insider **FASHION**

Market Madness

lowers aren't the only thing flourishing this spring: Once merely a weekend pastime or a bargain hunters' stomping grounds, jashion markets have stepped into the spotlight as some of Chicago's most successful-and reliable—shopping scenes.

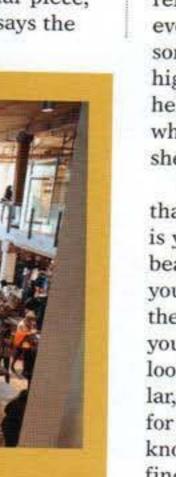
Thanks to the efforts of organizations such as Dose Market (River East Art Center, 435 E. Illinois St., 312.972.8400, dosemarket.com), Randolph Street Market (1340 W. Washington St., 312.666.1200, randolphstreetmarket.com) and Re.Stock 1047 W. Madison St., 312.243.9434, restockshop.com), the Windy City's most wealthy and fashionable are getting in on the action, clamoring to scoop up unbelievable market finds. Whether it's vintage, local or one-of-a-kind, these markets have got you-and your closet-covered.

Randolph Street Market, the veteran of the bunch, presents more than 200 booths chock-full of fashion relics dating all the way from the 1900s to the late

1980s. This indoor/outdoor shopbelts, shoes and hats from big-name designers such as Balenciaga, Prada, Halston Heritage and Hermès. Founder Sally Schwartz introduced the give quality, high-end vintage attire a home. The meticulously cared-for goods and notions (antique zippers, buttons, and lace) come to Schwartz after being discovered by vendors at estate sales or auctions. They bring their finds to the marketand her team then hone in on the real treasures. "We refine our merchandise down to only the best-I like to call it 'mint-age,' or vintage in mint condition," Schwartz says.

Even after the inventory has been pared down, however, scouring through all those goods can be overwhelming for shoppers. "I suggest two things: Either come with something specific in mind or [come] as a blank slate, willing to be inspired by a particular piece," Schwartz offers. She says the

ping bonanza is a vintage lovers' paradise, offering apparel, bags, monthly event in May of 2004 to place to sell at a profit. Schwartz



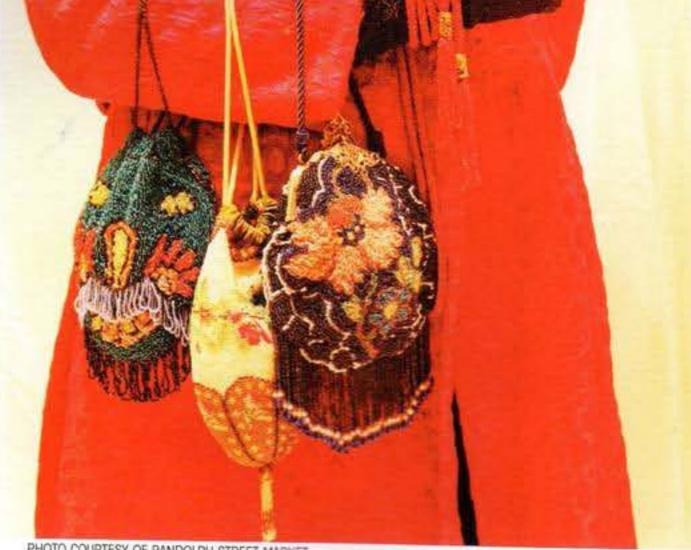


PHOTO COURTESY OF RANDOLPH STREET MARKET

market's vendors can also be a big help. "Many sellers are professional stylists and generously offer suggestions and fittings on site-take advantage of it! Buying vintage is an investment!"

Newcomer Dose launched in mid-2011 and offers goods from local budding fashion designers in addition to plenty of exclusive, handcrafted merchandise. The monthly indoor shopping experience is helmed by four of the city's top tastemakers, collectively known as The Dosettes-local Daily Candy editor Emily Fiffer; stylist April Francis of The Haute Closet: Jessica Herman, associate style editor at Time Out Chicago, and Heather Sperling, editor of Tasting Table's Chicago edition. With a unified goal to bring upand-coming style to Chicago, the group offers wares from the likes of Sir & Madame, Bodkin and Elegantly Wasted, to name a few. Fiffer recommends coming prepared to ensure a successful shopping venture. "Be sure to check out the website to see the full list of vendors. [It's] usually released a week before the event, and [you can] read about some of the upcoming market highlights on the blog. This can help you make a game plan of what you want to prioritize." she says.

Once you're there, Fiffer says that going straight to the source is your best bet. After all, the beauty of Dose is that it connects you-the shopper-directly with the designer. "Talk to the vendors you're buying from. If you're looking for something in particular lar, ask! They may have a solution for you," Fiffer says. "You mere know what you'll learn-or find—unless you ask

Julie LaBarge had such success with the designer sample sale she launched in 2009, Re.Stock, that she was inspired to work toward a permanent version in a West Loop warehouse. Keeping the company's overhead low to price items fairly in return, LaBarge stocks current styles from Valentino, Tom Ford, Ralph Lauren and Robert Cavailli at up to 90 percent off retail prices, without all the manic crowds. Updating the inventory on a monthly basis, LaBarge's quick turnaround allows her to maintain a constant influx of unique and high-end merchandise.

While sizing options are plentiful at Re.Stock, LaBarge does suggest that shoppers be ready to test the fit of the items they've got their eyes on. "Be prepared to try on the samples. There is a myth that all samples are small sizes; either 2 or 4. This is false. We also carry overstock, which [ranges in size frum small to XXL," she says. "[In fashion,] there are two Spring/Summer and Fall Winter. For each designer, there will be anywhere from 25 to 2004 designer samples for a season. When we get...designer samples, every single piece is afferent. There is only one piece and one size. There are no two pieces alike, and some of the pieces are one-of-kind [mems] that [were] never put into production."

No matter which market you choose to shop, LaBarge cites the manber one rule of shopping a market Shop with an open mind You never know what world discover hiding there amongst the racks! -Byrum Flitsch