Banquettes can be cozy, warm, and inviting. They are a place for a splash of color and, most importantly, are versatile. Their space-saving qualities allow for seating when an area is tight. Commonplace in restaurants and other public spaces, it is now the ‘benchmark’ for them to be adopted for use in the home, and it is easy to see why. Banquettes offer an alternative way to provide extra seating when space is limited.

A well-placed banquette can serve to delineate space, opening up a room.

Although the breakfast area pictured is large enough for a table, the flow to the English gardens through the French doors, as well as the opening to the family room, would be interrupted if the table were in the center. While off to the side, the banquette creates ample room to flow from one space to the next, offering good communication to the cook, and a beautiful view outside.

Photo: On the Water in Darien

Our goal in this beautiful historical home in Darien was to remove the walls of many small rooms, opening up the space to a lovely view of Long Island Sound. The light streaming in through the new picture windows and transoms maintained the architectural character of the home. The shape of the banquette delineated the kitchen work area from the eating area defining the space.

Custom millwork allows for the display, as well as hidden storage of cereals and jams. The wicker chairs bring the beach inside. Here we have a place to sit and enjoy, coffee, a meal or read a book.

The height of many banquettes stops somewhere mid-back. This can be uncomfortable for taller clients. An upholstered back certainly is preferable, preventing the finish cap rail from pressing into one’s back.

One must consider all of the family members when designing the back of the banquette. The high back you see in this photo prevents the finished cap from disturbing any of the family members sitting there.

It is key to select a table without cumbersome corner legs as these will get in the way. Rather, I suggest some sort of pedestal table, which gives a great enough allowance for resting your own legs comfortably. I recommend a round table or a surface with rounded edges; this provides better maneuverability because there are no sharp table edges.

The banquette brings in the color! The personal touch and aesthetic of the homeowner can be expressed here. Never forget that the most beautiful of fabrics can be used, as long as they are treated. A vinyl coating can be added and no one would ever know. This keeps the fabric looking beautiful and protected from spills.