

Back to School, Back to You.

You've cleaned out the kids' closets, purchased everyone's back-to-school wardrobes and now it's your turn. Whether you're ready for a total wardrobe re-vamp or simply searching for a few pieces to "wow" the world, a personal stylist can help. If you're thinking "Whoa, I can't afford that," think again. Enter "MyStylist" Cathie Arquilla, fashionista travelgirl and ambassador for two of the classiest and chicest lines we know. She's an expert at finding a unique fashion edge for stay-at-home moms, world travelers and professional executives. Her services include everything from in-your-closet wardrobe overhaul to helping clients create new looks with affordable, intimate shopping sprees at private, exclusive shopping venues. With summer in your rear-view mirror, the days of flip-flops, sticky popsicle juice and a car full of sand are over. Now it's time to re-focus... on you! I shared a crepe with Cathie at Méli-Mélo in Greenwich, Connecticut, to get the skinny on "back to you" shopping.

By Stephanie Oswald

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TG: What do you mean by, "private, exclusive shopping venues?"
Cathie: These days I'm working with two American fashion lines called Carlisle and per se. I like that they're American designers. The Showroom is here in Greenwich, just up the street above Scoop. I bring clients in and really work with them. We strategize, try on, discuss and decide exactly what will fit their body and their life. And the experience is quite luxurious as well, a bit like shopping at a salon depicted in an old movie — but I'm not trying to steal your husband!

TG: What are the biggest advantages to shopping this way, as opposed to working with the staff at a traditional department store?
Cathie: It's "by appointment" shopping and you receive service beyond what most department stores can offer: a private dressing room, a seamstress, even cappuccinos! Besides all that, Carlisle and per se are among the few American fashion brands still using fabrics from mills in Italy and France, and the design and workmanship of the clothing is extraordinary. So it's investing in fine wardrobe pieces, something I'm *always* encouraging clients to do.

TG: Sounds rather elite. What type of wardrobe budget does someone need in order to qualify for such personal treatment?
Cathie: That's the beauty of it. Considering the high quality, it's not that expensive — and there's no minimum purchase. Tops are \$150 to \$250; skirts and pants are around \$300, dresses, jackets and coats are \$450 to \$750. But keep in mind, these are items that will have a long shelf life in your closet. Fancy specialty items, leathers and such are priced accordingly. But here's the thing, an appointment "just to look" is okay; the staff is incredibly nice, fashion savvy and accommodating.

TG: What about for the gal who just doesn't have time to shop?
Cathie: I know the one you're talking about! She's you and me! For my super-busy clients, I set up a dressing room before they arrive, filled with some top suggestions in all the right sizes from information gathered beforehand. She can haul in there and get going, potentially in and out in 45 minutes — with just the right thing for that cocktail party, lecture or trip!

TG: And why should "our gal" make an appointment with you rather than calling the Showroom directly?
Cathie: Good question. I've been a fashion stylist for years. I've dressed celebrities, politicians, homemakers, talk show hosts and rock stars; everyone from Cindy Crawford to Midori to Natalie Merchant to Guns and Roses. I've dressed models for beauty advertising, editorial and lifestyle shoots. I'm understanding when it comes to clients' issues about their bodies and their feelings about clothes — I put fashion in terms you can relate to — and most important, I know what looks good and what doesn't! You can take or leave my advice, but I will give it to you, and as long as we're at the Showroom, it's free! I pride myself on building strong, long-term relationships with my clients. Once I know your "attitude" I can keep an eye out for new items that will meet your wardrobe goals. I have a few clients who come in from the Midwest. One in particular is

a news anchor; she comes in specifically to work with me on her on-air wardrobe. I also make a point of setting up seasonal appointments with clients so they're constantly building a really great, lasting and manageable wardrobe. In some cases, it's one or two pieces at a time, in some cases five. You can also call and make an appointment directly with the Showroom. There are several stylists on staff who have excellent fashion and retail credentials in their own right and will be happy to work with anyone who would like to come in and shop or tour the Showroom.

TG: Okay, so for our fashion-hungry readers, what's your favorite thing for fall?
Cathie: The fabrics are delicious! As for trends, I'd rather talk about classics. Actually, back to classics is a trend. Steph, do you have a very current-looking "blow your mind" suit, or a plaid straight skirt with a sexy kick pleat — or what about some great fitting merino wool sweaters with ribbing or draping in all the right places? Colors such as ochre, coffee, smoke and sepia are knocking me out. And there are all these fabulous fur collars, which take sweaters and such from day to evening. And ladies, get back into slacks; stop showing up in unforgiving pants that display muffin tops, *please*. There is nothing like a sweeping pant leg to elongate a leg and get a figure in proportion. As for what's new, I like the whole tender-tough thing that's going on right now, and I would say per se does that this fall in black spades! Susan Klope, per se's designer, will give us a Chanel-like silhouette and then add that chain detail that says, "I'm sweet, but don't mess with me."

TG: Whoa Cathie, take a breath! So if I'm in Greenwich, besides getting a bite here, what other stops should I make?
Cathie: There is a lot to do. It's Easthampton, west! Including the water! And it's just 40 minutes from Grand Central, so it's a great way to escape from the city for a day, or, and this is for your readers, build it into a New York City trip. I may be biased, but I think it's a perfect addition to a New York City girlfriend getaway. Greenwich, Connecticut is considered one of the toniest towns in America. What to do? There is the Bruce Museum, the shoe department at Saks and fabulous window-shopping up and down the Avenue. Don't miss the Ralph Lauren store, or pop in to my friend's place, SM Home. I like Morello for lunch or drinks... and that is just in town. Hmm, I think you need to come back and do a whole article on Greenwich!

style 411

Contact Cathie and read her blog at: mystylistcathiearquilla.com
To see more of the Carlisle/per se collection: www.carlislecollection.com
Photo opposite page - Outfit on left: Hershey cardigan with detachable fox ring: \$575, Cola scoopneck sweater: \$295, Foxy pleated flared skirt with leather trim: \$595
Outfit on right: Mongolia long cardigan with detachable lamb collar: \$595, Viceroy silk chiffon feather print blouse: \$375, Betula wool heringbone pant: \$325