

Ernest de la Torre and Laura Kirar with cocktail tables from ABC Carpet & Home (left) and Shine by S.H.O. See Resources.



The Top 10 Cocktail Tables

Truth in Decorating: Designers Laura Kirar and Ernest de la Torre discuss our selection of these living room essentials, ranging from the quietly chic to the all-out exotic

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If you can thank modern life for popularizing one piece of furniture, it's the cocktail table. Though long, low tables have been found in Asian homes for centuries, they didn't become living room essentials in the West until the early 20th century, when seating grew more formalized and the sofa-and-two-chairs setup became ubiquitous. People realized that a surface for drinks, flowers, books, and even casual dining was the final piece of the comfort puzzle.

The way a cocktail table looks, however, is just as important as its utility, says interior designer Ernest de la Torre. "It can make or break a room," he notes. "Some clients want a simple style in a neutral color

that will disappear into the decor. Others go for a standout that will get noticed and make everything around it seem more special." Basics before beauty, though. Decorator Laura Kirar—who has designed a number of dazzling cocktail tables throughout her career—says common sense is key. Whether you choose one made of streamlined lacquer or a version with a swoopy iron frame, "the table shouldn't be much higher than the seat height of the furniture around it, because you'll bang your knees and picking up a drink will be awkward. And if you have small children, choose a curved shape or rounded corners to avoid accidents." ▶

cocktail tables



1 HECTOR COCKTAIL TABLE BY OLY

"The strong, frill-free form lets the natural materials shine through," Laura Kirar remarks. "The limestone and hand-hammered iron are a nice combination of textures and craftsmanship." Because of its substantial proportions, she pictures it paired with generously sized linen- or canvas-covered seating to complement its "casual, elegant" look. Length: 48"; height: 18.5"; depth: 30"; material: hand-hammered iron base with distressed-limestone top; delivery: immediate; price: \$2,800; olystudio.com



2 TRIANGLE BASE GLASS COCKTAIL TABLE BY CALVIN KLEIN HOME

"The stainless-steel base is clean and classic," notes Ernest de la Torre. He also praises the circular shape, which, he says, facilitates traffic flow better than a rectangular design. The glass table's "airy quality" lends itself to a contemporary city apartment. Diameter: 40"; height: 18"; material: stainless-steel base in brushed-nickel finish with glass top (also available as an end table); delivery: 2 weeks; price: \$1,100; calvinkleinhome.com



3 CALDER COCKTAIL TABLE BY DDC

"I am modern, hear me roar!" jokes Kirar of this table. "The ebony veneer is gorgeous, and the thin metal base is flawless." Another selling point is its size: Large cocktail tables are difficult to find, she says, and since it's low, she sees it paired with a sleek sectional sofa. Length: 47.5"; height: 12"; depth: 47.5"; material: iron base in polyester-varnish finish with ebony-veneer top in glossy finish (also available with black nickel-plated iron base, and other tops and finishes); delivery: 12 weeks; price: \$3,310; ddcnyc.com



4 BONE INLAY COCKTAIL TABLE BY MATTER FOR ABC CARPET & HOME

"Wow, an astounding work for the price," raves de la Torre, who loves the intricate foliage pattern. "This piece could take center stage in any room." Plus, the four front drawers are ideal for storing paperbacks, remote controls, or entertaining supplies such as cocktail napkins and coasters. Length: 48"; height: 16"; depth: 24"; material: mango wood in resin finish with bone inlay (also available in charcoal-tinted-resin finish); delivery: immediate; price: \$1,495; abchome.com



5 FIFTH AVENUE COCKTAIL TABLE BY HAMILTON FURNITURE & TEXTILES

"Timeless," Kirar says. "The traditional Anglo-Indian style is attractive, I adore the caning, and the brass casters are a nice touch." Also, the shelf is the perfect place for books and magazines. Length: 40"; height: 17.5"; depth: 22"; material: mahogany frame in dark-brown mahogany finish with woven cane in varnish finish, glass top, and antiqued-brass casters (custom sizes and finishes, and other woods and casters available); delivery: 8-10 weeks; price: \$3,900; hamiltonfurniture.com



6 SPLAY-LEG TABLE BY GEORGE NAKASHIMA FOR KNOLL

"Mad Men gone to the country," says de la Torre. "It's an appealing midcentury design that's evocative of Nakashima's artisanal work." He also likes its light weight and the handsome rich grain of the walnut legs. Length: 37.75"; height: 17.5"; depth: 34.25"; material: hickory-veneer top with American-walnut edges and legs (also available with an American-walnut top); delivery: 5-7 weeks; price: \$1,495; knoll.com



7 CONSERVATORY TABLE BY CRATE & BARREL

"So pretty," Kirar says. "This stands out thanks to the sculptural iron base and the patinated-aluminum top, which looks like oxidized copper or bronze." The traylike surface is reversible, she points out, and the lip makes it an "excellent catchall" for notepads, magazines, and pens. What's more, it's "an amazing bargain." Length: 44"; height: 18.5"; depth: 26"; material: copper-plated wrought-iron base in antique finish with aluminum top in waxed-patina finish; delivery: 1-2 weeks; price: \$599; crateandbarrel.com



8 SPENCER 48 COCKTAIL TABLE BY SHINE BY S.H.O.

"It has a wonderful, simple geometry," de la Torre observes. "Karl Springer used this silhouette in the 1970s, and before that it was known as a Chinese scroll table." The slender proportions would work best next to a settee, he says, and suggests contrasting the white lacquer with bright colors and playful patterns. Length: 48"; height: 18"; depth: 18"; material: MDF in pure-white-lacquer finish (also available as a side table); delivery: 2 weeks; price: \$990; shinebysho.com



9 GOLD LEAF COCKTAIL TABLE BY FCL STYLE

"Very French," is Kirar's take on this ode to Art Deco glamour. "The metal X base is lyrical, and the curves help break up the boxiness of its rectangular form." She approves of the mirrored top, since it's easy to clean, "virtually indestructible, and good for displaying beautiful things." Kirar imagines it bedecked with a glossy enamel tray or bowl in an elegant living room. Length: 44"; height: 18"; depth: 24"; material: gold-leafed iron base with antiqued-mirror top; delivery: 7-10 days; price: \$1,295; fclstyle.com



10 JACQUI COCKTAIL TABLE BY BUNGALOW 5

"A terrific shape made famous by Jean-Michel Frank," de la Torre says. "The chinoiserie legs and apron are well made and the brilliant-green finish lends a great pop of color." In addition, the painted lacquer is durable and fingerprint-resistant. He envisions the piece as the star of a family room decked out in a vivid palette. Length: 40"; height: 16"; depth: 22"; material: hardwood composite in Spring Green-lacquer finish (also available in other colors); delivery: 5-15 days; price: \$588; bungalow5.com

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