

Fashionably Frugal



*Amp up your wardrobe without
breaking the bank.*

BY PRITI SALIAN

Spring is here and so is the indomitable desire to dress cheerfully. But this season there is no need to spend a fortune to keep your wardrobe fashion forward. From saving through season-specific deals to getting more mileage from your existing wardrobe, our experts show you how to stay stylish while keeping your pocketbook in the green.

Style Staples

A few classic fashion luxuries are worth spending on even if it means dishing out a few extra dollars. “A pair of simple black heels, a tailored cigarette pant, a crisp white shirt, pearl earrings and a bright pashmina are basics that will form a basis for many outfits,” says Cee Fardoe, a Vancouver-based fashion blogger at My French Life (www.myfrenchlife.org). Calla Haynes, a Toronto-born fashion designer currently living in Paris, suggests a printed cocktail dress for all seasons. Adding, that it will look and feel “Just as great at a friend’s wedding as it will at the office Christmas party.” Other must-haves? A cashmere sweater, a black leather jacket and a sleek pair of sunglasses. “It’s also worth paying more for a pair of great jeans, a perfect pair of flat boots and a handbag that you love since they will elevate the rest of your wardrobe,” notes Sarah Francis, stylist and director of Real Life Runway (www.realliferunway.com).

Mix, Match, Recycle

Being a transition season, spring gives you an opportunity to recycle your winter clothing in unique ways by contrasting cold and warm weather pieces. “Wear your winter parka with a feminine lace dress or pair your chunky scarf with a light jacket and coated skinnies,” says Alexandra Grant, fashion blogger at To Vogue or Bust (www.tovogueorbust.com). “There will be a lot of 1960s and 1920s references in the styling details of spring fashion,” adds Mariana Leung, a Parsons School of Design graduate and publisher of Ms. Fabulous (www.msfabulous.com). Add a piece of jewelry to your clothing or DIY by taking fabric from old shirts and blouses to create ruffles or roses as an accessory.

Shop Ahead

Why not add a few shopping goals to your list of resolutions this year? Start with resolving to buy clothing off-season. “Big department stores have a lot of buying power with designers, and therefore have the ability to negotiate bigger discounts at the end of the season,” says Leung. Your trench can be purchased at the end-of-winter sale and your floral tops before fall. Sign up for mailing lists of your favourite department stores and get the advantage of extra discount codes and private, limited-time sales. Season-specific, off-season sales can double the size of your wardrobe while cutting the cost by more than half. But it’s not just big box stores that offer customers the biggest and best deals. “If you are lucky enough to live in a city where designers hold sample sales, make sure you’re on

their mailing list so you hear about it first; maybe get access to a private preview before others,” Leung adds.

Extreme Couponing

Many shops, stores and labels have printable coupons, mail inserts and in-store discounts; a few minutes of simple browsing can mean more money in the bank. Aside from flyers, which often feature a host of deals, the best way to search for a coupon is to get online. Print and collect coupons while keeping an eye on the best times to buy (usually right before the start of the next season). And don’t forget to write to your favourite brands once in a while for a free coupon; they just might oblige. Another great idea is to trade coupons you don’t use with friends. Some of the best places to find hot deals and to browse for coupons are www.retailmenot.com and www.bigcrumbs.com. Sign up for their email updates for instant information to save your way to a cheap but chic spring wardrobe.

Shop Online

Clicking your mouse is a fast and easy way to save dollars. Pieces you buy online are likely to cost less than the ones hanging in a store. Discount codes and cash-back offers are another perk to purchasing online. Websites like www.quidco.com and www.myshoppingrewards.com have cash-back offers while a store’s site usually offers up great one-day sales or discount codes. Sites like www.greatcanadianrebates.ca give you \$2 CDN when you register. Freebies are a great way to begin. “Most give you additional discounts and shopping credits just for shopping or referring others,” says Leung. Join flash-sale sites like www.gilt.com and www.ideeli.com for the online version of sample sales and while you’re on a saving spree, why spend money on shipping? Get all your info about free shipping offers by Googling and checking out sites such as www.freeshipping.ca and www.indiaplaza.com.

Thrift Shopping

In addition to saving dollars by buying from your local thrift or vintage store, you’re likely to find unique pieces that are right on cue with current trends. “You’ll never see anyone else wearing the same piece that you picked up at a vintage store,” says Fardoe. Visit a certified resale fashion site like www.hellolamode.com for great deals on high-end designer pieces, many of them new with tags. Sites such as this one also manually certify each piece for authenticity. Alternatively, hit up lesser known local spots that carry vintage clothes for a fun, frugal afternoon adventure with your friends that will leave you with one-of-a-kind fashion finds. ä



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