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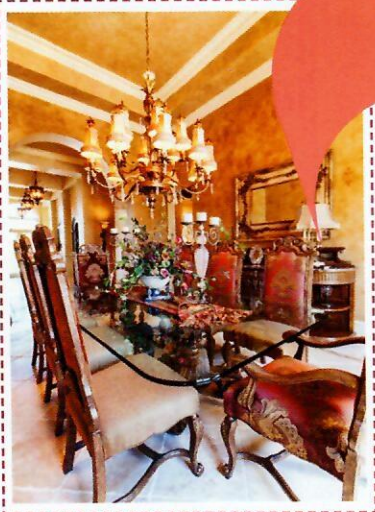
# Change Up Your Dining Room

When I was a young girl our dining room was very formal. The table shined, the crystal and silver sparkled, the china glistened. The room was traditional, off putting, and a bit scary.

BY: STARR MILLER

## I WAS SUPPOSED TO DRESS NICELY

and practice what I learned in "White Gloves and Party Manners." Think "Downton Abbey" minus the formalwear. My parents grew up in the '20s and '30s. My grandmother had a button on the floor that she could press with her toe to summon the servers. Oh goodness, now I am the server! Where did we take a turn?

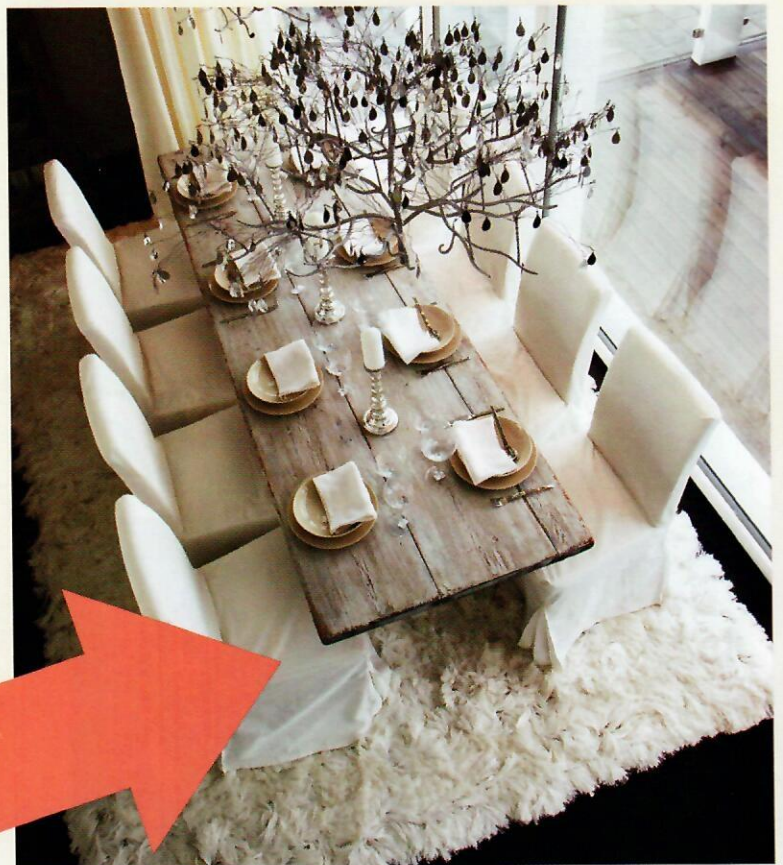


Today, we are more casual, welcoming. Many homeowners are opting for great open spaces with one dining area that works for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and the grand occasions. They are converting their "formal" dining rooms into wine bars, offices, playrooms, music rooms, reading nooks, or libraries.

It is time to move away from the iron decor, Italian-like textured walls, and swagged-window look. Leave that to the "Real Housewives of New Jersey." Keep the window treatments simple. Sometimes less truly is more.



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If you're like me and like a dining room, there are some fun ways to bring them into the 21st century.

- ▶ Change out the formal chairs to more casual slip-covered chairs.
- ▶ Take out the formal mirror, and add an oversized mirror or abstract art.
- ▶ Change out some of the formal chairs and layer in mismatched formal chairs for a more eclectic look.
- ▶ Paint the moulding the same color as the walls.
- ▶ Now, do not mess with heirlooms. But if you really don't like the table or chairs, and your mother's Aunt Suzy won't call the police, paint them or dull them down, or distress them.
- ▶ Pop the ceiling with color, shine, or wallpaper.
- ▶ Take out the formal rug and replace it with a modern variation.
- ▶ Add a bench seat or even a sofa for seating. I like a bench on the side of the table from where you'd peer into the room and or sofa on the opposite side so it does not block your view.
- ▶ Make the chandelier a statement. There are some amazing, organic chandeliers that will absolutely make this room inviting and fun!
- ▶ Wallpaper is not what it used to be. Grasscloth adds texture.
- ▶ Take out the china cabinet, or line the backing with some cool graphic wallpaper.
- ▶ You can add shine, pattern, and interest with the amazing designs that are available today. You can even design your own!