

Change it Up

We're all guilty of it. We see a sample made or a picture in a book/magazine and think "That's exactly what I want to make!". Then we head to the yarn department to find the exact yarn that was used. This is where the "fun" begins.

Sometimes the designer used a yarn that was provided by the manufacturer, sometimes they used something from their stash. And sometimes we fall in love with an item from two years ago, and the yarn is no longer being made. Your favorite store (and we're hoping that's Erica's) can't carry every yarn that's out there, but we do carry a range of fibers and every weight. You may have to go with plan B – especially if you want to get started right NOW!

It's ok to choose a different yarn than the original. Sometimes, when the original is no longer available, it's necessary. Please remember, we're here to help! We can suggest great substitutions and help with your choices. If you're shopping online, you can still ask questions and we'll do our best to get the answers. It's not as difficult as you think, as long as you remember a few simple rules.

First, **check the gauge** of the original. Notice the number of stitches per 4" (not sure where they came up with 4"- need to research that) and the size needle used. Then check out the yarns that have a similar gauge. This is usually noted on the label. European labels tend to show a small square with numbers around the sides- the number on the bottom of the square is the gauge. Take a look at the suggested needle size also. If the pattern calls for a 24 stitch gauge with a size 7 needle, then the yarns you consider should be close to, if not exactly, that (for example, a 25 stitch on a 6 or a 22 stitch on an 8 should work, with a bit of adjustment).

Next, **consider the fiber**. If the original was done in wool, the stitches will look a certain way, and the fabric will drape a certain way. If you choose cotton instead, remember the drape will be very different (much softer), but the stitch appearance should be similar. If the original yarn had a bit of fuzz, the item will look different if you use a smooth yarn. Sometimes different is great, sometimes not.

Third, **watch your yardage**. If the original requires 1000 yards, be sure you purchase at least 1000 yards. I prefer using the yardage rather than the weight as this is a more exact way to compare. 100 yards of a wool may weigh differently than 100 yards of cotton, but

100 yards IS 100 yards.

See, you can change it up and create a one-of-a-kind item! If you're thinking about starting something new, here is some information on the **trends for Fall**. Colors, styles, and items change from season to season and year to year. While it's great to be in style, remember you're knitting/crocheting to please yourself or someone else, so choose what you will use and enjoy. Having said that, it's still fun to see what's happening out there.

Colors for Fall will be a bit more subtle, slightly grayed. A pale grey, a soft blue/grey, beige, and light brown are the neutral range. The colorful side of the scale includes teal, cedar green, a rich purple, a strong pink (rose), rosy orange and greenish yellow. You can see the range at <http://www.pantone.com/> (select Fall 2011 Fashion Color Report under "Features").

As for **what yarns will be "in"**, we're seeing loads of mohair (often used for shawls, but really lovely as sweaters or scarves) as well as bulky yarns, especially roving types. There are a variety of bulky "chain" yarns- these look like the strand is already knitted, making them super cozy and super light. Novelty yarns are also easing back into the mix, adding a bit of fun to projects. We've seen ruffling yarn, beaded yarn and a little metallic.

As far as **fashion styles** go, big sweaters are being shown almost everywhere, from fashion runways to knitting magazines. These look SO cozy, and when they are done with a bulky yarn, they knit up quickly. Please remember, if you can knit it, you can crochet it too! You'll need more yarn for a crochet version, but the colors and style thoughts work for either craft. Lace is also out there, not always in a fine yarn as we normally think of it, but often done in a bulky weight, for scarves and wraps. Cables were big last fall, but I'm still seeing them in many magazines. I really like the simple tunic style pieces that are beginning to show up – think two rectangular panels attached at the shoulders and part way down the sides- too easy to knit and a great place to show off a special yarn, interesting stitches or fun texture. These panels would be great in crochet too, either simple rows or done in squares or other shapes.

Be trendy, be classic, be creative! And remember, it's ok to change it up a bit!

by Cathy Mark

