

Entertainment Tonight

Design with guests in mind

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PHOTOS BY ROBERT BEAVERSON



Carefully chosen wall colors play off the rooms' artwork and subtly designate smaller spaces within the Salingers' larger entertaining space.

Opening up the staircase and carrying the mahogany floors onto the stair treads creates a space that flows.



Looking forward to entertaining in your home over the holidays? Then plan ahead to maximize your use of space.

Total redesign

Bob and Jane Salinger redesigned their home's public areas to ensure great entertaining. Their original floor plan sandwiched their large kitchen between a diminutive dining room and a breakfast area. A wall separated the living room from the kitchen. Small archways led from the living room to the dining room and breakfast area, creating congestion at parties.

Working with Scott Wilson of Wilson Woodcrafts, the Salingers dispensed with their breakfast area, moving the kitchen into that space and enlarging the dining room at the other end. They widened the two entries into the living room, on one side opening up the staircase to the second floor for a more open feel. The couple chose Santos mahogany floors throughout to tie the three spaces together, carrying the wood to the second floor on stair treads. To complement the couples' art pieces, wall colors in each room and handmade tiles set in the kitchen's glass tile backsplashes keep everything warm and inviting, yet airy and open.



The Salingers' remodel opened up all their first-floor living space for entertaining, including the outdoor terrace.

"It's all very organic feeling," states Jane. "We call it our New York loft."

Now when the couple entertains, guests mingle throughout the space, even spilling out onto a large terrace — complete with hot tub — through new dining room French doors. Jane favors the curving honed-granite bar between the kitchen and dining room. Invariably, guests cozy up to snitch an hors d'oeuvre and chat with the cook. The mini-bar in the dining room is a great place from which to serve drinks, whether guests congregate inside or out.

Designer's advice

When designer Doug Zander of Zander's Interiors entertains, he considers how people move through the space. "People end up in the kitchen," he says. He encourages guests to move from place to place by positioning food stations throughout his home. He usually sets the bar up in his four-season porch.

Zander urges homeowners to consider a few things when planning their space. While a large family room/kitchen is great for entertaining, a secondary preparation spot — complete with sink and cold storage — makes good sense for those who host large parties. For instance, designate a corner of the family room as a bar area.

What's your entertaining style: Casual? Formal? Business? Family? Zander suggests choosing new furniture that does double-duty and enhances that style. Instead of a

traditional sofa table, choose one that comes with leaves. That way, you can open it up and use it as a primary or secondary serving area during a party.

Cater to the caterer

For homeowners who host catered events, setting up a secondary prep center in the garage just makes good sense. Or consider putting a garbage disposal in your laundry sink, and maximize the room's countertop space by choosing undermount or stackable washer/dryer units. You'll have a great place for your caterer to use.

"We need a 'blind' to bring food out to the guests from," explains Jim Bescette, co-owner of Queen Anne's Catering. "We need a place to hide the product."

Since most guests gravitate to the kitchen, Bescette likes to leave it open for mingling. Likewise, he tries to leave the dining room for diners to sit at the table. He picks a separate, inconsequential space to set up a buffet table, and establishes a bar area away from the buffet in its own warm, cozy area.

"You're setting up traffic patterns," he explains.

Most home parties, he says, are either drop-off service or buffet service. But if you want to add a touch of formality to a party, consider having servers circulate with hors d'oeuvres.

"It provides more ambiance and class," Bescette concludes. ■

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