

# Drama in the Dining Room

Blackband Design Creates a Formal Open-Concept Dining Room for a Client Who Loves to Entertain

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PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF BLACKBAND DESIGN

**It can be tempting to preserve high-style** formal dining rooms for occasional celebrations. Exquisite finishes, delicate fabrics, and fine china are not made for everyday wear and tear. But if fashionable decor, elevated cuisine, and full-scale entertaining are important to your day-to-day lifestyle, a formal dining room should be, too.

Creating a formal-yet-functional dining room with the hostess homeowner was the task for Wendy Blackband, designer and co-owner of Irvine, California-based Blackband Design. The homeowner, Julie Rosenthal, already had a vision of the new aesthetic for the Coto de Caza, California, home she shares with her husband and their four daughters. After working with California Remodeling Inc. on a complete remodel, adding wainscoting, eighteen-inch travertine flooring, crown molding, beadboard, and a coffered ceiling to the dining room, the Rosenthals welcomed Blackband to transform the scattered elements into a cohesive design.

“We really wanted it to stand out because it’s the first room you see,” Blackband says of the open dining room. Located just beyond the foyer, this striking space is also connected to the living room via a pass-through, making it imperative to garner attention and flow well with the style of the entire home, which Blackband describes as Coastal Elegance.

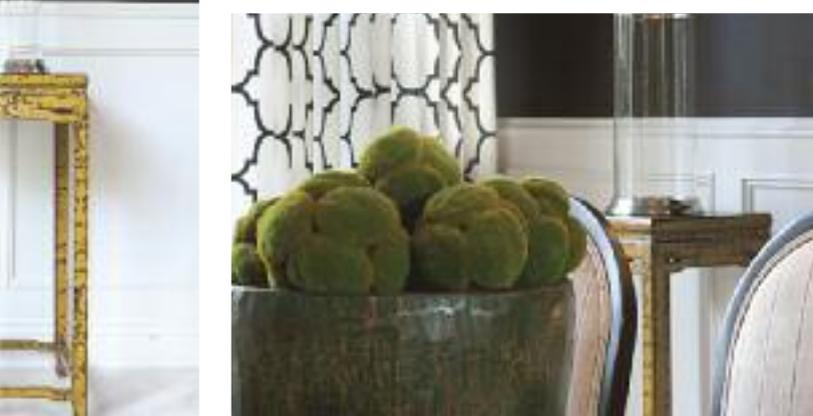
The nearby living room is dressed in varied shades of blue, red, and green, with only simple accents of black and white; conversely, the dining room emphasizes the dramatic neutrals. “There is some color in [the formal dining room], but not a lot,” says Blackband. “I think it’s a really

understated room with beautiful contrast.” The walls are bathed in Sherwin-Williams’s Black Bean and White Shadow paint colors, and the travertine floor is topped with a sisal rug. Pops of color are introduced through green moss balls and faux red coral pieces and wall art. For more contrast, they introduced custom drapery, Riad in Jet, by Kravet. “The drapery really makes that room,” says Blackband. “There is so much wood in the room that [we] really needed something to soften the edges, and that’s what the drapery absolutely does.”

The designer made custom furniture pieces to appropriately fit the space and the homeowners’ entertaining needs. The substantial black alder dining set, which provides seating for eight people, includes streamlined side chairs covered in Schumacher’s Aran Linen Stripe in the flax colorway. The host and hostess wingback chairs are covered in white canvas, and the existing Visual Comfort chandelier completes the vignette. Rosenthal’s personal keepsakes and functional dishware are housed in a stately black hutch with painted shelving. Soft interior lighting effectively highlights the simple-yet-eclectic display of black-and-white patterned pieces with eye-catching splashes of red, white, and silver items. The homeowners’ antique sideboard is adorned with chic candlesticks and family photos, but, in the name of function, that can all be easily swept away to allow for serving or buffet space.

Although the family of six dines regularly in a more casual nook that Blackband also helped design, the formal space still sees many meals. Durable fabrics and furnishings, a practical floor plan, and exceptional decor ensure that this formal dining room will never gather dust. ■





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: In the formal dining space, guests are treated to dinner and a view. The room is open to the rest of the well-decorated home and also looks out onto a beautiful outdoor pool and bar area. To add a splash of color to the mostly neutral room, Blackband introduced a simple collection of green moss balls as the table centerpiece. A side stand in a muted chartreuse shade hosts a simple hurricane vase; framed drawings of red coral complete the vignette.