



Dear FASHIONGRANNY,

I have been invited to a Summer dinner party – fancy, twelve piece place settings and the entire hullabaloo that goes along with a major sit down dinner. Dining will be held inside, leading to dancing on the terrace afterward.

This hot weather and I are just “mutual friends” and really don’t get along that well. Could you give me some suggestions on what to wear? I want to be fashionable but comfortable too! Help!

Signed,

Little Miss Can’t Be Wrong

Dear Little Miss Can't Be Wrong,

Lucky you – a Summer dinner party with all the trimmings! I can only guess the Hostess loves to entertain and FASHIONGRANNY applauds the way she is doing it!

You didn't tell me in which Town or State this party is being held and you didn't tell me if it was an "occasion," so to speak, like birthday, philanthropic, etc. so all you're going to get from me is my generic answer, though heartfelt, tried and true.

When invited to a "fancy sit down," that terminology alone denotes Formal. You then indicate how much flatware will be at each place setting, and I'm guessing the Hostess has skills and help!

"Dancing afterwards on the terrace" is where I really perk my ears up, as this is going to give you, my Lovely, an opportunity to float a gossamer skirt in the evening's Summer breeze as you twirl and curtsy through magnolia's scent! Am I dreaming? I hope not!

My suggestion of a beautiful dress for a most beautiful guest would be a lady-like one with a fitted bodice, perhaps with cap sleeves, a sash belt and a full skirt falling right below your knees. This should be a relatively easy dress to find, as one of the fashions this Summer is just that styling. It is a look of French Riviera cocktail dresses of the late '50's and '60's. Feminine, sexy and certainly dance worthy. If you can't find the one you want in the Big Box stores or online, consignment shops could be your answer.

The Summer heat works well with this look, as a dress always has ventilation in all the right spots. A silk print in gorgeous colors is my recommendation. Please wear appropriate shoes, either sandal heels or sling back silk pumps, and don't forget a small clutch of coordinating style and/or fabric weight and not that big ol' tote with all the receipts!

FASHIONGRANNY is all about jewelry, so bring out your best, maybe a cuff or drop-dead diamond earbobs. If the weather looks as though it might change its mind for the cool later in the evening, bring a shawl for your shoulders and please make certain it is a solid coordinating fabric and color.

You are now dressed, Cinderella, and trust me on this, YOU will be the belle of the ball, perhaps only outdone by your Hostess (this is good diplomacy), and your only concern at this point is what fork to use. Have a Ball!

Dear FASHIONGRANNY,

I own a Clothing Boutique for Women, and everyday I hear one if not two of the same statements from many customers. It's so annoying and I just don't get it!

One is, "I need to cover my arms!" and Two is, "I wish I had somewhere to wear this!"

What are these common complaints all about, truly? I get the "arm" part sometimes, but these women go out every day and wear clothes; is it that much of a quandary on what to wear and where to go and dress to do so? It is driving me crazy!

Signed,

Signorina S.

Dear Signorina S.,

Aren't shoppers funny? You know – funny peculiar, not funny ha-ha! Sometimes I think that all this rhetoric is a veiled attempt to hide their money situation and not an expression of their true feelings. Like, they still have the compulsion to shop, but they have limited dough so they shop defensively.

They put out statements that you as the seller really can't "argue" with, as "arms" are a little too personal to discuss and "no where to go" sounds like a personal problem too, doesn't it?

In the shoppers' defense, this "arms" business is all about hearing her Mother or Aunt talk about the demise of their upper arms. Somehow, this condition – real or imagined – holds so many women hostage. It's as though, because the muscle tone is wanting and the under part of the arm is therefore looser, let's cover it up! Hide it from public view forever more!

Yes, vanity is real and misplaced many times, and singing the same tune Mom and so many other women have sung afore, just because it's a familiar tune, is insanity! My answer to that defensive blurt would be, "Oh, you know you are your own worst critic!" and carry on as though you never heard it and she never said it.

What are you supposed to say to someone who "has no where to go and nowhere to wear anything"? Someone who "wishes" she had a place to wear an outfit?

My first thought is to feel sorry for her, but that's what she wants you to do. Your first mistake!

You are then caught up in her storyline, and I guarantee you will not sell her anything! Just the thought of playing out this scenario gives me a pain!

These are not serious shoppers and they just want attention or someone to talk to. Again, do not bite! Ignore, and carry on in your best selling tradition, customer service first.

Owning a boutique, you must always think of the bottom line – relying on all your skills as a human being in the hope that your inventory, *your investment*, is not only pleasing to the eye, but will sell. It takes a lot of patience and tenacity to constantly talk to vain women, along with all the other different personalities that walk through your door daily. Your goal? To find and access a common denominator that will allow you to not only please your clients, but also relieve them of their dollars... sending them on their way not only happy, but knowing they will shop with you again. Turning a customer into a client is your payoff!

So, don't waste your time playing their game. These shoppers are in *your* house, and when in your house they must play by your rules. Right?

Of course, there is always the customer who really doesn't like herself and really has nowhere to go, but genuinely wants help, and you know who she is. Definitely help her!

In doing so you can change her life – forever! – for the good and your business will grow. Good seed into good ground. This is what good business should always be about. Bottom line.

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