

TECH



## BIG NEWS ABOUT SMALL FORKS

Why using a little one means you'll eat more, L9

## A TASTE OF PARIS

Creamy quiches worth a visit to petit café, L3



### STYLE



KEITH BEATY/TORONTO STAR

J. Crew's styling has made Jenna Lyons one of the most influential designers in America. A look inside its Yorkdale mall store, L4.

# Jenna Lyons and the J. Crew cult

Cult-favourite retailer and its design demi-goddess bring magnetic mix of timeless and trendy pieces to Toronto



Jenna Lyons, creative director and president of J. Crew. The American retailer with a cult following opens its Toronto store Aug. 18 at Yorkdale Mall.

DERICK CHETTY  
FASHION REPORTER

The cultish appeal of J. Crew can be traced directly to one woman: Jenna Lyons.

As president and creative director for the U.S. chain's women's, men's and kidswear, she is the visionary force behind the khakis, bold colours and stripes peddled by the retailer. Her personal style is the object of many style bloggers' obsession.

It's not just Lyons' skill at blending high- and low-cost items in one outfit — and over and over again in J. Crew stores and catalogues — that appeals to fashion observers. It's also her ability to turn classic apparel into the most desired and exciting things to own right now that has made her one of the most influential designers in America.

J. Crew opens its only international store Thursday, a hotly anticipated 5,000-square-foot space in Toronto's Yorkdale Shopping Centre that will stock women's clothing and accessories.

The design demi-goddess toured Canada in early August, scouting locations in Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton for the re-

tailer's next store, before returning to J. Crew offices in New York City.

The *Star* spoke to Lyons earlier this week about sequins, style icons and how shoppers can navigate the abundance of designers and retailers to create a personal look. This is an edited version of that interview.

**As you travelled across Canada scouting for store locations, what did you come to think J. Crew will bring to Canada that is lacking in terms of fashion?**

I wouldn't say there is a lot lacking in fashion. Maybe a niche that is not completely developed. I was sitting in a coffee shop in Vancouver and I felt I could have been in New York, I could have been in Connecticut, I could have been in California.

There are customers out there looking for classic clothes — a great trench coat, a beautiful cable-knit sweater — just beautiful, classic, iconic styles. I'm hoping we offer a wide range of colours.

CLASSIC continued on L4

### GETTING HITCHED

## Splashy weddings in China cost up to \$60,000

But the average monthly salary is a meagre \$600

APRIL FONG  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

SUZHOU, CHINA—Qin Yunxia is tired. On a sweltering 40C day, she has trawled through China's largest wedding market, a sprawling block of more than 1,000 stand-alone shops in the silk-making city of Suzhou in search of dresses for her big day.

Armed with a parasol, with two girlfriends by her side, the bride-to-be is not just searching for a single dream dress.

Qin's shopping list includes a cream satin wedding gown, an evening gown in pink, red or green and a red qipao, the traditional body-hugging dress.

"My dream is to have a traditional and elegant wedding, but with princess elements," says Qin.

WEDDING continued on L5

### SALICY LADY

## Chefs serve up tasty menus for survival



JENNIFER BAIN

Attention Walmart shoppers: Disaster cooking demo in Able 3.

Okay, so it didn't happen quite like that. But there was a disaster demo at a Scarborough Walmart recently. It was in the garden centre and about a dozen staff came to watch. There was no public announcement, but some bemused shoppers wandered by.

The Canadian Red Cross invited two chefs to show how to make "delicious and nutritious meals in times of emergencies, using only non-perishable food and no electricity."

Vegan chef Doug McNish rose to the challenge first. With the help of Caleb Silver, his friend's 6-year-old son, McNish opened three cans of organic beans, tossed them with dried herbs, olive oil, bottled lemon juice and a whisk of shelled hemp seeds. It was an eye-catching, protein-rich salad.

DISASTER continued on L2

## LIVING

# Wear less makeup, more colour

CLASSIC from L1

Great colour is what we specialize in, and I was excited to see people wearing colours and stripes, which are some of my favourite things. It's not necessarily about bringing something that is missing but brightening things a touch.

You've been selling a Canadian brand on your website and in stores: *Want Les Essentiels de la Vie*, a bag line from Montreal. Do you have plans to sell other Canadian labels? I did a whirlwind tour (of Canada) so I didn't get a chance to shop and look at other Canadian brands but absolutely we are open to that. We don't select by origin but by great product. We met Byron and Dexter (Pearl, designers of the Montreal-based line) and became more fascinated with them than anything else. They are the most adorable twins I've ever seen.

In terms of fashion, what do you think women want?

Women want to look individual. I think the days of looking like everybody else is gone.

There is so much stuff out there now — designers, collections and retailers. How does the average woman navigate this?

We have something in the catalogue called *Jenna's Picks* — which was not my idea by the way. We've seen a lot of success with that.

I agree there is an intense saturation in the market in terms of information and product and so many ways to communicate with the customer and I do think it's become overwhelming.

So I think having an opportunity to edit is helpful to people and that's a reason we work with other brands as well. We want people to say (they) can shop with us because we will help curate things for you so you don't have to look at everything.

The merchandise seem to be changing at J. Crew. It's not as preppy. (There are fewer) ruffles and sequins. It's more cleaned up. Why change a successful formula?

The idea of a formula is a tricky conversation. Fashion is evolutionary and needs to evolve. That was our look and we were doing it and we turned around and we were seeing it in a lot of different places...

We felt it was time to move on and forward. It doesn't mean that those things wouldn't come back and we certainly have sequins and ruffles but we've toned it down and highlighted other things, like a coloured pant or beautiful tailored shirt and those things, interestingly, we are seeing our customer going in that direction as well.

J. Crew catalogues are meticulously styled. Are you involved with that? Is that part of the design process? It's our way of being unique and individual. The catalogue comes out 14 times a year. We can show the same item — the cord pant, jacket cardigan or cashmere turtleneck — and each month is an opportunity for us to take that item that you may already own or you thought wasn't for you and show you a different way to wear it.

The styling is just as much a part of our DNA and part of our visual vernacular that people relate to just as much as the clothes are.

Your most famous customer is Michelle Obama. Now that she is a style icon, is she an inspiration? What I love about her, in terms of inspiration, is not necessarily designing clothes for her. It's the way she connects with everyday people.



KEITH BEATY PHOTOS/TORONTO STAR

J. Crew specializes in colour, says creative director Jenna Lyons. The retailer's Yorkdale store opens Thursday and carries its signature striped shirts, coloured pants and timeless classics, like this trench coat, for women.

She'll wear a *Comme des Garçons* sweater with an *Alain* skirt with a J.Crew cardigan, showing people they don't have to wear all designer clothes to look beautiful. I love the fact that she is not a size 2. She is a normal, beautiful, healthy woman and incredibly fit.



How do you approach shopping for yourself?

I have a huge appreciation for clothes. I love all clothes. I don't discriminate. Everything from pulling things from lookbooks, going online, going to stores. I'm an obsessive shopper.

You're 43 years old and six feet tall. Should women dress for their age or body type?

Body type is the first thing. I've always advocated that if you are curvy, wear sexy dresses; if you are straight, dress like a boy.

Working towards your strengths and actually not worrying about trends is something I've always been a huge proponent of. I think people get tripped up about, "Oh should I wear those skinny pants?" If you don't feel comfortable wearing those skinny pants, don't wear the skinny pants. The most stylish women have always played towards their strengths.



## A sneak preview

Get a tour of the new J. Crew store at [thestar.com/living](http://thestar.com/living)

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As far as age goes, there is nothing more tragic than someone who is trying to look too young. This country and society does a number on women and the pressure to be perfect at any age is really unbelievably challenging.

When observing women, what are some of the things you frequently notice that can be corrected easily in terms of style?

The No. 1 is too much makeup. It the kiss of death for anyone.

The other thing I see people doing is insisting they are a size 6 when they are really a size 8.

Don't worry about the number on the clothes.

Does it feel comfortable? Do you look great in it?

Wearing clothes that are too tight is never good.

And I think people underestimate how important smiling and having a firm handshake can make you so much more beautiful.