

## Easy Ideas for Renaissance Garb

### Description

It's nearly time for the faire! If this will be your first visit to a renaissance fair or if you are tweaking your costume for this seasons festivities, historical accuracy will cross your mind at some point. You only have to be as accurate as you want to be. Though Queen Elizabeth didn't have machine embroidered lace anywhere in her wardrobe, the lace on most fair costumes is machine made. Like lace, some items are just more inexpensive and durable thanks to modern manufacturing methods. If you know how to make your own lace and enjoy doing so, by all means display this talent in your renaissance garb. If not, go for the modern equivalent with no fear of ending up in the stocks for the day.

A renaissance fair is usually staged in the 16th century, often during the reign of Elizabeth I. While the court is all from the same period, the other attendees may range from vikings to samurai. Chances are if the costume was fashionable 300 or more years ago, you'll fit right in. Though primarily based on British or European history and towns, it is not uncommon to see fair goers dressed as Persian traders, Japanese geisha, or even the stray elf or wizard. If the thought of a corset makes you gasp for breath these are all viable options.

Now that you have narrowed down your costume to a period and culture, it's time to start putting it together. If you have the skills or desire to make your own costume, the possibilities are endless. The Reconstructing History patterns we have available are a great place to start. Linen, being easy to work with, is a natural choice. For shirts and chemises I recommend earth tones such as our IL019 linen in wheat or pebble. Heavier weight linen works well for over skirts and bodices.

Another option is a costume shop. These are a good place to visit in person

or online to get a feel for what you want. Many have high quality, nearly authentic options. Some of these can be expensive, so be prepared. The costumes that pop up around Halloween usually don't work well. The material is often thin and contains a bit too much spandex. When looking for a ready made costume, fabric texture can make or break a look. Fabrics such as linen and cotton have a nice feel to them and lend a touch of authenticity to your garb. Look closely at the trim on the costumes. Often, the perfect costume is hiding underneath a particularly ugly piece of trim or obvious plastic rhinestone. If you can remove these easily, all the better. Also, a rather plain costume can be dressed up with a bit of ribbon or other addition. By blending ready made components such as a bodice with a handcrafted linen shirt you open up many possibilities.

Thrift stores are a veritable treasure trove for renaissance garb. When in doubt on what to wear, a peasant girl is a fine and noble choice. All you need is a long earth tone skirt, a shirt with flowing or balloon sleeves, and a vest. You can layer several skirts to add fullness. The vest can be altered to resemble a bodice with a pretty ribbon to lace it up instead of buttons. Linen skirts and vests are easy projects to make yourself as well, so focus on finding the items you can not or do not wish to fashion yourself. If you dig a little deeper you may find kimono style bath robes, Scottish tartans, or period costumes in need of a new home.

If white fabric seems too bright, tea staining can darken them up. Steep four or more tea bags, depending on how dark you want the item to be, in boiling water. Add a pinch of salt to set the dye, and then boil the item to be darkened for 10-15 minutes. Keep in mind the tannin in tea will soften stiff fabrics. Linen is especially receptive to tea dying and takes on a nice antiqued color. Save bright colors for the bodice or trim on your costume and stick to muted natural colors for the shirt and skirt to add authenticity.

As you can see, it is just the resemblance to accuracy that is important. It's the details that can make everyday clothes look like period garb. Make sure there are no visible zippers on your costume. Grommets and cord or ribbon are preferable over buttons for closures. Buttons can be removed and

replaced with grommets. Don't wear tennis shoes or spike heels. Ankle boots or leather sandals are the best option, depending on what period and culture you are going for. Find a comfortable pair of shoes since you'll be on your feet for most of the day. Simple hair styles, such as braids or buns, often look best. Make sure your jewelry and accessories fit the costume. A peasant girl did not wear diamond earrings or carry a designer handbag.

Most important, remember that putting together your fair garb should be fun. With a little creativity and a bit of skill you may find the perfect costume is already in your closet.

## **CATEGORY**

1. LIFE LOVERS

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