to hear what they are saying.'

ZONE IT The best way to ensure that a dining room can work within the context of a large living room and kitchen is to go back to the basics and think about zoning. A rug underneath the table is always a good technique to define the space (and will also help with acoustics). 'Also make sure the table is well dressed

and has its own proper lighting scheme,' adds Melissa Hutley, co-founder of design studio Hutley & Humm.

LIGHT UP Lighting is perhaps the most important element to a dining room and the route to generating the right atmosphere. 'Whether it be an intimate space or something grander, table illumination sets the tone for any dining experience,' says Lee Broom, founder of the eponymous lighting and furniture company. 'For me, the crowning glory of any dining room is its light fixture. I always suggest you go big, regardless of the space. The only thing you need to consider is height. It should be hung low above the table but not low enough that it obscures fellow diners.'

SMALL SPACES Size is no limit to atmosphere, say most designers, so when decorating a smaller room use it as an opportunity to create drama. 'Dark colours work well in dining rooms, and a soft sheen on the walls helps to reflect candlelight,' says Simon. 'Paint the ceiling the same colour for a cocooning effect.' Mirrors are a time-tested technique – they can help open up the space, reflect candlelight and bounce light around. 🕯

“WALL LIGHTS CAST A SYMPATHETIC LIGHT OVER A DINNER PARTY, ESPECIALLY WHEN MIXED WITH CANDLES”

MELISSA HUTLEY, co-founder of interior design studio Hutley & Humm

THE SOURCEBOOK: DINING ROOMS

JULIAN CHICHESTER
Furniture maker whose contemporary designs are inspired by the past but with an eye on the future and a particular emphasis on using interesting finishes.

MOLTENI & C
Leading Italian furniture brand known for its striking modern designs and interesting collaborations with the likes of Patricia Urquiola and others.

HEAL'S
A classic go-to for well-designed pieces, in particular its range of dining chairs in variety of classic styles including the Carl Hansen & Søn Wishbone Chair.

LOAF
Known for its range of handmade kitchen tables in a choice of styles including French, zinc-topped, solid and painted wood (many of which are extendable).