

# Fashionably, Festively, Ugly

**T**he holidays are a time to visit family, devour sugary treats and wear the ugliest clothes imaginable at social events. In an ironic way, of course. During the next month, Eugeneans will flock to ugly sweater parties, dressing in outlandish vintage apparel in an effort to out-ugly their fellow party-goers.

It's difficult to say when this trend started, but ugly sweater parties are quickly becoming a holiday tradition. Typically, guests compete against each other, vying for the honor of "most ugly," the point being to find the most revolting holiday outfit possible (think Colin Firth's Rudolph the Reindeer jumper in *Bridget Jones's Diary*). So, if you are fortunate enough to score an invitation to an ugly sweater party or want to throw your own, here are

some details to help you prepare.

Opinions vary on how to describe an ideal ugly sweater, but a few definitive characteristics prevail. The sweater must be overly bulky, garishly colored and decorated with holiday-themed, slightly creepy characters like misshapen snowmen and reindeer. Appliqué lights, bells and sequins are always a plus.

Of course, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. "People either think they're really cute or really ugly," says Pamela Burris, an assistant manager for the Salvation Army on West 7th Ave. Although it's pretty likely that most people think the latter, excluding grandmotherly types and '80s fans.

And just where does one go to find these coveted, hideous sweaters? Many scour thrift stores in search of unsightliness, but here's a tip: start the search early.

"They started coming into the store last month," Burris says, referring to the hordes of sweater seekers. "We always make sure to have our sweaters out early because there are so many Christmas parties."

Apparently, the ugly sweater trend shows no sign of slowing down. Burris says that her Salvation Army branch saves well over a hundred holiday sweaters throughout the year to satisfy the demand, devoting an entire section to festive apparel.

And don't expect to get this holiday haute couture on the cheap, either. "My manager sold lots of sweaters to college kids last year and they paid \$10 or \$15 for them," says Shannon Davis, a cashier at Goodwill on East Broadway. "As soon as she put those sweaters out there, they were gone."

When the demand exceeds the supply, ugly sweaters must be sought elsewhere. Try raiding the closet of an '80s survivor, the decade of origin for most ugly sweaters in circulation, or checking out the racks at Kitsch and Deluxe. If that doesn't work, entire websites are devoted to buying and selling these festive monster-pieces. [UglyChristmasSweaterParty.com](http://UglyChristmasSweaterParty.com) offers a brightly colored tidal wave of knitted wool delights, most running under \$40.

This may seem like a ridiculous amount of money to pay for an outdated sweater, but for the chance to own a genuine piece of holiday spirit, it may be worth it. — *Amy Schneider*

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