

The LONG & short of it

From drop-waist styles to mini-skirt dresses, there's a gown for every bride this season

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Brides are dropping everything this season to pick up the latest style in wedding gowns: the drop waist.

"The newest silhouette from almost every designer is a very elongated drop torso," said Nancy Aucone, co-founder of The Wedding Salon of Manhasset, near Long Island, N.Y.

Drop-waist styles are fitted down to the hips and sometimes even lower, making the torso appear longer, which can make the bride look thinner.

Designers offer drop waist gowns in a variety of fabrics, which can help suit all heights and sizes.

Though the style is popular in bridal magazines and on runways, a bride should take heed before setting her heart on this trend.

"They're tough to wear," said Julie Sabatino of the New York City-based The Stylish Bride.

"If you're petite, wearing a drop waist makes you look like your legs are shorter. If it's a drop waist that's not too low, it might be OK. But the ones that drop below the buttocks, they're really hard to wear; they don't hide anything."

Christina Hurvis, who designs custom-made gowns for her clients at Couture SF in San Francisco, also has reservations about recommending the style.

"I hardly ever do drop waist, because for me, what's important is making the legs look long, and once you bring the waist down, the proportion is totally different," Hurvis said.

Still, with sought-after designers such as Vera Wang, Monique Lhuillier and Reem Acra championing this style, Hurvis admits it is quite traditional, and that she has seen it at quite a few weddings she has attended.

"It's not necessarily just for tall girls. If the proportion of the torso is done correctly, anybody can wear it," Aucone said.

Bring on the ball gowns

Drop-waist styles lend themselves to having a fuller skirt, which is another trend in bridalwear this season.

"The second popular dress line is the 'full line,' often worn by young brides for a romantic, dream-like ceremony," said Japanese designer Yumi Katsura, whose avant-garde gowns from Asia and Europe inspire U.S.-based designers.

Aucone describes this romantic, fuller skirt-style as "frou-frou." Skirts done all in tulle or made entirely of ribbons fit this style. Sabatino said balloon hems, where the dress goes under the hemline and balloons out instead of being cut straight across, also fits this category.

"They're really quite elegant," Aucone said. "They have a fullness to them when they march."

Bride on the go

Several other popular silhouettes appeal to a trendier bride, especially those planning a destination or outdoor wedding. Brides who must be concerned with packing a dress for airline travel are more likely to choose a mini-dress or a dress with a more slender fit.

"Recently, wedding dresses that show skin are more avant-garde for me," Katsura said. "I have done mini-dresses and paired them with beautiful stockings, boots and long trains."

Aucone said lace gowns and bridalwear separates also work well for traveling brides.

Hurvis considers different types of fabric and different lengths for gowns when a bride is planning an outdoor wedding. "I try to incorporate a more organic fabric," she said.

For the blushing bride

Another element when selecting a gown is color elements.

Katsura said the creation of the world's first blue rose was the inspiration for her line this season. "It has been said that a blue rose has been impossible to grow since many thousands of years ago," Katsura said. "The line is celebrating the creation of something people thought to be impossible and rare — it's a celebration of what is found in marriage and accomplishment."

Sabatino said she saw many designers using flowers in their shows, either as accents around wrists or necks, or embroidered directly on the dress.

Hints of color have been showing up in other ways on bridal gowns as well. Aucone said contrasts at a bride's base or hemlines, or the use of a sash, is popular among several designers.

"Ribbons and sashes have been big, and they still are, but they're taking on a new dimension," Sabatino said. "They're using velvet instead of just the typical satin. We saw them embroidered and in dark colors."

Old is new again

For more traditional brides, head-to-toe lace is making a comeback.

Hurvis, who wore a lace gown for her own wedding in April 2005, champions this trend.

"I have incorporated a lot of vintage-looking laces," she said. "I'll do all over laces, but a lot of people don't want it all over, so I'll do lace appliqué, like as a seam on the bottom or somewhere on the dress."

Sabatino cited the popularity of chantilly lace as an easier way to wear a lace gown, as it is lighter-weight.

"Anything that can be done with lace is being done," Sabatino said. "It's very popular right now."

Aucone said that when a bride selects a lace gown, she often chooses a lace veil to go along with it.

"Once they get into lace, they get into the whole concept of lace," she said.



Designer: Christina Hurvis



Designer: Monique Lhuillier



Designer: Yumi Katsura



Designer: Vera Wang

This Paloma Blanca dress is trimmed with Swarovski crystals and pearls at the front, enhancing the bust line. A flat pleated back with tails ties to create the knotted sash.

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