

VIVERE COVERAGE – YOU MAGAZINE

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Cate
Blanchett

Paul
McCartney

Judi
Dench

David
Hockney

Guess who's coming to dinner

MARY McCARTNEY
(daughter of Paul, sister of Stella)
on secrets of cooking for the A-list

Help! We're drowning in BROWN

Caramel, toffee, chocolate: they're all the same to fashion writer *Laura Craik*. So she will *not* be embracing the newly fashionable hue – except maybe for a bag, a boot, a suit...

FIRST PERSON

When I was 14, I bought a brown dress; a weird-looking item with a square neckline, a drop waist and three frills that nodded to the then current and ill-advised trend for ra-ra skirts. My mother loved it. She swiftly added an adjective, so that it became a 'tobacco-brown dress'. Whenever I was going out and stumped for something to wear, she'd suggest the tobacco-brown dress. 'It really suits you,' she'd smile, encouragingly.

It didn't. I doubt it would have suited anyone. But then, I have a theory about brown. Of all the colours in the world, it's the one that other people will claim you suit, even when you know fine freaking well that you do not. Once you've left home and your mum no longer eyeballs your outfits, sooner or later some sales assistant will pop up to take her place. 'It really suits you,' he or she will croon, as you stand there hesitantly in your brown trousers/rollneck/dress, trying to banish an image of the poo emoji from your mind. 'Brown is in fashion this season,' they will add. 'It's really popular.'

I mention this scenario because brown is indeed in fashion this season, and is certainly really popular – with designers, at least. Rare was the catwalk not groaning with myriad shades. At Coach, brown leather trench coats and miniskirts came in dark chocolate shades. At Michael Kors, ribbed knits and shearling jackets were cast in burnt caramel. At Max Mara, fine-knit tube dresses and wide leather belts were paraded in deep cocoa. And at Prada, toffee-coloured blazers were sent out so many times as to look school uniform-esque.

Can you see what I did there? Chocolate? Caramel? Cocoa? Toffee? This is their tactic: seduce you with descriptors more suited to confectionery than clothes. Do other colours require such gustatory assistance? No, they do not. But brown – as my mother deftly realised – is rarely just brown. Even glossy fashion magazines realise the shade

takes some persuasion. 'It's more alluring than you might think', they'll entreat you, alongside an eight-page fashion shoot of a beautiful 21-year-old model who would look good in a bin bag. Even a brown one.

But if the catwalks were groaning with brown at the autumn/winter shows (which took place in February and March), they seem positively reticent when compared to the high street. As one, our most redoubtable high-street brands appear to have spent the past six months plotting brown's return with a dedication that makes one wish they'd collectively enter the world of politics, where

'WOULD IT BE SO WRONG TO BUY A BROWN BASE LAYER, AS A NOD TO THE TREND?'

they could use their fervour to put our country to rights again. Our crumbling concrete schools would be repaired in an instant – and painted brown.

How much does the high street love brown? Let us count the ways. There's Sienna Miller, new face of Marks & Spencer, modelling a £79 faux-shearling aviator jacket and £35 satin skirt. The shade? Tobacco brown. My mother is probably already on the waiting list. We can only assume the actress's stepmother, interior designer Kelly Hoppen – renowned for her love of neutrals – has had a lasting influence on the Miller girls. How else to explain the fact that Sienna's sister, fashion designer Savannah, has also launched a collection heavy on brown? Available in John Lewis, the elder Miller's new range, *Vivere*, showcases items

including a brown blazer and matching trousers – yours for £200 and £160 apiece.

Elsewhere on the high street, brown's supremacy marches on apace, with an item to suit every pocket. And while I'm definitely not changing my opinion on the hue – no way – I will concede that Whistles' clean bonded leather jacket (£449) is rather tempting, as is its belted leather mididress (£449). Both are still just about available, but for how long? Jigsaw's draped pleat jersey dress (£155) also looks useful, as does its Supima cotton long-sleeved tee (£34).

Would it be so wrong to buy a brown base layer, as a tiny nod to the trend? There are a lot of them about. For this I blame Kim Kardashian: she and her sisters have been rocking bodycon dresses, leggings and vest tops for seasons, in various shades of brown. Though I must also blame Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, a woman already suffering from such a surfeit of blame that one more pointy finger surely won't hurt. Since moving to Montecito, California, she has embraced with gusto the quiet-luxury trend, a central tenet of which is the wearing of neutrals, including various shades of brown. She has even trodden where all but the most confident of dressers fear to tread, and worn the hue from head to toe, right down to her handbag and shoes.

In this, Meghan may be on to something. Kastanophobia (yes, there is even a term for someone who fears brown) as I am, even I have succumbed to the allure of brown accessories. Despite having more handbags than Selfridges, I spent the summer wedded to a simple brown leather cross-body style by Anya Hindmarch, part of her Return to Nature collection. Without wishing to sound pretentious, it elevated every outfit I threw under it, however old, inexpensive and well loved. It brightened up a black dress, made a white one look classier and worked equally well with green and pale blue. Before you could say 'hypocrite', I'd bought a pair of Birkenstock Arizonas to match.

This unexpected love affair with brown accessories is one I am carrying through autumn. I have my eye on a brown Milo, a satchel-style bag with a distinctive gold-coloured clasp, new at Sézane (£365). If I ever win the lottery, Chloé's knee-high Mallo boots (£1,190) will be the second thing I buy after a new stair carpet, and I'm already looking for high-street dupes.

Anyone who shares my phobia should ease into the trend via a handbag or footwear: it's definitely the least intimidating way. Come late November, who knows where these baby steps might lead. You may find yourself giving *Succession's* Shiv Roy a run for her money. For, tricky as brown might be, it has one thing going for it. It isn't Barbie Pink.



NAOMI CAMPBELL AND POPPY DELEVINGNE, BOLD IN BROWN AT THE LATEST CATWALK SHOWS

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