

LATER LIFE LEARNING TORONTO

NOTE: THIS IS A **FIVE-WEEK** SERIES

SERIES C-367-A: The Dining Room

Fridays at 1:00 pm
January 8, 15, 29, February 5 & 12
(No class January 22nd)

Virtually via Online Zoom Webinar



Lecturer Bio:

John Ota has been involved with architecture and design since 1978, with degrees from Columbia University, the University of Toronto and the University of British Columbia. His bestselling book *The Kitchen* was a 2021 Taste Canada Awards finalist and a 2021 Paris Gourmand Cookbook finalist in the book design category. After working in architecture in Toronto, New York, and Vancouver, and as lead on multiple Ontario Ministry of Culture projects. John now loves to travel the world visiting historic houses, cooking regional food, and meeting people of all backgrounds.

Course Overview:

Some say the dining room is dead. I love to eat, cook and entertain – so I had to find out if this is true. This topic took on special meaning for me because I want to design a new dining room for my wife's significant birthday dinner – a place of perfect dining pleasure. To find inspiration for my new dining room, I travelled the world to find the perfect dining room. In this series of talks I will present a selection of dining rooms owned by famous people in history, reveal the story of their dining rooms, what the dining rooms meant to them and how dining and entertaining affected their lives. I will summarize the features of these spaces so that all of us can incorporate them into our own dining rooms. I will also describe the foods served in these beautiful places.

Format: Each session consists of a 60 to 70-minute lecture, a 10 to 15 minute break and a 30 minute Q and A.

Weekly Outline:

Friday January 8, 2027. - Week One: Early Dining Rooms

Introduction:

The discovery of fire and early dining rooms in Neanderthal caves from 400,000 years ago, Pompeii 70 AD, King Henry VIII Dining Room, Hampton Court Palace, London, England, 1530 and King Louis XIV Dining Room, Versailles, France, 1690.

LATER LIFE LEARNING TORONTO

Feature Dining Room: Nomura Samurai Dining Room, Kanazawa, Japan, 1667.

The traditional Japanese house, garden and dining room places great value on simplicity, seasonal change and natural beauty. This presentation will discuss the architecture of the traditional Japanese house, history of dining in Japan, the importance of nature, Japanese cuisine, seasonal ingredients, visual presentation, dishware, chopsticks as well as Japanese dining etiquette and why Japanese eat on the floor.

Friday January 15, 2027. - Week Two: Regency, Victorian, Edwardian Dining Rooms

Introduction:

During the 19th century in Canada, the elite designed their dining rooms to impress visitors to reflect their wealth, power and good taste in houses such as Campbell House, Toronto, 1820 and at Point Ellice House, Victoria, B.C., 1877. Dinner was served, “a la Francaise” - in the French style with platters of food spread around the table.

Feature Dining Room: Downton Abbey (Highclere Castle), Hampshire, England, 1912.

At Downton, the ritual of dining was less about eating and more about maintaining social relationships within the upper class. Proper etiquette, dinner conversation, dress and demeanor determined if a person would rise up the social status ladder. By the early twentieth century, dinner was served, “a la Russe” - in the Russian style with multiple courses being served by the butler and multiple footmen.

NO CLASS - Friday January 22. 2027

Friday January 29, 2027. - Week Three: The Dining Room of Artist Claude Monet

Introduction:

In the late 19th century, the Impressionist painters revolted against the state-run French salon system of art. It was the beginning of en plein air painting, new paint pigments, scenes of everyday life, colour, light and the painting movement of Monet, Manet, Renoir, Caillebotte and Pissarro.

Feature Dining Room: The Dining Room of Artist Claude Monet, Giverny France, 1910.

The history of Monet's life, his magnificent garden, house, dining room, dishware, silverware, Japanese block prints, the significance of the colour yellow, family, everyday life, lily pad paintings and his love of eating, dining and entertaining his fellow Impressionist painters.

Friday February 5, 2027. - Week Four: 1960's Dining Rooms

Introduction:

Following World War 2, North Americans, experienced a period of rapid growth and prosperity that found its way into the dining room. The Frank Sinatra House, 1958 in Palm Springs, California, set the tone for a care-free ideal of informal dining while the kitchen/dining room of chef Julia Child in Cambridge Massachusetts, gave rise to a new social consciousness and sophistication in French dining.

LATER LIFE LEARNING TORONTO

Feature Dining Room: Jacqueline Kennedy, White House Dining Room, Washington, 1962.

First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy changed dining and home entertaining in 1962 and her influence has lasted to the present day when she gave a state dinner for French Cultural Minister Andre Malroux in 1962. Mrs. Kennedy hired a French chef, set a French menu, remodelled the State Dining room and invited arts and cultural leaders for dinner. But she had her own personal agenda and she used her dining room to achieve it.

Friday February 12, 2027. - Week Five: Contemporary Dining Rooms and the Future

Introduction:

With an emphasis on informality and a desire for more open and free-flowing spaces, the architecture of dining rooms evolved from separate standalone rooms in the 1960's to the open concept spaces of the present day. Examples will include the dining rooms of Colette van den Thillart, Toronto, 2012, Pearlstone Dining Room, Victoria, B.C., 2020 and the Norbraten-Lichti Dining Room, Toronto, 2024.

Feature Dining Room: Stadtlander Forest Dining Room, Singhampton, Ontario 2026

Chef Michael Stadtlander is the father of sustainable, organic farming in Canada. In the 1990s, Stadtlander left the life of a star chef at glamorous restaurants to grow vegetables, raise livestock and forage for morels on his own farm. All ingredients for meals in his Forest Dining Room come from his sustainable farm or other local farms. He is changing the future of the world through food.