

GREEN Gleaning

Stylist Chad Sophia Suiter has been hunting and gathering in thrift stores and flea markets since she was a child. Follow her tips to thrift like a pro.



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As a kid, I excelled at scavenger hunts. I parlayed this early hunting and gathering talent into an illustrious career with the 4-H club. I would scour flea markets and dig through thrift shops for antique fabrics and pretty trims to make my craft projects bold and memorable. With that, my signature style of mixing old and new and my love for vintage things was born. As a dress designer, photo stylist and set designer, I've followed my passion for savvy shopping. It's an integral part of everything I do—and an important part of my efforts to reduce my environmental impact and stay within my budget.

ABOVE: Vintage furniture and décor bring a one-of-a-kind element to your home.

LEFT: Writer Chad Sophia Suiter styles thrift-store finds into a pretty tabletop setting. PHOTO BY RON ATCHISON



the easiest place to educate yourself about prices, value and availability is www.ebay.com.



Sage Advice for SWEET FINDS

HAVE A PLAN.

Google the best thrift stores in your area (or ask an experienced thrifter for recommendations). Call ahead to find out what days the stores re-stock in the departments you are interested in and what days they put items on sale.

SIZE IT UP. When looking for furniture, measure your space at home beforehand and bring a small tape measure with you.

BE DECISIVE. If you're on the fence about an item, put it back. If it speaks to you, buy it! You may never see another one.

BRING A FRIEND. Find someone like-minded, with a good eye (and, preferably, who doesn't wear your size!). In large stores, the two of you can start at opposite ends of long rows and meet in the middle.

STAY SATISFIED. Stop for lunch before you're exhausted. Pack a few snacks (almonds, carrots, raisins) and lots of water.

BRING CASH, NOT CREDIT.

When it's gone, you should be too.

BE PREPARED TO DIG. The perfect vintage Chanel jacket could be waiting in the next aisle! Look through all sizes; items get moved and misplaced.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS. Wear fitted clothing you can leave on while you try on other clothes. (Fitting room lines can be long, and many places don't have them.) Bring a messenger bag or tote for carrying home treasures.

AVOID THE CROWDS. Get to stores early or go on weekdays.

ALWAYS BARGAIN. Typically, sellers build negotiating room into the asking price, and they prefer not to pack up items at the end of the day. They'll often take something off the price if you're pleasant and ask politely. Try visiting favorite sellers at the end of the day; you may be able to strike deals on excess merchandise.

Give a simple treat class and style by presenting it on lovely vintage china.

Watch for Counterfeits

Determining whether a find is an authentic antique or a reproduction can be difficult. Copies, fakes and reproductions flood the market when a particular piece becomes sought-after. Consider the following before you purchase your newfound treasure.

- How does it compare? Study the item next to a photograph of an original, looking at every small detail for discrepancies.
- Does your find look handcrafted or factory-made? Most originals are slightly imperfect because they're handmade.
- Is the maker's mark present and in the correct place?
- Are the materials used consistent with the era in which it should have been made?
- Is the amount of wear in keeping with the item's age and expected use?

RESOURCES

Interested in something specific?
These references will help.

Antiques & Art
The Art & Antiques
Dealers League of America
www.aadla.com

The National Antique & Art
Dealers Association of America
www.naadaa.org

*Antique Trader: Antiques &
Collectibles 2010 Price Guide*
Edited by Dan Brownell

*Antique Trader: Guide to Fakes
and Reproductions*
by Mark Chervenka

*Kovels' Antiques & Collectibles
Price Guide 2010: America's Most Popular
Antiques Annual*
by Terry and Kim Kovel

Ceramics
International Ceramic Directory
www.ceramic-link.de

Cut Glass
American Cut Glass Association
www.cutglass.org

Gems
American Gem Society
www.americangemsociety.org

Jewelry
*How to Tell Antique Jewelry
and Vintage Jewelry from New*
www.suite101.com, search "antique jewelry"

*Warman's Jewelry: Fine and Costume
Jewelry Identification and Price Guide*
by Kathy Flood

Sterling Silver
Online Encyclopedia of Silver Marks,
Hallmarks & Makers' Marks
www.925-1000.com

When to Bypass

CLOTHING: Put it back if it's stained, significantly torn or smelly. Factor in the expense of alterations and repairs if you choose something that needs major refurbishing.

HOUSEWARES: Don't buy dinnerware or glassware that's been repaired. It won't be as strong as new and may leak.

COLLECTIBLES: For high-ticket items, hire an appraiser.



Vintage butter dishes make great jewelry and watch holders.

8 Great Places to Shop

The best flea market for you is the one that's in your hometown; support your local stores! Because I live in Denver, my personal favorite is A Paris Street Market (WWW.APARISSTREETMARKET.COM), a European-style market that features a mix of fresh fruit, flowers, antiques, housewares and jewelry on the first Saturday of each month in summer.

The World's Best Flea Markets

1 LES PUCES DE SAINT-OUEN, known as Les Puces ("The Fleas") in Paris, is worth a vacation across the pond. It is the world's largest antiques market with a very colorful past. From the finest silver to monogrammed linens, it has everything. WWW.PARISPERFECT.COM/PARIS-FLEA-MARKETS.PHP

2 THE FIRA BROCANTE ANTIQUE AND FLEA MARKET in Barcelona, Spain, offers vintage housewares, furniture and assorted treasures. WWW.TRIPLANNINGGUIDE.COM/BARCELONA

3 THE BRIMFIELD SHOW, one of the world's largest antique shows, sells vintage dishes, linens and collectibles three times a year in Brimfield, Massachusetts. WWW.BRIMFIELDSHOW.COM

4 BROOKLYN FLEA has a wonderful assortment of antiques, salvage, handmade items and homemade treats. WWW.BROOKLYNFLEA.COM

5 ROSE BOWL FLEA MARKET in Pasadena, California, attracts big crowds, but you should be able to find what you're after. Go early. WWW.RGCSHOWS.COM/ROSEBOWL.ASPX

3 Hippest U.S. Markets

1 THE APARTMENT in San Francisco's Mission District carries urban and mid-century modern furniture and artwork. (415) 255-1100; no website

2 THE MELROSE TRADING POST in Los Angeles offers chic vintage clothing and furniture—and great people watching. Every Sunday. WWW.MELROSETRADINGPOST.ORG

3 BERKELEY FLEA MARKET in Berkeley, California, features wonderful finds for every type of home. Saturday and Sunday. WWW.BERKELEYFLEAMARKET.COM



Tiny vintage trophies become cozy holders for Good Lights Natural Candles (www.naturalcandles.com).



Be Careful with Cloth

Before you lose your heart completely to that vintage dinner dress or linens, slow down. Carefully check it inside and out, and inspect trim, pleats or ruffles for small holes, delicate webs or areas where the fabric looks thin. These flaws may indicate moth or other pest damage. Pass on it and find another frock that doesn't carry the risk of unwanted guests.

Wash all thrift-store finds in the hottest water that the manufacturer's label recommends before wearing or storing. Check out the following websites for more information.

Bedbug.com: www.bedbug.com/Page-Bedbug-tips-when-buying-secondhand-clothing_233.aspx

Fashion-Era: www.fashion-era.com/Vintage_fashion/a13_cleaning_vintage_tips.htm

The Vintage Connection: www.vintageconnection.net/PesteredByPests.htm

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RESOURCES

Antiques Roadshow Online
www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow

Collecting and Home
Furnishing Directory
www.collectics.com
nationwide directory of
antique and collectible shops

Flea Market Insiders
www.fleamarketinsiders.com
52ndwest.com
virtual showroom

Flea Market Style Magazine
www.fleamarketstylemag.blogspot.com

Flea USA
www.fleausa.com
state-by-state directory

The Thrifty Chicks
www.thethriftychicks.blogspot.com
green style tips

The Thrift Shopper
www.thriftshopper.com
national ZIP code-based direc-
tory of charity-driven thrift stores

Vintage Renewal
www.vintagerenewal.com
click on "Sold Products" for
ideas on re-making thrift
store furniture finds

A collection of gifts is wrapped
in antique linens and tied with
vintage ribbon, corsage pins and
jewels with old photos as gift tags.