



Evening elegance

Welcome soft cashmeres, leather, naughty knits

GREAT EVENINGS, at least for this Christmas season, can be as simple as a cashmere sweater.

This year some glamorous women at holiday gatherings will forgo the sequins, spangles and perilously high heels that characterized previous holiday fashion seasons.

Instead, they will choose body-skimming knits and delicate dresses accented with subdued shine and drop-dead accessories. With long, luxurious cashmere dresses, silky tunics with matching pants and exquisitely detailed accessories, the season's best fashions emphasize that glamour need not be glitzy.

Luxurious cashmere defines the spirit of holiday evenings. The ultimate dress this season is of soft, ankle-grazing cashmere, while shorter cashmere dresses, sweater sets and skinny pants create a look both refined and utterly alluring.

Simple, shimmering footwear and accessories in reptile, metallicized suedes and embroidered satin best complement the subtle sensuality of the season's premier fabric.

ELEGANTLY DETAILED. low-heeled shoes, simple belts and compact handbags from the Italian collections accentuate rich materials and impeccable craftsmanship. Heels range from flat to medium height and sleek envelopes, lozenges and minaudieres are important.

With subtle accessories, holiday looks are dramatic, as well as elegant. New treatments in the Italian footwear and accessories collections are designed to add subtle drama to the new styles.

Says Enilda Milotti, fashion spokeswoman for the Italian Trade Commission, "The Italians have always understood that beauty lies in simplicity. This season they have translated the

idea into shoes, belts and handbags that gleam with soft metallic washes rather than all-out shine."

ANOTHER WAY to highlight cashmere ensembles is with richly textured accessories.

"Crocodile is enjoying popularity this year," says Milotti, "and it's also an excellent fashion investment."

Luxurious enough for holiday soirees, crocodile pumps, flats, belts and handbags remain appropriate for daytime.

The long, lean proportions so popular in recent seasons get a new twist this holiday season as the trapeze dress — a swingy A-shape silhouette that flares dramatically from shoulder to knee — teams with narrow pants and leggings. Again, sleek, well-crafted footwear and accessories best accent the look.

"CHIC FLATS, such as gold-dotted

velvet slip-ons from Italy, make a dazzling impact when paired with an ivory silk trapeze dress and matching pants," says Milotti.

For more conservative tastes, roomy tunics and slim trousers in luxury fabrics create a similar look. Elegant Italian flats, perhaps adorned with Chanel-inspired gold chains and a sleek evening bag, highlight the ensemble's clean lines.

The short and sexy cocktail dress, a holiday fashion tradition, remains strong as ever this season.

"The little black dress is a perennial favorite; some women find it's all the evening wear they need," says Milotti.

For these women, Italian designers have crafted bare heels, wide reptile or metallic wash belts and dazzling evening bags. Accessorized properly, a knee-skimming black cocktail dress creates a look that is simple, sophisticated and absolutely sexy.



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