

Just What You Needed: More Recipes for Dressing

Written by Alex Baer

Monday, 26 November 2012 22:40 - Last Updated Monday, 26 November 2012 22:44

The return to work -- Monday, after a long, holiday weekend: This is such a grim, dour moment in life that there's only one known antidote. And with that, we hereby *Break Glass and Pull Switch In Case of Emergency* -- and are rewarded with underpants news.

The good news: There is actually *some* underwear news. The not-so-good news: There wasn't much. News, that is -- although, now that you mention it, unmentionables are getting so tiny anymore that there's not much of them in *that* sense, either.

Well, to paraphrase a war criminal: You go to work the Monday following a long holiday weekend with the underwear you *have*, not the underwear you *wish* you had.

Buck up, remain strong, everyone -- and we'll get through this return-to-employment crisis together, patriotically clad in 100% American underwear!

On that elastic note of a pep talk -- and before anyone gets his or her bloomers in a wad and flags us a penalty for delay in story -- a pair of Queen Victoria's linen bloomers were auctioned recently in the UK, bringing about \$575, the BBC reports. (It was just one item, yet they are called a *pair* -- perhaps because they are *singular* at the top, but *plural* at the bottom.)

It was part of a larger auction of royalty's odds and ends, a sort-of royal rummage sale, with bids coming in from all around the world. Auctioneer James Grinter says the bloomers, 38 inches around at the waist, were sold to a collector. (The BBC very wisely failed to follow-up with the collector and ask what else might be in the collection, how the hobby got started, and why on Earth anyone would pay that much money for used underthings.)

However, Grinter said that many people like to collect clothing and "you can't get more personal than royal pants." He added, "We commented that Queen Victoria would not have been amused -- they were enormous and very rare."

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Also featured was a silver apple (almost \$6,000), a gilded carriage clock (\$7,800), and a piece of wedding cake from April this year (\$672). There is apparently a demand for stale wedding cake. Grinter said such things normally go for \$160 to twice that, although some have gone for as much as \$1600, leading some to think of old cake as investment vehicles.

Why such interest? "It's rare, has novelty, and I think people like to show it off to their friends," Grinter said.

(I have the uncanny feeling such *cake-responding* people are those who are as far outside my orbit of life as Uranus's is from the sun. Truly, I cannot imagine saying to anyone, "Care to come over to my place and see my collection of old, stale wedding cake?" I suspect the looks I'd get would at least equal those of the underwear collector, trying to lure over guests with promises of Queen V's bloomers.)

In all, 150 lots of what-not were up for grabs, with 146 of them selling, bringing in about \$67,000 in all.

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Who would have thought The New York Times, the Old Gray Lady herself, would have listings for articles sorted by category, with one of those categories being Underwear and Lingerie? Not me, obviously. So, I hereby sit corrected, and now fully modernized, brought up to speed with real life.

Once at that search juncture, one might enter the word "new," just to see what pops up. You'd be surprised what's new in the underwear world -- sheltered old me certainly was. Still am.

There are apparently a large number of pages devoted to such things. On the lead results page from that first search are options to display 9 full pages of entries, with the opportunity to select *Next* as well, and keep rummaging through articles of information on articles of underwear.

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It's a veritable bonanza of underthings, a cornucopia of underpants and such. You need never again suffer from a lack of updates regarding seamless undergarments, it seems.

Page one has some of these titles vying for one's attention:

- What civil war underwear tells us about the conflict
- An attempt to develop a business based on a dancer's wide exposure
- Online retailers are trying to lure women from in-store fitting rooms to new online tools
- Fruit of the Loom is trying to snag more young buyers, even if it means leaving the dancing fruits and leaves behind
- How a World Bank program with links to Victoria's Secret is helping impoverished women in South India via lingerie stitching

I mean, it goes on and on like this. True enough, though, there are some sideways grabs that seem awkward fits for the category. There's one piece on someone leaving a rugby field to help combat bullying and homophobia. There's another article that speaks to how your job may affect your fertility, but how a beer may not.

But, most of the articles appear to be earnest attempts to cover such undercover areas of inquiry.

There's a tale of a designer launching a new lingerie line, saying, "Feeling constricted by one's underwear just isn't my thing..." To which one can only respond, "Well, good for you, and we all applaud your determination to be unbound, both figuratively as well as literally." I mean, really: *I can relate.*

Still on Page One of search results, one article catches my eye for closer peering. (No, not pruriently so, for heaven's sake. This is official research here, after all, even if it is unpaid, and done on my own free time and my own dime.)

The piece is called, "Locked in at Macy's," by Vivian Awner, from November 19th. Just what it

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is about is unclear, and even less clear how underwear enters into the equation here. And, true to form and real life, it is destined to remain a mystery: I click to go forward and hit the wall that says I've hit my limit of ten free articles a month from NYT, and *wouldn't I really love to subscribe?*

Well, as much as I might love to do just that, folks at NYT, and a whole lot more in this life, I am currently unemployed and without funds -- yes, it is embarrassingly true, especially in a world where money is a mandatory password which must be constantly uttered, issued, and reissued, from the very first step of the day to the ultimate last.

But, sure -- thanks for asking about that subscription thing. (Sheesh. And after all the free column inches I've been handing out to you and your efforts over the years, you *ingrates*.)

Well, that leaves us little choice but to wrap up. Those looking for information as well as cheap thrills, should search for "underwear news briefs," and be surprised at what you find. I thought it might be a category of news that would pull up oddball stories. Instead, it found an apparently-famous blog featuring the latest news in men's underwear.

However, it appears to be underwear available exclusively to and for men with six-pack abs who have spent at least ten years of their lives juggling grand pianos, doing sit-ups while embracing anvils, and bench-pressing Buicks. *Talk about niche marketing.*

Of course, you can always go to other websites and type in *underwear* in their search boxes, and see what happens. For the heck of it, I tried it at AlterNet, the least underwear-oriented site that came quickly to mind. Even there, a *zillionteen* hits popped up. More surprising results:

- Save the oceans with your thong; get your underwear to match your social cause (or was that vice versa?)
- Underwear wars between or among underwear makers (everything's a *war* in media, for some reason)
- An article called, *Are Mormon Underwear Magic Between the Sheets?* (I swear I'm not making this up)

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- Another piece is called, *Expose Coal Company Lies -- With Your Underwear*. (There are, apparently, whole underwear universes co-existing with our own, previously undiscovered, until now.)
- Still another tale shouts, *Did Palin Use GOP Funds to Buy Her Children Underwear?*

At this point, I bail.

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I guess that lands us here at the end -- unless you want to consider some allied stories as you head to the exits, aiming to browse elsewhere.

There's the exhibition in Vienna that's wiggling out many people with its *shock-of-the-nude-male-form* displays.

Amusingly and tellingly, the museum had to cover up part of its advertising and display announcement posters, saying they had created public outrage.

And, of course, back at home, San Francisco has banned nudity in public places, triggering more back-and-forths over what constitutes freedom of speech. Good luck with *that* legal matter, of course. In this country, we still can't agree that corporations are not people, and money is not speech.

The whole boxers-or-briefs question pales before thick packages of legal briefs and the constitutional query of whether to brief or not brief at all.

Ay, there's the rub.

So to speak.

Bloomers & Etc.: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-20407850>

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The New York Times: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_New_York_Times

NYT underwear and lingerie search category: http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/subjects/l/lingerie_and_underwear/index.html

NYT underwear and lingerie, after entering the word "new": http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/subjects/l/lingerie_and_underwear/index.html?match=any&query=new&submit.x=15&submit.y=11&submit=Search

The AlterNet underwear search: <http://www.alternet.org/search/site/underwear>

Vienna exhibition: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-20218094>

SF's nudity ban: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-20399164>

Today's Fun Quote: When his wife asked Albert Einstein to change clothes to meet the German ambassador, he said, "They want to see me, here I am. If they want to see my clothes, open my closet and show them my suits."