

tucked in

by sarah firshein

In ancient Rome, much of life took place horizontally. Wealthy Romans kept separate beds for just about everything — from sleeping to studying to, yes, even dining.

Today, bedrooms have taken on even more varied roles from home office to family conference room to love nest. And in an effort to confuse us even further, sleep psychologists caution us against spending too much time bunked up, alienating us further from that sweet repose.

Isn't it time we reclaim the boudoir — or at the very least, the bed — that humble piece of furniture that anchors us and plays such a pivotal role in our sense of style, self and calm?

"Once upon a time, bedrooms were simply a place to lay your head and were designed on a small and modest scale," says Wendy Paladini, showroom manager at Princeton's Tuscan Hills. "Today, all that has changed, as the master bedroom has become a private and personal sanctuary to get away from it all."

YOU'VE BEEN FRAMED

Beds and bedding schemes have slowly worked their way to the forefront of the décor arena. Ms. Paladini points to Tuscan Hills' Caporali beds: made-to-order iron frames forged in a family business that started in 1885 in Santa Mama, a tiny hamlet near Arezzo, Italy. Each design comes with a variety of options for headboard and footboard designs, canopies and cupolas, allowing the customer to design their own bed and end up with something completely unique.

Farah Kathwari, style director for Ethan Allen, advises those searching for bed frames to consider materials, headboard design and shape. For a twist on a classic Shaker design, check out Ethan Allen's charcoal-finished wooden poster bed, with a curved scroll headboard, tapered 80-inch posts and pewter-finish bed-bolt covers (canopy optional).

Treat your bed frame much as you would a piece of sculpture. "Your headboard is no longer viewed as the basic piece of furniture that fades into the background," says Meredith Mazur, spokeswoman for West Elm. "It has become the focal point of the room. Your headboard and bed are now the centerpiece that reflects your overall style." Dramatic, sturdy pieces such as West Elm's clean-lined slipcovered headboard and frame (in suede-textured poly or cotton twill) allow you change your bed with the seasons.

A SOFT PLACE TO LAND

After settling on a frame, spring forward to mattresses. "There is the standard box spring, a low-profile box spring or ... just a low wood platform," says Ms. Paladini.

To make your choice easier, Ethan Allen offers a survey that matches personal characteristics (your height, weight, shirt size, pant size and age) with one of their five mattress lines. Mattresses, box springs and foundations from Ethan Allen "are constructed with a hand-assembled, coil-on-coil spring system designed to work together — they're considered to be the ultimate in providing proper postural alignment," Ms. Kathwari says.

All Ethan Allen mattresses require either a box spring or a foundation (denser than a box spring and generally used under a memory-foam mattress). "They are both offered in low-profile height for a more contemporary look," she says.

West Elm's plush and Eurotop mattresses from Serta, both available alone or in box spring sets, feature high-density cushioning and an innerspring contour that balance and support the body throughout the night.

LUXE LINENS

As far as bedding goes, it's really a matter of taste. "People are donning their bedrooms with treatments and details reflecting their personal style and needs, whether it be romantic and luxurious, modern and sleek — or perhaps a far-off place they can dream of escaping to everyday," Ms. Paladini says.

To achieve a rustic, luxurious feel, Ms. Paladini suggests outfitting your bed with Busatti linens, Egyptian-cotton and Irish-linen creations that have been loomed on antique shuttle looms since the company's start in Anghiari, Tuscany, in the 1840s.

Consider incorporating some design trends into your revamped boudoir. According to Ms. Kathwari, black-and-white patterns, silver accents and Indian-inspired block-print patterns, beading and silks provide *au courant* detailing for spring.

"Start with large Euro (square) shams against the headboard, then layer in standard shams and finish off with smaller decorative pillows in the front — these could be square, rectangular, or even neck-roll shapes," she says. "Details like beading, needlepoint, embroidery, or ties add extra interest."

Remember that nothing's set in stone; in fact, your bedding scheme can assume just as many roles as your bedroom does. "We love the use of duvets because you can change out your duvet cover each season, as well as your throws and pillows, to express the latest trend and color palette of the season," Ms. Mazur says.

"Add a Corona over the bed with pretty hangings for added romance and intimacy," Ms. Kathwari says. "Add a coverlet or quilt — open or folded — at the foot of the bed for a fresh look. Choose a reversible duvet cover so that you can alternate looks, depending on your mood. Add decorative pillows for an easy change."

So forget the psychologists and take a tip from our ancestors. Plan a bed picnic or lounge all day.

After all, when in Rome... ■

(Opposite) A bed is just a bed...or is it? Newer, design-conscious boudoir options stretch the bounds of bedtime. West Elm's slipcovered, streamlined headboard and frame, offset here by a buoyant orange duvet cover, makes redecorating a breeze. (Inset) Caporali's iron-forged, made-to-order frames, are showpieces in themselves with stunning frames that promise to keep all your dreams sweet.

Opposite: Photo courtesy of West Elm; (inset) courtesy of Tuscan Hills.

