



Play-and-Dine Pool

As summer sports give way to indoor games, Blatt Billiards returns us to the gentle pastime plied on green baize. Newly gentrified by a move to midtown New York City, the home of the world's largest collection of pool tables (3,000), stacks a veritable feast for the eyes. The cornucopia of colored woods includes mahoganies and rosewoods, elm burls and Makassar ebonies, but the trending curiosities are Play-and-Dine models.

These combination pool and dining room tables, usually seven to nine feet, allow you to eat on a table surface, then remove leaves of wood and proceed to cue balls on felt of your favorite color cloth, stretched over an inch and a half of thick slate. Buyers short on living space—especially apartment dwellers—love these tables.

"You can start as low as \$2,800 for a pool table with a dining top," says Steve Roeder, an owner of Blatt Billiards. With custom models, the prices rise. "You pick the wood finish, color, stain, size and height of the table," Roeder adds. Some have a hydraulic mechanism that can raise and lower the table. "It can be a table height of 32 inches or a dining top of 30 inches. These models run from \$8,999 to \$18,000."

The appeal is obvious. "It gives buyers a multifunctional room: a true dining room when they entertain and a true pool table," says Roeder.

"And it's a fine piece of furniture; it doesn't look like a pool table when the dining top is on. With the top off, it doesn't look like a dining table." Foosball and table tennis enthusiasts can add those surface tops to their dining table.

I'll bet you \$20 and table rental that you didn't know that pool cues and cigars have something in common: both are kept in humidors. Pool weapons of the highest order, made by companies such as Pechauer and McDermott, are kept at 74.5° F to preserve the hardness of the maple. "There's mother-of-pearl, different mixed woods, different wraps—such as leather and Irish linen—and soft, medium and hard varieties of leather tips," explains Brian Roeder, citing some elements that separate custom from mass-production cues. The prices typically run from \$1,500 to \$2,500 but can go higher, depending on the inlays added to the butt end.

Founded in 1923, Blatt Billiards has a coterie of customers who include Taylor Swift, Tom Hanks, Will Smith, Mayor Bloomberg, Donald Trump and Harrison Ford. All told, the inventory is not the kind that seduced youths and threatened to cause so much "trouble in River city" in the *Music Man*.

Visit blattbilliards.com.

—Kenneth Shouler