

Most Popular Current Trend: Casual Living

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Long gone are the days of the untouchable living room lined with plastic runners and furnished with white sofas covered in plastic for fear of staining them. You can practically hear the cries, "We will live in museums no more!" Today the hottest trend in decorating is the concept of casual living. While this does mean a turn towards washable fabrics and comfortable couches that people actually lounge on, it also means that every space is useable and comfortable. From the deck to the living room, guest room to the kitchen, every space is now about entertaining in comfort and style.

An extremely popular trend – and with good reason! – is the use of outdoor space to be used as an outdoor living room. Patios, decks and clearings in the garden are now being furnished as a lounge or an outdoor dining area fit for a real dinner party from cocktails to nightcaps. Patio furniture sets sold today are not limited to the iron garden bistro set or the wood table and umbrella. Now these sets are not only designed to withstand the elements but also to entertain your loved ones with comfort and ease.

Another case in point: the open floor plan. This recent trend intermingles the space between the kitchen, living and dining rooms into something resembling a great room. Entertaining is the emphasis in this kind of space, which means one can expect a decorative wine rack on the counter as easily as barstools to pull up to the island in the kitchen. Country kitchen accessories are often seen in this setting as they are both functional and decorative. In the dining area, a large table with a Polish pottery bowl containing fresh fruit or a hanging candle chandelier can create a bit of casual intimacy in such an open space with ease. These touches focusing on entertaining also speak of a touch of luxury – a nice bottle of wine with friends while dinner cooks and then eating the meal under the warm glow of candlelight.

An additional fine example of this trend is the integration of children's areas among the common areas of the home. Many homes now feature a corner in the living or family room that has an activity station for the children including creative kids' toys paired with children's furniture that coordinates with the rest of the room. This design is an excellent compromise where the children of the home can join the social gatherings without instantly upsetting an adult conversation and are not tucked out of sight either. Mini set-ups, such as a child's size couch and table that coordinate with the style of the room are a cute yet fashionable detour from the typically plastic and primary-colored options normally decorating nurseries, playrooms and children's bedrooms everywhere.

The spirit and key to executing a casual living feel in your home is to pair function with form. Practical and useful does not have to mean devoid of charm. In fact, when evaluating any piece for your home, make sure it meets at least two if not all three of

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these criteria: that is it useful, that it is beautiful, and that you absolutely love it. This creed will keep your design casual enough to use regularly but beautiful and inspirational enough to give your home some beautiful and personal touches.

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