

HOME DINING RECREATION TRAVEL COMMUNITY HEALTH SHOPPING

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The
Chocolate
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GOOD ENOUGH TO EAT

From creamy finishes to deep, dark hues, chocolate is influencing home furnishings.

A chocolate indulgence doesn't have to be sinful. Forsake the calories and spruce up your home with chocolate-inspired designs instead. From light and frothy mochas to rich and decadent cacaos, these furnishings are a feast for the eyes and satisfy chocolate cravings in a whole new way.

Tips from a Pro

Imagine sitting at a café sipping espresso and tasting chocolate, says Carol Hilton, interior designer and co-owner of **Great Rooms** in Camarillo, and you get a sense of what furniture manufacturers are trying to do when they name colors, patterns, and finishes with evocative food-related words. "Anything that gives us a richer visual image and imparts a familiar feeling to us [is going to be more interesting]," Hilton says. "We look at an object [and its name] brings us pleasure, speaks to our heart."

Though the color brown is certainly not new in home furnishings, today there are more color choices than ever. But all browns (even carobs and chocolates and cocoas) do not necessarily work well together. "Browns have to talk to each other, coexist," Hilton says. "They can be mixed, but not all browns go together." Hilton suggests noticing the underlying tone—either cool (blues and grays) or warm (reds and oranges)—as a start to see what other colors will complement brown. "Reddish tones don't go well with that golden-toned oak table you got 20 years ago," she says.

Dark espresso finishes remain popular in furniture and can work in contemporary, Mediterranean, and transitional designs, Hilton adds. She encourages people wary of anything too trendy to opt for a classic furniture design with a stylish twist so they can "transition from one year or decade to the next."

To avoid a room that's too heavily drenched in chocolate brown, Hilton suggests picking one piece for high impact. Many of her customers are choosing a beautiful credenza or sideboard to support a flat-screen TV rather than a traditional media center or armoire, for example. "Brown is a strong base, but don't put dark brown carpet on a dark brown floor with dark furniture," she says. "[Mix it up] to allow a piece to stand out. Play with wall color to set off [brown] pieces—it allows them to come forward and stand out."

For those who think brown—even chocolate brown—is boring, Hilton mentions the textures found in materials such as hand-scraped, distressed wood, a nubby chenille sofa, and supple leather. "If you're going to just have a brown and beige room, that is boring," she says. "But with brown as your base you can pull in accent colors that resonate beautifully: blues and blue-greens; chartreuses and moss greens; ambers, burnt-oranges, and reds that bring wonderful punch and pop."

Great Rooms sells furniture and home accessories and offers design services from co-owners Hilton and Ann Mulligan. "We don't demand that you take all the old stuff and throw it out," Hilton says. "Keep your favorite pieces [and we'll work to] bring your room to life again."

Great Rooms, 651 Via Alondra, Camarillo, 805-445-9057, www.greatroomsdesign.com; open Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday.



From top: Decadent libations await in the **LISBON BAR** (\$2,799) in Chocolate leather from Peninsula Home Collection. Sweet treats for bare feet: the **FACETS** area rug (from \$409) in Chocolate from the Premiere collection from Shaw. Nathan Anthony makes the scrumptiously streamlined **LAUREN** sofa (\$2,022) in Chocolate linen with white linen welting: a perfect perch for bonbon sampling. *All available at Great Rooms, 651 Via Alondra, Camarillo, 805-445-9057.*

