



Author Natalie Walton says lighting helps to define a space, imbue it with personality, and add a sculptural form.

'Dine in style' with Natalie Walton

Abbey Halter ♦ June 19, 2022



This is an edited extract from *Style: The Art of Creating a Beautiful Home* by Natalie Walton published by Hardie Grant Books, RRP \$60. Photography by Chris Wames.

"The art of creating a beautiful home" all comes down to style, says interior designer and stylist Natalie Walton. In her latest book, **Natalie** breaks down styling barriers to teach readers how to find your unique, personal style. Revealing tips and tricks of the trade, *CW* shares an extract from this timeless book to show how to enhance and transform your home dining space.

The dining room is where we come together as a family and connect with friends and loved ones. However, it is often neglected when it comes to making the most of our home. It doesn't need to be as hard-working and functional as a kitchen, yet this space is where we gather when the meal is ready. This is where we sit down and relax, break bread, and make memories. It is often the room that bookends our day and is an important touchpoint in our lives.

The dining room is also where we entertain and host many of the most important celebrations of family and community life and is the backdrop to hospitality and generosity. We can learn to elevate this important space.

Increasingly, the dining table is also where we work and build businesses and livelihoods. It can oscillate from the busyness of family life to a quiet spot to pause before the day starts, or at its end with a warm drink and reflective mind. How we create this most important space comes down to what we value most.

Consider the frame

The architecture of the space informs how best to enhance your dining area. If your table is positioned near windows or glass doors to the outside, avoid competing with the greenery of outdoors. Light bouncing off branches and leaves can create a busy backdrop so consider keeping it simple inside. Embracing a neutral palette can help subdue the space. Add a mix of lighting sources for ambience – a table lamp on the sideboard, candles on the table. Be attentive to the view from each seat and ensure there's something to create interest from every vantage point – an artwork, a display, a window, a plant, or a floral arrangement.

Create intimacy

Pendant lights are an impactful decorating device, creating a focal point and a sense of intimacy. While they lift the eye upwards and make a room feel more impressive, rugs can help anchor the space, making it warm and inviting. Dark walls, warm textures, and earthy tones all contribute towards an intimate feeling. In winter, add felt seat-pads or sheepskin rugs to chairs for warmth. When warm weather returns, swap candles for fresh blooms from the garden and arrange seasonal fruit en masse in large ceramic or wooden bowls.

Set the scene

A table display doesn't need to be overly fussy to create a beautiful moment. Books, bowl, candles, ceramics, flowers, fruit, and plants all contribute towards the ambience. Focus on a few key pieces and build the layers as you would for any vignette, introducing a mix of heights, forms, and textures. Work within a constrained colour palette to keep it cohesive. Contain everything on a large rustic chopping board or tray if you prefer to move the display at mealtimes.

Work zones

Many successful businesses have started at the family dining table. If you don't have space for a separate home office, your dining room is probably performing a double duty. Integrate beautiful furniture with storage possibilities that allow you to hide away device and office equipment when not in use. A sideboard or cabinet can perform this function and recede seamlessly into the room. Opt for comfortable chairs or add cushions. Use baskets as low-maintenance storage to corral office supplies, allowing you to transition easily from daytime work to evening meals. Benches and stools can double as places to store reference books, too.



The dining room is often the space that bookends our day, says author and stylist, Natalie Walton.