

S lathered in SPF 4 Bain de Soleil Orange Gelée while sipping a Gosling's Bermuda Rum Swizzle poolside is the ultimate way to enjoy a good book on vacation. But this indulgence comes with a price, as evidenced by my friend's oil-stained designer cover-up.

But life is meant to be lived, and unseemly mishaps are bound to happen (if you're having fun). We all want to prolong the life of an expensive Zegna suit or Chanel dress that has lived through many good times. However, dunking it in the infinity pool isn't the solution.

The best way to protect your investment is to use a reputable dry cleaner who knows how to care for high-end fine designer apparel. As we've all discovered, some dry cleaners are better than others. So what makes one superior?

A top-notch dry cleaner has a professional relationship with retailers of fine garments and often designers themselves. This helps him identify the fabrics and the best way to clean and ultimately save your expensive garments. Your fine clothing retailer can direct you to the most qualified dry cleaner for the brands they sell.

A couture cleaner's knowledge encompasses the proper way to treat fancy embellishments such as beading, feathers, leather and suede. Discuss with your cleaner what caused the stain to help him or her decide on the proper method for its removal. (Be honest!)

Different stains, such as protein-based (dairy, blood); tannins (wine, coffee, etc.); oil-based (butter, car grease, body

oil, that pesky Bain de Soleil); or dye (blueberries, permanent markers) all require different methods of removal.

One of the biggest mistakes you can make is attempting to remove the stain yourself. You risk destroying the fabric as well as permanently setting the stain. Your dry cleaner has the expertise to remove most stains, even invisible ones left by perfumes and cologne that can wreak havoc over time.

Here are some questions to ask before entrusting a dry cleaner with your fine garments:

- Do they send out the garments or clean them on-premise?
- Do they wrap specialty buttons to prevent scratching?
- Do they hand-iron and offer hand-finishing?
- Will they pre-measure and block those expensive Chanel, Brunello Cucinelli or St. John knits to their original shapes so they won't distort during cleaning?
- Do they offer rush services and tailoring?
- Is home pickup and delivery available?

A couture cleaner will provide all these services.

To be on the safe side, always do a trial run with a less-loved garment before committing an important piece to their service. And one last tip: When it comes to suit separates, have both pieces cleaned even if only one needs it so they show the same wear.

Until someone invents a virtual wardrobe from which to wipe away life's mishaps, the best option is to bring your threads to the professionals. Your apparel will thank you.

# KEEP IT CLEAN

**PREVENT YOUR CLOTHES  
FROM GETTING AS DIRTY AS  
YOUR BEACH READ.**  
BY HANS GSCHLIESSER

