



DIY Denim

Good news: Every style of jean is 'in' this holiday season

delegs. Skinny legs. High-waist. Not high-waisted.

If you want to buy denim, the age of popular styles this holiday season can leave even the fashion-vy hard-pressed to pick out the nt look. The flip side: You are just out assured of finding something it looks good on anyone.

That's why some retailers are ering more personalized ser- e in the form of "jeans experts" help customers make the most appropriate purchases.

"The rules for denim have really nged over the past few seasons," d National Jeans Co.'s online

denim expert, Carly Lundy. "Now, no matter your figure, your size, your height, your weight, you can always find a fit."

Denim experts say clean, dark washes are popular for a fancier look, while casual styles range from worn and tattered to classic bootleg or straight-leg cuts. Two of the hottest women's styles are at opposite ends of the spectrum: wide-leg and skinny-leg.

Taller, thinner women are reaching for the tight styles, while those with an athletic build might prefer higher-rise, wide-leg cuts.

Zafu.com has an eight-question survey to help shoppers find the "perfect jeans in three minutes." Site visitors shouldn't be shy about disclosing information about their "saddle bags" or "stick legs" and need

(1) William Rast Savory Bootcut When National Jeans Co. announced that Jessica Simpson wore this \$244 pair, sales of the brand increased 400 percent.

(2) 7 for All Mankind Ginger These casual, wide-leg, high-rise pants go for \$158 to \$185.

(3) J Brand 942 This low-rise, pencil-leg jean (\$160) has covered the bum of "Private Practice" heartbreaker Kate Walsh.

to determine whether they'd like the jeans to make their rear-end look "booty-licious" or make wider legs look "long and lean."

At Levi Strauss & Co., the company has phased out its glass "body scan" booths, introduced in 2005, whose technology traced a custom-

er's body and suggested sizes and styles. Instead, Levi's is relying on experts on the floor who can drive sales by guiding customers to the right style.

Customers are also driven by what their favorite stars are wearing. When Lundy noticed that pop star Jessica Simpson wore William Rast's Savoy Bootcut jeans on several occasions, she sent an e-mail out to customers. That drove sales of the style up 400 percent, and sales of the brand — with prices from \$230 to \$245 per pair — up 75 percent.

While shoppers may be more willing to spend a few hundred dollars on a pair of jeans, they're not buying as many, according to said Marshal Cohen, chief analyst at NPD Group. Overall jeans sales have risen just 1.2 percent so far this year, compared with 7.8 percent last year.

"A more discriminating purchase is being made," Cohen said. "It's not about the price anymore; it's not about sticker shock. It's about the look." LAUREN TARA LACAPRA (AP)