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TABLECLOTHS AND PLACE MATS

Shop For Tablecloths and Place Mats

Bold floral prints, plaids, novel designs, imaginative shapes and sizes, interesting fibers, and finishes are all adding a new look to the dining table. Because of the many choices that are available, consider the following when shopping for tablecloths and mats:

. *Appearance.* Color and design should complement the table service and be coordinated with the decor of the room. Square and rectangular tablecloths and napkins should be cut on the grain and have square corners.

. *Suitability.* The occasion often indicates the choice, such as an easy-wipe plastic coated tablecloth for a children's party or a gleaming damask cloth for a formal dinner.

. *Size.* Many sizes and shapes are available to meet the shopper's needs. Select the size to fit the table attractively. (Will it be for meals and/or a decorative cover?)

. *Durability.* Hems, finishes, and decorative details should withstand wear and care. Check labels for shrink resistance and color-fastness.

. *Care.* Some tablecloths require time for upkeep, while others are quick and easy to care for. Check labels for specific care instructions.

What Is Available In Tablecloths?

Tablecloths come in a variety of fabrics, patterns, construction and often have many finishes. Descriptions of tablecloths with special features follow:

. *Durable or permanent press* tablecloths are given a special treatment during the manufacturing process to provide a smooth wrinkle-free appearance after laundering. For informal occasions no ironing may be necessary, while a quick touch-up with a steam iron prepares the tablecloth for formal use. Such easy care features are a boon to the busy homemaker.

Durable or permanent press finishes are identified by the use of such trade names as:

Penn Press

Perma-Press

Sta-Press

Others _____

Soil release finishes are used on tablecloths in conjunction with durable or permanent press finishes to assist in the release of soil from the fabric during laundering. If stains do not come out in the first washing they generally are removed in the second. Solid colors and whites show wrinkles and stain traces more readily than the printed patterns. For best results in removing heavy oily spots and stains, the area should be sponged with a solvent cleaner before washing.

Soil release finishes are identified by the use of such trade names as:

<i>Come Clean</i>	<i>X-It</i>
<i>Courtrai</i>	<i>Dual-Action Scotchgard</i>
<i>Soil-Away</i>	<i>Others:</i> _____

Spot and stain resistant finishes are also used on some tablecloths. Waterborne stains and oily substances roll off, blot off, or may be wiped completely away from tablecloths treated with this finish.

Dual-Action Scotchgard is a finish that provides both spot and stain resistant and soil-release properties for tablecloths and napkins.

Glass tablecloths are being made from glass fibers sold under the trade name *Fiberglas Beta*. Fiberglas Beta is an extremely fine filament fiber and does not break as readily as the regular glass fiber. Because of this it is more resistant to wear. Fiberglas Beta is wrinkle resistant; and because it absorbs no moisture it is resistant to stains. However, these tablecloths will give greater satisfaction if treated with a soil release finish. Most spots come off easily with wiping, although oil and fat stains may require special pretreating. Read care instructions on the label for specific directions. Labels on some Fiberglas Beta tablecloths indicate that they should be laundered separately. Be sure to follow the care instructions. Glass tablecloths are available in a number of colors, woven or printed patterns, and assorted sizes in oblong, square, oval, and round shapes.

Vinyl tablecloths with a flannel back are very popular for casual living. The vinyl surface is designed to look like fabric but has a wipe-clean property. A heavy cotton flannel backing is permanently laminated to the vinyl and protects the table. Some vinyl tablecloths are treated to resist bacteria and mildew.

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Malimo tablecloths are made using a new fabric forming process. Malimo machines neither knit nor weave, but form fabrics at extremely high speeds by using several sets of yarn. In this process, filling yarns are placed across warp yarns and a third set of yarns stitches warp and filling yarns together, using a chain stitch. In some fabrics the warp yarns are omitted. The process makes possible an entirely new type of fabric of varying weights and with different design and texture effects. Fabrics have excellent stability, resist raveling, and are quite inexpensive to produce. Interesting new textures and novel effects can be obtained in malimo tablecloths.

Terry tablecloths in gay colorful designs provide a rich, textured look for patio parties and casual dining. These tablecloths require minimum care; they can be machine washed, line or dryer dried, and put on the table without the need of pressing. Some terry tablecloths are also available with a reversible vinyl side.

Damask tablecloths with matching napkins are most often associated with elegant dining. A damask tablecloth has an elaborate floral or geometric pattern created through the weave of the fabric. A jacquard loom combines a satin and sateen weave in such a way that a design subtly appears when light is reflected off the surface of the fabric. This design is visible on both sides of the tablecloth.

Linen, because of its natural soft sheen, is the traditional fiber used in making damask. However, cotton, rayon, polyester, or a mixture of these fibers, with or without linen, are now also being used.

Damask is available in two types: single damask and double damask.

. *Single damask* uses an equal number of warp and filling yarns. The yarns that float on the surface of the fabric to produce the design pass over four yarns before being interlaced into the fabric.

. *Double damask* uses twice as many filling yarns as warp yarns and the yarns that float on the surface of the fabric to produce the design pass over seven yarns before being interlaced into the fabric. This gives greater distinctiveness to the pattern and often a firm leathery feel to the fabric. If the weave is not close and firm the floating yarns may snag and pull and the cloth may not be satisfactory.

If good quality yarn and a firm close weave are used, both single and double damask will provide good service.

Lace tablecloths, fragile and dainty, are available in a wide assortment of attractive designs.

The wearing quality of these tablecloths is greatly increased if polyester fibers are used or blended with rayon or cotton fibers. In addition, permanent press and soil-release finishes are used on many lace tablecloths to make them wrinkle free and easy to care for.

Cut work, lace insert, and embroidered tablecloths are available in a variety of colors, sizes, and designs for special decorative effects. Because of the intricate and/or raised effect of the design, considerable time is required in laundering and pressing this type of tablecloth. Prices of these tablecloths vary depending on the quality of the cotton, linen or other fiber used, the type and amount of decoration, and the amount of hand work done on the cloth. Decorative tablecloths of this type are generally much more expensive than plain tablecloths.

Prices of tablecloths will vary widely depending on fiber content, finish, size, decorative trim, such as lace, fringe, embroidery, and on what is fashionable in texture, color, and design.

Tablecloth Size Chart

To determine the correct size tablecloth to buy:

1. Measure the width and length of your table the way you use it, i.e., with or without leaves.
2. Add approximately 20 inches to both width and length of your table to allow for proper side drop.

Table Size In Use	Tablecloth Size	People Accommodated
<i>Oblong</i>		
30" x 30"	50" x 50"	4
30" x 48"	50" x 68"	4 to 6
36" x 48"	56" x 68"	4 to 6
36" x 60"	60" x 80"	6
40" x 60"	60" x 80"	6
36" x 72"	60" x 92"	8
40" x 72"	60" x 92"	8
40" x 84"	60" x 104"	10
<i>Round</i>		
30" x 42"	58" to 66"	4
43" or over	70" to 90"	6 or more
<i>Oval</i>		
40" x 54"	60" x 74"	4 to 6
40" x 60"	60" x 80"	6
40" x 66"	60" x 86"	6 to 8
40" x 72"	60" x 92"	8

For example:

	<u>Width</u>		<u>Length</u>
If your table measures approximately:	40 inches	by	60 inches
Add 20 inches to width and length:	<u>20 inches</u>	<u>by</u>	<u>20 inches</u>
Ideal size is:	60 inches	by	80 inches

What Is Available In Place Mats?

Place mats can create a gay, casual atmosphere or a dignified, elegant one. They vary from intricate hand-worked linens to artistic disposable paper mats.

Select place mats according to the occasion, your color scheme, and the amount of care you are willing to provide.

Place mats that are now available are:

Permanent press and soil-release treated fabrics of cotton, linen, rayon, polyester, and blends of these fibers in solid color, exotic prints, and interesting textures.

Some are *vinyl* embossed to look like fabric and have a raised floral or geometric design. They are easily wiped clean. Some are finished with a shiny, smooth surface that reflects light to produce a wet look. Some are decorated with sparkling plastic chips to produce a rich, textured effect. Crumbs and stains may be difficult to remove from this type.

Polyethylene and polypropylene fabrics are resistant to moisture and can be easily wiped clean.

*Sisal, *ramie, jute,* and other unusual fibers and materials are often woven into interesting patterns and shapes to provide a wide selection. When buying place mats of these materials, always check the label for care instructions. Place mats are often backed with polyurethane foam to protect the table and to prevent them from slipping on the smooth surface.

What Linens for What Dishes?

Here are general guidelines:

- . Patterned dishes: Select plain color cloth or mats which emphasize one color in the dishes. The cloth or mat may match the color or contrast with it.
- * "*Grass linen*" is a common term for ramie. Mats made of this fiber look like silk. They wash well. "*Silk grass*" is another name for Pina, the fiber from pineapple leaves.

- . Plain color dishes: The cloth or mat may match or contrast with the color but should be either darker or lighter in tone than the dishes. The cloth may have pattern in a harmonizing color.
- . As a rule: heavy textured tablecloths or mats look best with heavy textured pottery or even plastic dishes.
- . As a rule: damasks, laces, sheers and other finer-textured cloths or mats look nicest with daintier and more elegant china and glassware.

Table Pad

Use felt padding (purchased yardage) or custom-made pads to fit table and leaves. Pads are insulated to protect the table from heat.

Care Clues

- . Check labels for specific laundering instructions.
- . Remove stains immediately. Rub detergent on grease or oil stains. These stains cling stubbornly to man-made fabrics. Pre-treat dark linens that have a no-iron finish by using detergent if you think oil stains may be there.
- . If tag or label on the cloth or mat says, "do not bleach," be sure not to wash the cloth in a load of clothes which you are bleaching.
- . Keep your best tablecloths and mats away from excessive heat and dampness. Never store freshly laundered linens until they are thoroughly dry, or mildew, one of the most difficult stains to remove, may develop.

When selecting fabric remember: A tablecloth should be made of washable fabric (preferably with easy-care characteristics.) Wide fabric for either cloth or cover will cut down on the amount needed and the number of seams required. Upholstery and drapery fabric, polyester double knits and many permanent press blends have the advantage of really generous widths. And don't forget no-iron sheets which are so wide that they may require no seaming at all.

To simplify information, trade names of products have been used. No endorsement is intended, nor criticism implied of similar products not named.

Information from: New York State College of Human Ecology at Cornell University.

Iowa State University of Science and Technology, Ames, Iowa.