

Spring brings variety for women

by Jan Cooley
for The Outlook

Long or short, pants or skirt, ruffled or classic — there is something for everyone in women's fashions this spring.

"This is the very first time in the fashion industry that we have had so much variety, choices, colors and styles to choose from," says Candice Brusse of Sassy Lady. "The old cliché "anything goes" is a true statement, from the pirate look to the romantic, feminine look."

The looks abound: prairie, Santa Fe, classic and nautical. The prairie dress boasts a high collar, puffy sleeves and lots of ruffles, ribbon and lace. The longer, fuller skirt ends in a flounce, sometimes with the white hem of a petticoat peeking out.

Gerri Van Zyl of Glass Butterfly says, "Petticoats have become very strong this spring. They're worn a little longer than the skirt."

"We're seeing ruffles everywhere — up the shoulders and around," says Sheila Namhie of Gresham Girl. "Fuller skirts are everywhere. That's really neat because they are more flattering."

The Santa Fe look is similar to the prairie dress, incorporating the flounces and playing down the ruffles slightly. Leather vests, conch belts, and turquoise and sterling silver jewelry accent its desert colors.

The classic look is tailored. Brusse describes it as a basic blouse with a notched or Peter Pan collar worn with a blazer and dirndl or straight skirt. "It can be softened by adding a ruffled blouse," she says.

"Jackets are changing from a traditional look to a little more interesting," says Randy Stone of Gordon Stone's Key to Fashion. They are shorter and more fitted, often with sophisticated detailing. "The working gal influence on all manufacturers in the women's wear industry has become predominant," he adds.

The nautical look, with its wide collars, red, white and blue theme and bright stripes is popular for spring. "We're seeing it all over the place," says Faye Harry of W.R. Hicks Co.

Split skirts are another trend. The lengths vary from below



Staff photo by Kelly James
Brenda Mauck wears a Liz Clairborn designer outfit. It has the Santa Fe look with an ikat stripe in desert tones, conch belt and headband.

the knee to mid-thigh. "They are called skorts because they're a little longer than shorts and look like skirts," explains Van Zyl.

"Lengths are all over the board," says Jeanee McCaulou of McCaulou's Contemporary Clothing. "There is a big, big surge toward the mini again. In juniors we'll be into it first."

"While skirts may be getting shorter, shorts are getting longer. "The shorts are definitely in a large variety of lengths, anywhere from short shorts to above the knee," says Harry.

Pants, too, come in many lengths — just below the knee, halfway down the calf, fitted at the ankle or over the foot. They go by many different names: capris, crop pants, pirate pants and harem pants. "Women just have hundreds of choices," says Namhie.

Colors run the gamut, according to Stone, "to let customers decide which colors strike them." Namhie says spring fashions emphasize pastels, a toned down khaki, and red, white and navy.

The trend toward natural fabrics is getting stronger. "In fabrication, everything is cotton — lots of crisp, neat cotton," says McCaulou. "It's the look and comfort you achieve with cotton, that makes it so popular," she explains.

Linen, silk, wool gabardine, rayon and flax, fibers that "breathe," are other fabrics that add durability, wearability, comfort and easy maintenance to women's apparel, according to Brusse.

The final touch — accessories — individualize the look a woman chooses. "Probably the most exciting accessories are the headbands," says McCaulou. They are worn across the forehead and around the back of the head.

Belts also are important for spring. "Belts are the biggest they've ever been," Brusse says. She lists sashes, hip huggers, dropped V, yoke belts and cummerbunds as among the various styles.

Jewelry is of polished horn on light rope necklaces, pounded brass on leather thongs and turquoise set in silver. "We're seeing a brightness in jewelry that goes with the strong red, white and blue theme," says Van Zyl.

GIRLS DEVELOP DIAMOND TEST

Science experiments by Sarah Goldsmid, 14, of Sydney, Australia, have led to the development of a device that may save diamond buyers money.

Sarah's heat-conductivity experiments on gemstones with two other girls enabled them to tell diamonds from other stones by sounds each made in a carbon-dioxide test. Diamonds were the best conductor and produced the strongest sound oscillations by releasing the most gas from frozen carbon dioxide. — CNS

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