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Food for Thought

The Not-So-Tragic Demise of the Opinionated Apron

By **Hanna Raskin**, Mon., Aug. 9 2010 @ 11:54AM
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There's a growing number of apron collectors who scour eBay and antique shops for pretty, frilly pinafores. But **apron expert** EllynAnne Geisel says there still isn't much interest in what she calls "opinionated aprons."



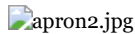
"I think there are too many beautiful designs out there," says Geisel, author of *The Apron Book* and curator of an apron exhibit that's slated to return to the DFW area next January.

Yet Geisel thinks aprons with slogans are as revealing of societal sentiments as the dainty gingham and paisley numbers that preceded them.

"One of the things about opinionated aprons is they're mass-produced," Geisel explains, "so there's safety in that. You're not standing out there alone saying 'For this, I went to college?'"

Although aprons amplifying their wearers' aggravation date back to at least the 1950s, Geisel says the 1970s are considered the heyday of opinionated aprons. In the years when the ERA seemed achievable, apron makers didn't shirk at depicting their product as an "icon of strangulation." Plus, the unisex, chef-style apron that 1970s cooks favored provided plenty of room for writing.

Geisel doesn't think opinionated aprons have much of a future: "They're on their way out," she says. But for prospective collectors who'd like to make a specialty of sloganeering aprons, City of Ate here presents five classics:



I Hate Housework

Gesiel likes to wear a circa 1950s apron emblazoned with this straightforward slogan when she's lecturing. "All I can figure is someone wore it when she did housework," she says.

Why Is This Night Different From All Other Nights? Don't Ask!

This apron, designed for harried home cooks readying for Passover, is representative of the ethnic apron genre that emerged in the 1970s.

Kiss the Cook

Perhaps the quintessential apron slogan, the cook who wants to be kissed is just seeking appreciation.

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The anatomically correct apron

In addition to popular aprons that seemed to reveal what was under the apron wearer's clothes, novelty shops stocked suggestive aprons like the one in Geisel's collection that features a zipper positioned over the crotch. "It says 'open for emergency use'," Geisel says. "There are some filthy aprons out there. Of course, they're for when everyone's had a whiskey sour or two."

It's Still Work

An example of the "honeymoon's over" apron, this apron implies the housewife's a prisoner in her own home. "There is a lot of negative apron speak out there," Geisel says.

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apron's gone

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