

FINERY *that* FITS

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TROUSSEAU CO-OWNER SARAH WIENER EXPLAINS TO A CUSTOMER THE MANY PIECES OF CONSTRUCTION IN THIS BRA.

BY DONNA CEDAR-SOUTHWORTH

If Washington area women can agree on one thing, it's the fact that there are not enough hours in the day. Many will admit to being overworked, overextended and overtired. It's precisely these women—the workers, the mothers/chauffeurs, the caregivers—that would be pleasantly surprised to learn that Trousseau, the lingerie specialty store in Vienna, caters specifically to them.

If getting fitted for undergarments is the last thing on your mind, chances are: (a) you are either adjusting your bra straps and pulling your back band down all day; or (b) you have visited Trousseau, spent 10-15 minutes getting professionally fitted by the skilled staff, and have terrific bras and panties that will last.

“While there's a segment of women whose priority is high fashion—chic and elegant, there's a larger segment of women, particularly in this area—because so many work and/or have children [and] are always busy—who want to be comfortable; they want to feel and look good, but some women put comfort above anything else,” says Sarah Wiener who co-owns Trousseau with husband Michael. Trousseau accommodates both segments of women—and spans preteens to senior citizens.

According to Sarah, all of Trousseau's merchandise meets four criteria: “It should fit well, wear well, look good and feel great,” she says.

The first concern is fit: “A lot of what we do here is fit women for everyday, beige, seamless T-shirt bras,” says Sarah, who studied at Yale and graduated from Carnegie Mellon with a bachelor's degree in fine arts and whose formal background is in anatomy and medical illustration. “Fitting for underwear is not just about numbers and measurements—it's about geometry and engineering as well. You want to fit someone with a style that's well-cut for their body type because it will stay in place better.”

How many bras should a woman have? “Manufacturers recommend three: one to wear, one to wash and one to let the elastic rest,” says Sarah. “My feeling is that a lot depends on your wash cycle and lifestyle. You need the workhorse bra that you put on everyday that anything can go over; you probably want a couple



of neutral ones, a black one, a sports bra, a strapless, and I feel that you need something fun or beautiful to lift your mood.” Trousseau carries them all—but only quality products. With pieces ranging in price from \$30 to \$100-plus, and from sizes AA-K, there’s a bra for every woman.

The difference between a quality Chantelle bra and a more moderate bra is that the Chantelle is all hand-sewn, with more pieces and details in its construction—right down to the embroidered name. The more moderate-quality bra has a minimum of 38 pieces in its construction; it’s lighter weight, less detailed. While it’s a good quality item, the more expensive bra will last longer. Most of the brands carried at Trousseau are European and include: Chantelle, Panache, Simone-Pèrele, Fantasie, Aubade and Le Mystere.

Trousseau also carries a wide range of styles, types and sizes of panties. Some cost as little as \$10, but have to be good quality or Sarah doesn’t carry them. “Panty fitting is a very personal thing—some women prefer a snugger fit, some looser. All agree they don’t want something so tight that they bulge over it.”

The store, which celebrates its 10-year-anniversary in September, originally carried bridal accessories, with a limited collection of lingerie. Even that’s expanded, and the staff fits brides for undergarments for their wedding gowns and walks them through

a selection of shoes, headpieces and tiaras. All headpieces and veils are custom-made on the premises.

The sleepwear is breathtaking, especially Jane Woolrich (an English designer with pieces exclusive to Trousseau), Patricia Fieldwalker and Jonquil. Other merchandise includes classic pajamas, robes, bath and body products, jewelry, accessories—even gourmet Moonstruck truffles.

Is romance a part of the picture? Yes, but “romance is really more about a style of living than it is about sensuality,” says Sarah. “It’s like keeping fresh flowers in your house—and how that adds an uplifting, romantic touch. We really feel we’re about helping women look better and feel better—to give them confidence—and it makes a huge difference. Undergarments have often been called foundations throughout history because they really are the building blocks for a wardrobe. You can put a cheap T-shirt over a great bra, and it’s going to look like a higher quality shirt. If you put an expensive shirt over a cheap or ill-fitting bra, it will never do the garment justice.”

Trousseau: Dedicated to the Art of Romance, 306 Maple Ave. West, Vienna, VA www.trousseaultd.com; 703-255-3300.

ABOVE: THE BASICS FOR YOUR LINGERIE WARDROBE