

*"It's like gray but a little more racy, a little more fun. It's like the crazy aunt of gray."* — Anne Coyle

**LAVENDER**

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not have to mean shades of beige. It's a grounding background color that does not call attention to itself, but allows everything around it to stand out.

"There is an entire world out there of neutral colors that are not beige," said Stephanie Hoppen, author of "Perfect Neutrals: Color You Can Live With." She describes lavender as sophisticated and chic, a color that "works like an absolute dream."

**Going with lavender**

The wide spectrum of lavender — tending toward pink, blue, gray or white — can adapt to almost any color or design style. Paired with warm dark wood finishes, lavender can seem cool and refined. Near a cool pale green, lavender comes across as warm and lively. "It can pick up the qualities of any color," said Chicago designer Anne Coyle. "There's no color that it can't mix with. Lavender is the new neutral."

Coyle says lavender is always her first choice, and it's the color of the walls in her home furnishings store in the Bucktown neighborhood of Chicago. Despite a rotating stock of items in a mix of colors and styles, she says, nothing ever looks bad with the lavender walls. She likes the color with black and white, brown, gray, celadon (a pale green), mustard yellow, contemporary furniture and antiques. "It's like gray but a little more racy, a little more fun," she said. "It's like the crazy aunt of gray."

Stewart recently used a taupey lavender as the principal color in the living room of a client's Georgetown home. She frequently uses the color with cream, gray and taupe, or midnight blue and white. She says the color is a frequent request of young professionals.

Jeannie Tower, a Washington feng shui consultant, says the color not only looks beautiful, but can make you feel good, too. "It's a nesting color," Tower said. "It makes you very content. You want an environment that's calm, surrounded by things that inspire you and make you feel warm and comforted. Lavender will do that."

# Pairing up lavender

*How designers make the most of this neutral*

By **TERRI SAPIENZA**

The Washington Post

"Lavender is really pretty in a modern room with a gray or taupe color," says Sarah Wessel of Washington. She prefers lavender wallpaper and fabrics to paint, which she feels can look cold, and she likes to pair lavender walls with a celadon ceiling, and would take a chance with orange: "kind of crazy, but kind of fun."

"Go really pale or really deep," says Chicago designer Anne Coyle. "Avoid midrange because it tends to look childish." She likes it with modern and antique furnishings, gold frames and dark wood. It pairs beautifully

with brown, celadon, gray, mustardy yellows, and black and white.

"It's a happy color," says New York's Mario Buatta. "It's a beautiful background for women's complexions — particularly brunettes." He thinks it pairs well with blue and white fabrics, apricot, pink and green apple. Be careful with yellows, he cautions, and red can be "a little touchy." He offers this paint recipe for the timid: three parts Lavender Ice, one part Polar White (both from Benjamin Moore). And to women whose men won't consider lavender, this advice: "Most men aren't aware of the color of the room they are in. ... Just don't tell them it's lavender."

Lavender "lends itself to gem colors," such as garnet, sapphire and certain topazes, Washington designer Whitney Stewart says. She likes to use it

with cream and off-white, gray, brown, dusty pink and taupe, and midnight blue and white.

"The best shades are those that have been faded-down, dirtied, weathered," says London designer and author Stephanie Hoppen. "This makes them sophisticated rather than sweet; stylish and never cloying — and far from dull." Her choice for color companions: amethyst and other darker shades of lavender, creamy colors, all the brown shades, and lime green accents.

"Lavender looks great with platinum, silver and greige, but also can be a fantastic ground for a more exotic color adventure when spiced with saffron, magenta and beet juice," e-mailed New York designer Jamie Drake. He would pair it with black and white, and with dark, antique brown furniture.



## EXPERT PICKS FOR LAVENDER

The Washington Post

**Mario Buatta**

**New York designer**

Lavender Ice: one of his favorites  
White Heaven: a bit more blue  
Misty Lilac: a little more pink (All Benjamin Moore)

**Jamie Drake**

**Manhattan designer**

White Heaven: very ethereal  
Lavender Ice: more of a neutral (Both Benjamin Moore)

**Whitney Stewart**

**Washington designer**

Canal: her favorite; leans toward periwinkle  
Hocus Pocus: pushing pink  
Mystic: like a faded lavender flower (All C2)

**Anne Coyle**

**Chicago designer**

Shoreline: reads gray, but it's lavender  
Violet Sparkle: great with black  
Sensitive Tint: very chic (First two Benjamin Moore, third Sherwin Williams)

GANNETT NEWS SERVICE

# Turning tables

*Getting real about the dining room*

By **ANNIE GROER**

The Washington Post

"It's a room that needs to metamorphose," says architect Sarah Susanka, author of six books about living in small, well-designed homes.

For John Straub and his wife, Harriet Adams, that means sleek floor-to-ceiling doors that, when closed, look like minimalist white walls behind a gleaming black table that seats six. With a slight push, the six three-foot panels pivot open to reveal shelves, drawers, a sound system, a desk and a work chair.

"I'm used to an executive desk, so when I have a lot of paperwork, all I have to do is swivel around and spread out on the dining table," Straub says.

The design by Washington architect Simon Jacobson functions so well that Straub gave up the downtown office he used for his work as president of the Future of Russia Foundation. "People come over for dinner and unless we open the doors, they have no idea what's back there."

Susanka has watched this trend grow. "When I started writing in 1996, I observed that most people were building dining rooms because they were supposed to; all the real estate agents and appraisers told them they had to for resale. There are certainly people who still use them, and they should have one. But I would guess that close to

80 or 85 percent of people use them only once a year, for Thanksgiving."

The key, says Susanka, is to make the old dining room serve a new function.

Interior designer Jane Mitchell missed her greenhouse in Connecticut after moving to Loudoun County, Va. So she claimed the neglected dining room in her Round Hill home — with its nine-foot-wide bay window — as a garden staging area. "After Christmas until summer planting time, it's overrun with roses, herbs, hostas, peonies, heirloom vegetables, Virginia native plants, topiary, ferns and a lot of wildflowers."

Architect Robert Bell wanted no part of "the vestigial room used for Thanksgiving, Christmas and weddings" in his Washington home. Instead, he anchored a two-story, skylighted octagonal foyer with a \$56 flea market table upon which mail and keys are tossed. It expands to seat 12 at formal meals or is replaced by rows of chairs for periodic concerts performed around the grand piano in the living room. "In these days of ecology, it's certainly not efficient to have something that takes up the bottom quarter of the first floor," Bell says.

McLean, Va., interior designer Marlies Venute gave one client a rather exotic option in a guesthouse with an antique Victorian billiard table that flips over for dining. "After a lovely meal, the dishes are cleared, cognac is served, the table is turned over and the game commences."

# A chill-out room

By **ANNIE GROER**

The Washington Post

Janice Kanter often found herself writing bills or setting up her laptop in her dining room — "at the most uncomfortable table and chairs" in her Arlington, Va., home.

The cozy space right off the kitchen has great light and a view of the living room fireplace, so she liked to settle in there rather than at a much larger table that seats eight in the family room at the back of the house.

After more than a decade of walking through the front door and seeing a dining room never used for dining, Kanter — vice president of Theodore's contemporary furniture store in Georgetown — decided to create a "nestier, chill-out room" filled with stylish furnishings and art.

She jettisoned a dining table and six chairs for two

generous wing chairs, custom-ordered with legs four inches higher than normal so she could lounge or pull them up to work at a small round pedestal table. A low "totem bench" holds African carvings, a galvanized steel bookcase displays design magazines, and a potted palm adds color and texture. Recessed lights make it easy to read or write; a floor lamp sets the mood.

Kanter says a number of her clients are remaking their homes to fit their lifestyles. Young condo dwellers with limited space use barstools at kitchen counters for casual dining and buy oversize coffee tables and floor cushions for entertaining. For people with larger homes, "there is no living room and no dining room, just knocked-out, eat-in kitchens and a great room that can accommodate a table."