

Bring blue to the party

New color combos are standing out at holiday gatherings this year.

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Feeling blue for the holidays?

You're right in fashion, as cobalts and even teals make their way onto clothing racks in time for party season. Red, that predictable scene-stealer, is still a major player on the party circuit – but blue is establishing itself as a formidable competitor. Sandy Furia, owner of B. Younique in Brighton, recalls the cool color's strong presence at a fashion trade show in Boston last month.

"I bought everything from vintage looks to designer look-alikes, and they're going to carry forward right into spring," she notes. It's easier to extend an ensemble's staying power these days as more people are eschewing formal celebrations in favor of more casual — but still festive — gatherings at friends' homes. This takes on greater importance if you're invited to two or three parties.

Furia recommends getting a basic shell and changing its appearance with a jacket or shawl and accessories. "You can get a bunch of different looks for not a lot of money," she says.

At Ruby Rd. Clothing Store in Pittsford, blue microchenille sweaters are joined for the holidays by fun red-fringed jackets and more traditional (though often embellished) black skirts. Co-owner Kyle Hinding enjoys watching customers model party pieces for New Year's Eve events in particular: "It's the one night a year that you really can wear something a little bit different."

More women should stretch their perception of what they can get away with wearing, believes Kerry Stich, co-owner of Bella Bleu, a color consulting company in Pittsford.

"We want to bring color back," she says. "We want to give people that freedom."

About two decades ago, when color analysis was a new trend, complexions were lumped into two categories (warm or cool) and suggestions for what to wear were based on hues associated with the four seasons. Today, says Stich, color consultants realize that 85 percent of us fall somewhere between the seasons, and that finding the right shade of color is where the focus should be. For example, someone might be overpowered by one of the season's bolder blues but beautifully complemented by a more muted tone. "You can come home with the greatest, most awesome piece, but if it doesn't match your skin tone, it's a nightmare," she says. "When you wear the right colors, everything's in perfect harmony." And for the latest in accessories? "Metallics are huge this season in all different tones — copper, gold, silver, pewter," says Meghan Mundy, fashion consultant and owner of In the Closet in Brighton. "They are a great way to dress up any outfit."

Even denim gets into the holiday spirit, with studded pockets and fringed jackets for less formal partygoers.

"There are no rules anymore," says Hinding of Ruby Rd., where dressier denims come in several colors and lengths. Then again, there are some well-known guidelines, especially for work functions.

"You want to dress it up a little bit but obviously you don't want a skirt that's too short, or a blouse or sweater that's too low," Hinding adds. "You still want to be able to walk into the office on Monday morning."



LISA HUGHES staff photographer
This blue faux suede jacket, modeled by Valarie Rose Dumont, 37, of Greece, is very versatile for winter. The vibrant cobalt blue works for both day and evening, and you can wear it with jeans and a white T-shirt for day or with all black (as shown) for evening.
Blue faux suede jacket, \$59.20 at Ruby Rd. Clothing Co., Pittsford.
Black pants, \$35.20 at Ruby Rd. Clothing Co.