

## The Home Designer

# Dining Room S.O.S.

By Brandon Neff



Photos courtesy Brandon Neff Design

Once the center stage for family, friends and lovers alike, these days the dining room has taken a back seat to more entertainment centric real estate in the home.

As a child, I remember our dining room with its oversized oval table and compliment of wacky neoclassical caned chairs as the epicenter of life for my family. Setting the table, arranging the silverware and the stemware just so, and clearing the china and placemats was a daily ritual that seems like a lost opportunity in households today. The dining room was, for us, not just a place to replenish, but also a chamber for political debates, current events and even a competitive post dessert game of poker.

Do people still use placemats? I hope so.

Maybe it's just my nostalgic memories of gathering all who matter for a hot meal and lively conversation that has me wondering and wistful. In this era of "great rooms" – giant all-encompassing spaces where one cooks, serves, texts and stares at the television – I am reminded of how much is lost at the dinner hour if everyone involved is forever distracted. Retiring to a gracious spot for the purpose of connection is what I'm talking about.

For me, the dining room is sanctuary – it allows you to escape, however briefly, the visual noise and static of the day and really engage with your tribe. It's a place to be heard over the din of cell phones, tweets, apps and tablets and really connect to those around you while sharing in a sensual and galvanizing experience.

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