COLOR THEORY

ANY DECORATOR WORTH HER SWATCHBOOK WILL TELL YOU THAT A COAT OF PAINT FAST-TRACKS ANY ROOM TO LOOKING FRESH AND MODERN. GRAB A GALLON OR TWO AND BEFORE YOU KNOW IT, YOU'RE ON A ROLL. **BY TERRY TRUCCO**

WARMING TREND>>

A contemporary riff on the classic red dining room, earthy red "has an organic feel that blends well with wood tones, and creates an appetizing backdrop for eating," says Shazalynn Cavin-Winfrey, an interior designer in Washington, DC. Be sure to avoid white trim. "A room looks taller when molding is the same color," she says.

>> Play up the vibe with green-accented tableware, placemats and fabrics. "Red and green are opposite each other on the color wheel, which makes them a dynamic combination," she says. A whispery green ceiling complements the effect. Loveramics Elements of Nature Appetizer Plates, target.com, $29 for set of 4

PRO TIP

Inject extra elegance by using an eggshell finish on the walls and a semigloss for the trim.

Photo: (interior) Janet Mesic-Mackie.

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For a fresh, timeless feel, select a crisp white for woodwork. To give definition and dash Casey suggests touches of semigloss black—like on a banister or bench.

GRAND OPENING>>

A soft, mid-range foggy gray transforms an entrance hall. "It's especially soothing to the eyes when you walk in," says Laura Casey, an interior designer in Charlotte, North Carolina. And as a modern neutral, the color won't clash with the walls in adjoining rooms. Semigloss paint looks sophisticated and is more durable than a flat finish—especially important for a space that gets lots of traffic. "I like to do ceilings 50 to 75 percent lighter than the walls," says Casey, who just mixes some white in with the gray until she gets her desired shade.

>> "Yellow really warms up these cool colors," Casey says. "Navy's good too." A mirror in a gold frame makes gray walls sing. Set up a small wood table for a lamp and a tray to hold the mail. If there's space, add a bench painted white topped with a navy and yellow fabric cushion. **Splash Collection Mimosa Ceramic Rectangular Table Lamp, LampsPlus.com, $210**