

AS SEEN IN...

The New York Times

Q&A

Different Tipping at Dinner

On Designing a Dining Chair That Reclines...

Carol Poet, a West Hollywood-based interior and furniture designer whose two decades-old firm serves many in the movie business, was at a dinner last year when a familiar accident occurred. It was after the meal, the moment when people push away from the table and maybe even tip back a bit in their chairs. “We were all sitting in these French antique chairs,” Ms. Poet said, “and one guy leaned way back and snapped the back off. It was terrifying.” Ms. Poet drove home that night and sketched a solution: an office chair that looks like a ’30s-style upholstered Parsons dining chair. In the spirit of Passover (“Why on this night do we recline?”), she shared her thoughts on it.

None of this lying-down, Roman stuff?

Right. I believe that you need to be rather upright when you’re eating. I saw in my mind a chair that would allow a man to sit back and begin to digest his wonderful meal while continuing a deep conversation with a guest.

Do you see tipping-back as a boys-only behavior?

Not necessarily, but they certainly have more power when they do it. It’s sort of like the bull in a china closet.



KEVIN SCANLON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Try not to put them in delicate 18th-century original French chairs. It’s just not a good idea.

Are there different reclining positions?

It’s a continuous position, just like an office chair, so when you push back it follows your back.

I’m doing it right now! (Leans back in desk chair.)

How were you brought up to behave at the table? Were there strict rules about sitting up straight?

My parents both worked, and I did all the cooking. I felt responsible for them because they worked so hard, and so I thought, ‘I’m just going to take over.’ I was cooking and sewing and ironing my dad’s shirts. In a way I didn’t have a childhood.

Have you ever had a dinner accident? Somebody overserving themselves, and wiping out?

Not really, they just went to sleep, schlumped in their chair.

The Reclining Dinner chair, \$3,990, is a custom order in walnut, mahogany or oak with choice of fabric; (310) 659-6900, Poetfurniture.com.

PENELOPE GREEN