

# S B L S

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LOCAL ESCAPES



# Cut From the Same Cloth

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Entering into what is safe to call the most \*unique\* start to a decade, the fashion industry has demanded taking a step back from in-season buying, and towards filling stores and closets with classic, timeless pieces.

Located conveniently on the vibrant Coast Village Road in Montecito, Allora by Laura is run by a passionate mother-daughter team, Laura Dinning and Taylorjane (TJ) Harlin, who find ebullience in helping others find the perfect items to express themselves. The boutique offers styles that marry fine European clothing with a soulful California attitude—think luxurious yet laid back. Growing up in different generations, I'm curious to learn about how their style has changed over the years, how they influence each other when it comes to fashion, and their tips for evolving our style as we age.

*The mother-daughter duo behind Allora by Laura discusses the evolution of their styles*

## How do you influence each other's style?

**LAURA:** A perfect example of being influenced by TJ's generation of dressing (for me) is illustrated by the following true event...a few years back the girls in the store were wearing their blouses, sweaters, t-shirts, etc. in a "front tuck" style. Now, I'm not sure where that look originated from (maybe from the trend then in higher waisted pants), but I hated it. To me, it looked half-done, not polished, too sloppy, and an excuse to not have to deal with proportionality. After months of this fashion debate, I found myself in a dilemma. I wanted to show off the detail on a trouser that I was wearing and reluctantly allowed myself to experiment with the dreaded front tuck because the top I was wearing was too bulky to tuck in completely. Well, in that moment I was re-inspired. I thought it looked great and I had to concede that indeed it was a viable and good-looking fashion statement.

**TJ:** My mom is the perfect example of fashion to me because she can rock so many different looks while still staying true to who she is. One day she's in her Southern California vibe with sandals and wooden bangles, and the next she's in an architectural top and modern black trousers. She is also the queen of monochromatic dressing. It inspires me to always mix things up and express how I feel that day.

## What's one style you can always agree on?

**LAURA:** Definitely the love for layering jewelry and multiple ear piercings.

## What are your top three tips for adjusting your style as you age?

**LAURA:** 1. Certain looks can become a person's trademark and should never be changed. It can be a way of wearing your accessories (like in a Chanel pearl necklace layered way) or sometimes it's your hairstyle or your eyewear.

2. Wearing bigger accessories or jewels as you age looks better. Now I can wear bigger baubles and beefier shoes, and it feels like daintier pieces don't make the statement.

3. Keep admiring people—everywhere—in the grocery store, at the beach, at a concert, in a restaurant, or just strolling down the street. You can find inspiration when and where you least expect it, and it can challenge you to don a look that you would have never tried. A color, a shape, or a skirt length can immediately interrupt your thinking about what looks good on you and how to express your ever-evolving self.

**TJ:** 1. Don't be afraid! I hear women in Allora all the time say "Oh that's too young" or "It's for someone your age" and it's

not! I might be young, but I know that if you put that tulle skirt on with a classic ballerina and a fitted blouse, you would stun a room at 60 years old. I also hear it vice versa, "It's a little matronly." My response is that if you slicked your hair back in a tight pony, put on some Kai Linz hoops, a swipe of lipstick, and a funky wedge, you would look amazing. Don't be afraid.

2. Three words. Closet clean out. This helps you understand what feels important to who you are (becoming and currently), sheds light on your lifestyle, and lets you know what holes your wardrobe has (or what you need to replace).

3. Find inspiration. I love getting re-inspired. A magazine article on a funky art curator's home can make me feel like I need to start hunting for some vintage pieces, or a swipe through Pinterest can make me feel like I need to streamline things.

## How has your style evolved over time?

**LAURA:** There are certain rules I follow that I have determined are just right for me. For example, I NEVER tie anything at my waist. I, therefore, look for drop-waisted styles, minimalist, biased cut dresses

that shape your waist without accentuating it. I also do not wear blazers anymore—although I love the look. Instead of jackets, I choose shawls, capes, cashmere, cropped ponchos. My style feels like it's relaxed over time and the silhouette is softer. Not less of a statement, but rather a less-is-more attitude.

**TJ:** My style has evolved as I learn about more of who I am. For example, my husband and close friends always joke with me that I never look "casual"—meaning my loungewear is somewhat non-existent. To run errands, I am still in a great jean and blouse, or a tent dress and sneakers. I tried for the last few years to nail my casual or "loungy" wardrobe and have found that it's not who I am...and that's okay! I also haven't pinholed myself into one "style." There are things that inherently speak to me, and things that feel like a risk, but gathering them all together and giving it my twist is how I would say my style evolves, in comparison to how I used to fall prey to trends. I have learned that if it looks good on you, it's in style.

## What's an example of a look at Allora you believe is timeless over generations?

**LAURA:** Diamond earrings, a Missoni top, a cashmere scarf, and a stretchy, slim legged, cropped black pant à la Audrey Hepburn.

**TJ:** Peter Cohen bias pant and ethnic blouse. It can be funkified with sneakers and chains, or worn elegantly to a cocktail party with a kitten heel and diamonds. You could be in 1945 or 2050 and still look so chic and current, yet classic. \*