



Unused To Unbelievable: Five Trends To Help Spice Up Your Formal Dining Room

These tips allow homeowners to make their dining rooms not only beautiful, but also usable.

Troy Kehoe
09/18/2017

For many homeowners, formal dining rooms are like foreign countries. They are often beautiful and elegant. Happy memories are made there. But the visits are rare.

The room simply sits and collects dust in between family holidays and the occasional dinner party. But, it doesn't have to! Even without a full five-course meal, dining rooms can serve as complementary spaces to the rest of a home. And, the style included in them can say a lot about a homeowner's true personality.

“Formal dining rooms are becoming a more sought-after luxury, especially in big city

dwellings, but the identity of the room is changing,” said Kalina Todorova, Global Visual Merchandising Manager for BoConcept, the Danish-founded global retail furniture franchise with nearly 300 locations across 60 countries. “Open plan living, dining and kitchen spaces are the mainstream now, so a separate formal dining area is increasingly only found in single-family houses. Even in those spaces, formal dining areas are now being more utilized, and can serve different purposes, from casual dining to home office, a place for kids to do their homework or the more traditional formal dining and entertaining for guests. In other words: the formal dining room is not as formal as it once was.”

But, even as a practical space, the design aspects of the room are still important. Below are five of the latest trends that can help make that traditionally elegant space more practical, while also updating the look to a more modern design.

Big and Solid

Formal dining rooms present the perfect chance for homeowners to make a bold statement, and that’s causing many to choose to go big. In most dining spaces, the table becomes the focal point of the room, so it’s the perfect place to make your mark.

“Large tables are a growing statement,” Todorova said. “Solid wood tops combined with concrete or metal legs create a more modern look and are really growing in popularity. Upholstered dining chairs are also essential in a formal dining setting, but they can also be simplified with modern metal bases as a design statement.”

Increasingly, furniture pieces are intentionally mismatched in order to create a more eclectic look. Rustic elements are also growing in popularity and can serve as perfect accents to the overall vibe of the room.

Accent the Kitchen

Most formal dining rooms sit just off of the kitchen area, and, as such, flow between the two rooms is important.

“There is a big appreciation for modern, sleek design in both the dining room and the kitchen, and the trend for that flow is simplified, yet sophisticated,” Todorova said. “The use of white cabinets and a lot of gray tones create monochrome settings enriched by marble or quartz tops. Big islands and a lot of enclosed storage help to keep the look clean and organized. Accents in brass or steel are used for handles and light fixtures. These are themes that can help streamline the flow from one room into the other.”

Light the Way

As the trend shifts from formal, stuffy settings to a more elegant, yet functional design, opulent crystal chandeliers or intricate golden fixtures no longer define formal dining rooms. Instead, homeowners are making their own statements with one-of-a-kind, unique lighting options.

“The chandelier is considered the centerpiece of a formal dining room, and lighting should still be a focal point, but the look should be updated,” said Todorova. “Brass, copper or crystal can still make the perfect statement, but in a more modern design. Large artwork helps elevate the look of the room as well.”

Customized lighting solutions from manufacturers like [Buckingham Interiors + Design](#) can also allow for a unique and personalized touch, and leave guests with a lasting impression of the room.

Formal, But Functional

Gone are the days when formal dining rooms were just for show. Today, the room is expected to be more beautiful and usable.

“A single dining space dictates a style that can be functional for everyday use and at the same time easily transformed into a formal setting,” Todorova said. “Here we often see extendable dining tables as they are practical for everyday use and allow easy flow in the space. That offers flexibility that can be extended and accommodate more seating when needed. We’re also seeing the lighter, more modern look replace the traditional dark and moody metropolitan setting.”

Make It Feel Like Home

The rise of popular design trends like the Danish-inspired “hygge” movement allows for the inspired use of lighting to help create a specific mood in what has traditionally been a cold and even stuffy formal space.

“Hygge is a state of being,” said Todorova. “It is about creating happy moments, cozy spaces and spending time with friends and family. The dining room is the perfect place to entertain and share moments in a casual ambiance. Tea lights surrounding a vase with flowers with natural elements nearby or warm blankets in a basket in the corner are little things, but they help make the space feel welcoming.”