

Jan Casey shows off one of her favorite handbags out of the dozen in her 'collection.'  
Photos by Lyle Cox.

# For the Love of Handbags

With handbags, form doesn't always follow function ... unless the function is the creation of a personal style. One Central Oregon woman discusses her obsession with handbags and what she looks for in this accessory.

It was love at first sight.

When Jan Casey first spotted a black Bulga bag with its shiny gold clasp and leather fringe, she knew she had to have it.

But that statement bag came with a bold price tag too. So she waited and waited. Then one lucky day, it was on sale and she took it home.

So began Casey's collection of purses — now about one dozen — all created with unique designs and top-quality construction.

Once she discovered bags beyond the department store, there was no turning back from the exceptional style and quality that just isn't found in mass produced bags.

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“It’s like collecting artwork,” said Casey. “They’re all so different.”

Casey has always enjoyed handbags, shoes and accessories. However her approach to fashion changed when her lifestyle did, and now handbags are her weakness.

She moved to Bend three years ago from the San Francisco Bay Area where she wore suits and rarely changed her bag. Today she prefers casual, tailored pieces with unique bags.

“Changing your handbag can change your outfit totally,” said Casey. “Get a jazzy handbag to make it pop.”

She keeps her purse contents organized so it’s easy to change bags, from the black and white pin-striped clutch one day to the red bag another.

“I didn’t have much of a purse passion until I went into Clutch. It’s such a unique store,” Casey said of the downtown Bend handbag boutique, crediting owner Larie Borden with expanding her sense of handbag style.

Casey enjoys the frequent compliments she gets on her handbags. She finds it ironic that on visits to the Bay Area, her city friends ask where she got her stylish handbag. When she answers “Bend, Oregon,” they often don’t know where it is.

Casey said it’s hard to choose a favorite bag since she “loves each one of them for their own uniqueness.” Yet one brown leather bag with gold rivets is “very cool” and gets noticed for the unexpected red and blue lining with an animal print.

She also likes the small cosmetic and coin purses she has so she can slip money into them for a quick trip to buy milk.

“Because the styles are unique, they are not going to become outdated,” Casey said. “They’re hip.”



## Cultivate Your Own Handbag Style:

**Don't be Matchy-Matchy:** Bags don't need to match shoes or anything else for that matter. Casey is considering purple for her next bag to pop with winter grays.

**Remember Proportion:** Look at yourself in a full-length mirror to see if the bag works for your stature. Casey says as a tall woman, she can wear larger bags.

**Buy Quality:** Casey appreciates the fine workmanship of her bags and knows the good quality will last forever.

**Think Outside the Bag:** Casey said one clutch-style bag she has, which is lined in gold leather, at first seemed like an evening bag. With her new open-minded approach, she likes to carry that bag with jeans.

**Take Good Care of Them:** When she travels, Casey packs purses in the felt bag which often comes with nicer purses to prevent scratches. Store purses empty and don't pile things on top of them.

