

Great Home Design

Bar Harbor Beige? Oval Room Blue? Green Tea?

And 30 Other Colors That Interior Designers Like

BY DENISE KERSTEN

To get an idea of designers' favorite paint colors, look around your grocery store. "People are into all these really nice vegetable colors," says Zoe Kyriacos, an interior designer and architectural color consultant in Takoma Park.

Consider a few current favorites: Duron's **Roasted Red Pepper** and Benjamin Moore's **Chili Pepper**, both deep reds with yellow undertones that have replaced burgundy in libraries and dining rooms. Then there are Farrow & Ball's **Radicchio**, a bold radish, and **Brinjal**, a deep eggplant.

In the '90s, clear colors—such as lime green and tangerine—with contrasting white trim were all the rage, says Mary Douglas Drysdale, a designer in Northwest DC. "They were bright, strong, optimistic colors." The new colors are more muted and earthy, with stronger brown, gray, and yellow influences. Many coordinate better with cream than with white.

Strange as it seems, the turmoil of the past few years has affected which colors are in style, says Dawn Stoecklin, who works on Benjamin Moore's color strategy. Shades of blue, the most conservative color, are popular.

Colors have a longer life span in interior design than in fashion—about ten years—so it's safe to embrace trends. Just remember that the lighting in your home can change how a color looks on the walls. Before you paint, test the color on a wall or a piece of poster board and make sure you like it in daylight and artificial light.

"Never paint anything that you have not lived with for a couple of days," says Nestor Santa-Cruz, a partner with SKB Architecture and Design in Northwest DC.

Some brands offer sample pots or large sheets coated in actual paint, like a giant paint chip.

WARMING TREND

Warm colors—shades with lots of yellow or red—can make a room cheerful or cozy. They're believed to stimulate conversation and appetite, and they brighten spaces that don't get enough natural light.

Warm colors can make a room feel too hot, though, if it gets lots of sunlight. They work better in north-facing rooms than in those with southern exposures.

Red is a traditional choice for dining rooms and studies. In addition to the pepper colors mentioned above, designers like Duron's **Cochineal.** "It's the kind of red you'd expect to see in an English library," says Mathilda Cox, a Northwest DC designer.

Dining rooms don't have to be red. Farrow & Ball's **Cooking Apple Green**, a soft, yellowy color—not sharp like a Granny Smith—got raves from many designers as a dining-room hue. "It's absolutely yummy!" Cox says.

Forget the idea that small rooms need light colors. A dark, rich color—like chocolate brown—can make a room seem less confined. Because it's so dark, chocolate works best where you won't spend too many daytime hours—powder rooms, dining rooms, libraries, and bedrooms. Two favorites: Farrow & Ball's **Wainscot**, a true, rich brown, and **Mahogany**, chocolate with a purple tinge.

GOLDEN HOUR

Gold is another hot color, in subtler shades than the harvest gold of the 1970s. Eric Crowe, director of home decor at the Color Wheel in McLean, says his customers have been pleased with Benjamin Moore's **Concord Ivory** and **Straw.** For a more saturated color, try Benjamin Moore's **Dorset Gold.**

Yellows are inviting and work in big spaces, but "be careful of the lemon factor," says Victoria Neale, a designer in Northwest DC. Farrow & Ball's **Hound Lemon** is a soft, safe shade. Christopher Nutter, a designer for McDonald & Associates in McLean, loves Farrow & Ball's **Citron**, a stronger yellow that needs a big, open room with lots of contrasting trim.

The same goes for Farrow & Ball's **Orangery**, a brownish mustard that several designers praised—with a word of caution. It works best when broken up by built-in bookshelves or used on an accent wall, which is one way to introduce a strong color without overwhelming the room.

COOL BLUES

In light shades, blues are airy and serene; in darker hues they tend to be moody and dramatic.

Deeper blues such as Farrow & Ball's **Oval Room Blue**—a dark aqua—and Benjamin Moore's **Providence Blue** and **Westcott Navy**—both slate blues—are stylish choices. Although conventional wisdom says to avoid blue in kitchens because it isn't appetizing, these shades look great against white cabinets.

Nestor Santa-Cruz recommends these colors in a lacquer finish. "A sheen makes a darker color appear lighter," he says.

Sheree Friedman, a designer in Potomac, likes to balance Benjamin Moore's **Down Pour Blue**, a crisp sky blue, with the warmth of **Berkshire Beige**. She uses **White Diamond** for trim.

Light blues create a peaceful mood in bedrooms, but beware clear blues—even in very pale shades they can look institutional. Blues with some gray, yellow, or red undertones work better. Try Benjamin Moore's **Windmill Wings**, a periwinkle, or **Crystal Blue**, a light blue-green.

Blues also make interesting ceiling colors. Try two designer favorites by Benjamin Moore: **Morning Sky Blue** and **Beacon Gray**, a sky blue with a tinge of gray.

NEUTRAL TERRITORY

Neutral colors—which aren't too warm or too cool—can be soothing. They make great backdrops for colorful art, rugs, or fabrics, and some designers recommend using them in living rooms and other public spaces because everyone likes them.

These shades are deceptively tricky to work with because many have undertones that are hard to see on a paint chip but become dominant once the paint is applied to four walls. Without intending to, you can end up with a pink or green room.

Benjamin Moore's neutral beiges include **Bar Harbor Beige**, **Stone Hearth**, and **Alexandria Beige**. For a safe taupe, try Farrow & Ball's **Old White**, a light shade, or **Mouse's Back**, a true, deep taupe.

Sage green is another nice neutral. Cox recommends Duron's Green Tea.

VISION IN WHITE

Most designers say white is too cold and impersonal to use on walls. But Darryl Carter, a top Washington designer based in Northwest DC, says he uses white on walls when displaying art or when painting small spaces, especially if you can see from one room into the next. It's serene, it reflects light, and it can hide imperfections.

Carter used Benjamin Moore's **Moonlight White**, a very warm white, throughout his house and recommends Benjamin Moore's **Simply White** in a satin finish for trim.

Premixed whites and creams from Benjamin Moore are a good bet for trim and ceilings because they're true neutrals. Designers also recommend Duron's **Shell White.** Another strategy is to use the palest possible version of your wall color on the trim. It will appear white. **W**

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