

The one label I'd wear if I were rich



Brunello Cucinelli's comfy luxury makes normal life fabulous, says Anna Murphy

Do you ever wonder what you might wear if you were rich? Perhaps not. But I like to think it is part of my job to ponder the matter. Then again, perhaps you are rich. In which case you will know that you face many of the same sartorial problems as the rest of us. The strange fact is that spending a lot of money on clothes doesn't guarantee you anything these days. Expensive clothes can be almost as poorly made as cheap ones; certainly they can be just as unsatisfactory in other ways — cut badly, finished badly, conceived to shine just once or twice rather than to endow an ever-after glow on the wearer.

You only need to walk around one of the flashier department stores during the sales to see how the offerings of certain luxury labels look positively bedraggled once shorn of the minimalist high-end merchandising they enjoyed earlier in the season.

Odd as it may sound, you can learn a lot from a sales trip during which you aren't planning to shop. Investment non-buying can represent some of the best money you don't spend in terms of informing your approach to building a smarter, more enduring wardrobe in the future. Postmodern or what?

One label I'd be wearing nonstop, should I have the wherewithal to do so, is Brunello Cucinelli. This stealth

label, founded in Umbria in 1978, produces clothes that are incredible quality and utterly wearable. Yes, there are telltale luxe details here and there: Signor Cucinelli started in cashmere and still produces some of the most sumptuous around, plus he loves a fur trim as much as the next Italian.

Then there's the so-called "monile" signature, a kind of metallic chain embroidery that might appear on the sleeve of a jacket, as pictured.

Yet the overall effect is low-key and, best of all, encompasses things such as tie-waist trousers, slouchy knits and smoochy tailoring — clothes in which you could actually live your current life, in other words, just much more fabulously. Cucinelli has worked out that rich people stay in on the sofa and binge-watch *Game of Thrones* too, but also that when they do so they don't want to look as shabby as us.

There is 30 per cent off the spring/summer collection, which means the beautiful navy wool jacket shown here — oh how I love this jacket — is reduced to £1,288, the cream cotton trousers to £497, the cream linen jumper to £273, the navy cotton top to £147 and the loafers to £735. All from the Brunello Cucinelli shop in London, brunellocucinelli.com

Bag, £185, MZ Wallace at net-a-porter.com. Above right: Brunello Cucinelli



Poke rules, OK?

Fashion types have long eaten sushi like it is going out of fashion.

Actually, strictly speaking, their foodstuff of choice is sashimi, the ultimate in high-protein, low-carb consumption, to which their unusually low body-fat levels bear testimony. The downside?

I have sent any number of fashion high-rollers to an alternative therapist whom I rate, and in his testing he has found unusually high levels of mercury in all of them. Not good.

For a while there has been a new way for the beautiful people to get their raw-fish hit, courtesy of a Hawaiian dish known as poke (pronounced "poe-kay"), which — for those of you, shame on you, who are not up to speed with the latest in protein consumption — is essentially chopped up sashimi in a bowl.

I went on a weeknight to the newly opened Black Roe — already London's leading poke establishment, don't you know — and was amazed to find it packed (blackroe.com).

Traditionally, poke is made with ahi tuna, but there were seven different varieties to choose from, the salmon poke with yellow chilli salsa proving particularly delicious (£6.95).

In the interests of keeping my body fat levels up I also sampled the excellent Kahlua pork belly (£12.90) and, ahem, the garlic butter fries with yuzu mayo dip (£4.50). Aloha!

A tote fit for a president

One reason why Hillary Clinton is the preferable option for next president of the United States: her superlative taste in bags. She was photographed recently with Barack Obama on one arm, her MZ Wallace bag on the other. How's that for accessorising?

I am a particular fan of the small New York label's Metro tote, which is made of a quilted nylon that is light as a feather, water and stain-resistant and can be folded, packed, sat on and possibly run over should that take your fancy.

It's available in black, camo or — my favourite — a bisected blue and black, and costs £185 from net-a-porter.com. Now all I need to complete my look is a Hawaiian-born incumbent president as arm candy. We could talk poke together.

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