

Stir it up with one of the season's feminine, finely-detailed dresses

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NEW YORK—Cocktail dresses are the toast of the town this season.

They're the solution for any party, and most can be adapted either for daytime or black-tie occasions.

"The return of the cocktail dress is really about fashion's love affair with all things feminine and retro-inspired," says Gregg Andrews, fashion director at Nordstrom.

The 1940s and '50s seem to be particularly influential, he says. "We're seeing a fitted bodice, fuller skirt — often knee-length to mid-calf — with a raised or natural waist, a very defined waist."

Other details are ruching, ruffles, beading and even attached brooches.

Lace and chiffon are popular fabrics for dresses as are sheer or "illusion" fabrics that allow you to see the skin through "a veil of fabric," Andrews says. "It's not as overtly sexy while still being alluring."

Hints of the 1920s can be seen in straighter-shaped dresses with dropped waist and asymmetrical or handkerchief hems and a little bit of beading.

It can be magical when a woman wears a "real" cocktail dress, one that was designed to be both chic and easy for when a woman was indeed drinking, designer Karl Lagerfeld says.

"It's an image very much from the '50s. Chanel, Jacques Fath and Balenciaga were famous for 'cocktail dresses.' Women always wore hats then," Lagerfeld says.

His fall-holiday Lagerfeld Gallery collection features a dramatic one-shoulder sheer

overlay with a high waist over a strapless beaded sheath, and a brown sleeveless dress with a pleated hemline, beaded waistband and white high-neck collar.

"Women are becoming more and more comfortable with the idea of dresses because more dresses are available to them. They don't offer the flexibility in fit that separates do, but the variety of styles makes up for it," says Andrews. "Women are enjoying dressing in the more feminine way that is so fashionable now."

Banana Republic executive vice president Deborah Lloyd is one of the converts.

"I'm wearing dresses all the time now," she says. "I love the fact that you don't have to think so much. The top and bottom are already together. I find them easy."

Lloyd says the silk dresses she's relied on this fall are easily covered with a cardigan to adapt for weather or work. She pairs them with cute flats, high-heeled strap- py shoes or higher-heeled

boots.

One of Banana Republic's cocktail looks is a pleated taffeta dress. "It's just one of those dresses that work," Lloyd says. "It's very easy to wear. Who would've thought that of a pleated cocktail dress?"

Pleats can indeed be hard to wear, but, first off, these pleats are vertical not horizontal. Lloyd explains that because the pleats are fine, they create a flattering feminine line "and they'll hide things underneath."

There also is a sheen to the fabric and the taffeta isn't too heavy, so the dress has movement.

"This dress is nice because if you wear with denim jacket and boots, you can wear it in the day as well," Lloyd adds.



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Baby stroke and its treatment

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tion of her skull to relieve massive brain swelling and prevent further damage. When she woke up a week later, she was like a newborn, unable even to hold her head up.

After four months of hospitalization and intensive therapy at a rehabilitation unit, today the Connellsville, Pa., toddler can sit, roll over and stand with support, although she still is weak on one side.

"So far, she has beaten all the odds and has surprised everybody," Gonzales says.

Doctors aren't sure what caused Alexandra's stroke, but she was lucky: Her parents raced her to a local hospital that immediately recognized she needed neurology care.

Too often, children face a significant delay, say Pitetti and Goldstein. Hospitals fre-



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quently make stroke a diagnosis of last resort. Parents may not recognize acute stroke symptoms—such as one-sided weakness, loss of speech and, in babies, seizures.

And if your baby seems to favor one side, insist on a neurology exam—it might be an undetected newborn stroke that requires physical therapy, Goldstein adds.

"Moms need to trust their gut instinct," she says. "Know

this can happen."

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