

HOW-TO TIPS

**Illuminate Your Space**

The soft glow of a new chandelier can transform and complete the look of your dining space with ease, says MaryAnne Dery, owner of Casual Concepts in Rochester. But if you're stuck to the rule about centering your lighting above your dining table and are frustrated by the placement you're forced into as a result, consider moving your ceiling lighting fixture. "With a bit of time and a qualified electrician, you can move or place one or more lighting fixtures exactly where you want them, allowing for a better table position," says Dery.

**Functional Color**

Once your table and chairs are in place, continue adding your own personality to the space with washable placemats in trendy colors. "You selected your table for the beauty of its wood grain and its unique finish. It is perfectly suited to everyday use so don't fuss with a tablecloth. Instead, add color with easy care placemats and matching or contrasting table runners like our Chilewich mats," suggests Dery.

**New Heights**

Take your dining experience to a new height. Consider elevating your table to a 36" height and add 24-26" counter stools. This is fast becoming very popular with homeowners, according to MaryAnne Dery, owner of Casual Concepts in Rochester. "This is a new trend that is rapidly gaining steam and offers a new height to the traditional dining table," she says. "At six inches higher than the standard chair, the counter stool and table are a comfortable alternative." Flexible enough to provide additional seating at your kitchen counter or island, most all tables, counter stools and even benches, can be ordered in this new, elevated height.

Not sure how the counter height options fit in? Check out Casual Concepts' website for a handy HOW-TO guide for measuring for bar stools and counter stools, plus tips for spacing diners at the counter or table at www.casualconceptsinc.com.

HOW-TO

Create the Perfect Dining Space

Your dining space is the heart of your home. It's where your family meets to share meals, discuss and debate topics and ideas, plan vacations and celebrations and entertain guests and loved ones. Here, the children study and do homework, enjoy snacks and play games.

"Regardless of your family size or makeup, your dining space is where everyone gathers," says MaryAnne Dery, owner of Casual Concepts of Rochester. "Together with your kitchen, your dining area is the most important feature of your home."

Coming home

Our economy has encouraged more homeowners to discover or re-discover their love of cooking and home entertaining, with 68% of adults reporting a change in their dining habits and 51% cooking and eating at home more often rather than dining out, according to ApplianceMagazine.com.

Functional beauty

Whether you are completing a kitchen remodel by adding new cabinets and countertops or just upgrading appliances, incorporating a functional and attractive dining space is the



perfect way to celebrate and express your individual character. In fact, synergy between kitchen and dining spaces is critical for today's homeowners, says a study by the National Kitchen and Bath Association.

"People recognize the importance of

complementing their kitchens with equally beautiful and functional dining spaces, and they are coordinating their furniture with their cabinets and flooring to create a highly customized look that is unique to their home," says Dery.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

What are the hottest colors and finishes for tables and chairs right now?

"Our number one finish combination is a lighter tone on the table top to coordinate with your cabinet or floor finish, blended with the pedestal or leg in a contrasting tone such as black or chocolate," says Dery.

Another popular look is a heavily distressed gray finish as well as antique cherry and maple finishes.

"A matte or satin finish with smooth color tones is a very contemporary look, especially when paired with a highly stylized chair, while a distressed look is vintage and absolutely perfect for a busy family with small children because everyday wear simply deepens the finish's beauty," Dery says.

12 STEPS TO YOUR PERFECT DINING SPACE

1 First, measure the entire room and create a diagram of all the space's elements. Remember to include entrances, windows, counters and existing chandelier or overhead lighting.

2 Collect color samples or materials from elements of the room that you do not intend to change, like counter and cabinet surfaces. Don't forget rug, wall covering and window treatment colors or patterns.

"Remember to bring these

on your shopping trip so your design professionals can guide you through your selection process," suggests Dery.

3 Take digital photos of the space on your camera or phone. Include all angles of the room, plus other rooms of your home so your design professional can get an idea of your style preferences.

4 Browse design magazines for furniture and décor inspiration. Cut out photos and bring them with you when you shop.

5 Determine how many adults and children you'd like to accommodate daily, and if you plan to expand to entertain guests. This will help guide you as you choose your table size and shape, and whether you want to add an extension leaf or two, says Dery.

6 Consider your desired table shape: rectangular, oval, round, square or even boat-shaped. Open your mind to suggestions when you talk with your design professional. Most likely, you will be able to improve upon your current table shape for added functionality and beauty.

7 Select the leg or pedestal style that will work best for your desired table and for the room. "Pedestals work well for ease in adding more people to a table or in a small dining space, whereas legs add more stability to the end of the table," says Dery.

8 Choose a chair style. There are endless options! For a newer look, incorporate a mix of upholstered chairs on the ends of a rectangular table, with wood back chairs on the sides, or even a bench or banquette on one side.

9 Pick fabric or wood for your chair seats. Bring in samples of existing color tones, window treatments or rug samples to help in the selection of your new chair fabric. "With today's advancements in fabric protection, you will never have to resort to grandma's plastic seat covers for your chairs," Dery says.

10 Choose a finish option for your table and chairs. If you have hardwood floors or wood cabinets, bring in a sample so you can match or complement your finish options to these elements. For example, your tabletop can match your cabinets, while the pedestal and

chairs contrast with a darker color or antique finish.

11 Know what you are buying. "Our dining collections are all from North American manufacturers, made from maple, cherry and birch. All wood surfaces have a catalyzed lacquer finish that is ideal for everyday use and is applied to every inch of the product. This makes the surface non-absorbent and impervious to stains for the life of the piece," says Dery. Also consider your desired surface texture. Do you prefer a smooth matte finish or a highly distressed look, or maybe something in between?

12 Finally, consider other needs of the space. Counter stools for your kitchen island, a hutch or buffet can all be coordinated with your table and chairs for a complete look.

