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Christmas fashion made merry, not harried

By Rebecca Tay

Between all the holiday parties you'll be attending and the Christmas cooking you'll be doing over the next few weeks, you will most likely suffer a panicky moment or two—induced, no doubt, by the realization that the countdown to present-opening day is on. And while gift certificates are a good backup plan, here are some safe fashion-wise suggestions that won't require you to know exact sizes.

Santa's got a brand new bag

Sisters, mothers, daughters, and girlfriends deserve a little splurging, and there's nothing better than showing off a new purse after the holidays. This season, a handful of Vancouver-based bag designers will help you shop local. Ashley Watson, who has gained a loyal following south of the border and as far away as France, Germany, the U.K., and Australia, has been fashioning her carryalls out of vintage leather jackets since 2005. The Plover (\$368) is a semi-triangular style with a long cross-body strap and two shorter handles, while the coveted Murre (\$364) features a triangular flap with a cute knot closure (available at One of a Few [354 Water Street]). Other noteworthy designers include Erin Templeton (511 Carrall Street), known for her signature slouchy crescent-shaped hobos, perfect for slinging nonchalantly over your shoulder, and Denise Wilson of Bronsino, whose convertible Haarlem tote (\$350, Umeboshi Shoes [3638 Main Street]) has been spotted on a fashion editor or two.

Wrap up a local label

When in doubt, there's always Lululemon (2113 West 4th Avenue). No matter who knocks it (and why), every gal can appreciate the wearability and brand status of this Vancouver company. Pick up the new Doitnow! gym bag (\$84)—a washable wonder that carries up to 50 pounds comfortably—then toss in a Luon headband and hair ties.

Accessories under the tree

Whether you pair these with other items or give them on their own, there are a few items that are always a pleasure to receive. A red wool blanket by outdoor-turned-hipster brand Filson (\$165, the Block [350 West Cordova Street]) or a super-cozy fleece version by local label Wings + Horns (\$148 at Roden Gray [231 Cambie Street]) is a sure hit, while mittens—whether you go cute and cheerful with a Delux animal pair, complete with eyes, ears, and even a tongue (\$30 at Hills of Kerrisdale [2125 West 41st Avenue], or sleek and leather with Filippa K (\$149, the Block)—are also a safe bet.

Cheeky Umbrellas make an artful gift for anyone who has to brave the winter rain.

Other affordable options include a fancy new Vancouver-appropriate umbrella (\$40 at Gumdrops [2029 West 4th Avenue]) by new company Cheeky Umbrella. Designer Jen Zurovski created a strong but lightweight aluminum shaft with wind-resistant fibreglass ribs, then decorated it with colourful, double-sided fabric featuring sassy sayings like "When does it start raining men?"



Manimal moccasins (\$168) are handmade suede slippers decorated with beads, buttons, and colourful fabric—and their sell-out status at Nouvelle Nouvelle (209 Abbott Street) gives them wish-list credence. And for the male Canuck fan on your list? Splurge on (or group gift) the Rink Link cufflinks by GreenShag (\$80), which feature a to-scale rendition of a hockey rink, complete with blue lines and goalie crease.