

BRIDES OF '85

Making your own gown can save valuable cash

Most women have a definite idea of what they want their wedding gown to look like when they march down the aisle. However, finding the exact look, fabric and fit in the price they can afford may seem an impossibility.

That's why more and more women (or their mothers) are making their own dresses, or using a seamstress to achieve the custom look and fit they want.

Making your own wedding dress can offer substantial savings — an important consideration with today's high cost of planning a wedding. For example, a dress that would cost well over \$1,000 to buy in a retail store can be made at home using similar fabrics for less than \$300. Even using a dressmaker can save a considerable sum.

Joan Watkins of Vogue patterns reports the most popular silhouette has a defined waist, full, opulent skirt and full sleeves.

Some of the best fashions are being offered for spring and summer '85 by the pattern manufacturers.

Whatever style of dress a bride chooses, she can create a truly one-of-a-kind gown by selecting the most flattering fabrics and trimmings.

Fabric selected depends on the styling of the gown and the amount the bride wants to spend, reports Mary Fotherby of Butterick patterns. "We recommend satin, lace and dotted swiss for contemporary designs, and taffeta or an elegant organza for more traditional gowns. You can also make the same dresses using a cotton or polyester blend.

"To create a luxurious look," she said, "add a variety of elegant trimmings such as lace or embroidered appliques, pearly flower buds, a silk finger loop to hold up the train, and even a pale blue ribbon on the bottom of the petticoat to give it that traditional American look."

The Butterick Pattern 3137 (at right) is a perfect choice with its scoop V-neckline, off-the-shoulder emphasis and petticoat ruffle hemline.

For a more elegant look, select Vogue Pattern 1518 (at left) with its long, lean skirt in front and full, flowing train behind combined with cap sleeves and boat neckline.

Every bridal pattern, Fotherby said, comes with coordinated patterns for bridesmaids' gowns. The same patterns may be adapted to make prom dresses, graduation gowns or evening wear.



Hope chests, linen mark gracious home

The lovely tradition of a bride bringing fresh linen to her new home carries historical as well as sentimental roots.

Linen, spun from the fibers of the flax plant, is the oldest fabric known to man. It is prized for its strength, absorbency, soft luster and hygienic smoothness.

To the ancient Egyptians, linen symbolized purity. It was the only fiber worn by the Pharaoh's royal court, and by priests and worshippers in the temples.

In ancient Greece, a bride arriving at her new husband's home wound flax around the doorpost. Then, holding her spindle and distaff to symbolize her industry and thrift, she was carried over the threshold by her bridegroom.

During the Middle Ages in France, brides carried a trousse (small bundle) of clothing and household linens to their new homes. Today's bride continues this practice with her trousseau of beautiful lingerie and fine household linen.

At the turn of the century, the collections of matched, hand-embroidered and lace-trimmed linen "sets" of pillowcases and sheets, tablecloths and napkins, tea cozies, hot roll warmers, guest towels and doilies that accompanied any self-respecting bride to her new home was, to put it simply, staggering.

A girl and her mother labored for years to provide proof positive of her skills with a needle.

Today's bride picks and chooses her traditions. And what is both useful and charming about a hope chest full of fine

linen home textiles is how well it can be adapted to suit modern needs.

For example, the hope chest itself can do double duty as a coffee table to help solve the "first apartment storage shortage." Today's hope chest, in fact may not be a chest at all, but perhaps a newly-fashionable armoire.

The beautiful linen a bride is "showered" with before her marriage can be augmented by purchases she and her groom make together for their new home. Those lucky enough to receive precious heirloom linen can use it to accent their growing collection.

Although at one time linen home textiles were "strictly formal," modern designers now interpret them in adventurous styles that range from new colors in traditional looks to the most whimsical and avant-garde designs. That the couple find it appealing is the only unbreakable rule.

Practical modern couples are rediscovering why their grandmothers valued linen home textiles: They are lint-free, do not "pill," withstand high heat without scorching, and grow softer and more lustrous with use.

LUXURIOUS LOOK — Pure linen and linen blend towels (right) pair elegant looks with durability and absorbency. Clockwise, are friction towels from Ireland, wide-striped Italian linen-cotton hand towels, Belgian fingertip towels, huckaback weave Irish linens and tailored stripes in Italian linen/cotton.

