

Not your grandma's SLIPCOVERS



Crate & Barrel

The Willow sofa cover is available in easy-to-care-for fabrics from Crate & Barrel.

Thanks to the economy, they're
in demand with stylish, versatile
options that go beyond plastic

By **TARA NURIN**
For the Courier-Post

Mention "slipcovers" in a crowd of people and someone within earshot will snicker about grandmother's house, where the parlor furniture was coated with impenetrable plastic and only the best company sat on it.

But vinyl slipcovers have changed with the times.

"In the past couple of years we've really kicked it up a notch as far as the types of

courierpostonline
WEB EXTRA **.com**

■ Tips for slipcover care. Add **/yourlife**.

fabrics we're using," says Nancy Cartisano, senior vice president of Sure Fit, a slipcover manufacturer that reaps 75 percent of the industry's sales.

The change has not gone unnoticed in



Sure Fit

National online retailer Sure Fit offers Cotton Duck covers for chairs.

See **SLIP**, Page 2C

Slip/Today's styles are fun and better fitting

Continued from Page 1C

the market, which in 2009 rewarded the New York City-based Sure Fit with some of the highest profits in its 95-year history. After decades fighting obsolescence, slipcovers have been nudged back into favor by a lingering economic downturn.

Sure Fit — which sells online and in home stores — boasts an expanding collection of spandex velvet and faux leather fabrics in contemporary patterns and solids that can complement any decorating scheme. It and other companies also have extended their lines to enhance individual cushions and fit a growing number of furniture pieces — from recliners to wing chairs — along with coordinated curtains, pillows and throw rugs.

"It's the alternative to buying new furniture," says Cartisano, who believes her customers are trying to avoid hefty purchases while also saving money on outside entertainment.

For consumers, a new slipcover inexpensively hides stains and signs of age, offers a fresh look on a tired room and provides the opportunity to dress up a home seasonally. When they get dirty, they can be removed and machine washed, a benefit long appreciated by par-

MORE INFORMATION

- Sure Fit: (888)-796-0500 or www.surefit.com
- Ethan Allen: 489 Route 38 W., Maple Shade, (856) 667-7333 or www.ethanallen.com
- Crate & Barrel: Cherry Hill Mall, 2000 Route 38, Cherry Hill, (856) 662-5499 or www.crateandbarrel.com
- Teresa Tocco-Davenport: (856) 294-9173, www.absolutelivingtoday.com

ents of young children and owners of hairy pets.

But slipcovers are not the solution for everyone. For instance, parents and pet owners should realize that although manufacturers hype the covers' washability, most families don't own a washing machine big enough to hold the cover for a large sofa. And despite the addition of stretchable, form-fitting fabrics, a generic cover is unlikely to fit perfectly.

"They're sometimes loose and baggy, so if you like the shabby chic look, then that's for you," says Teresa Tocco-Davenport, an interior designer who owns Absolute Living Today in Woolwich Township.

"If not, you might have to push it into the crevices and tighten it up a little bit. Your best bet, if you really want to get slipcovers, is to get a



Sure Fit and other companies also have extended the lines to enhance individual cushions and fit a growing number of furniture pieces — from recliners to wing chairs — along with coordinated curtains, pillows and throw rugs.

Photo provided

seamstress to come out and make one for you."

You can buy ready-made covers at discount and home stores, but it may be worth making an initial investment in a sofa frame that comes with fitted cushion covers and can be washed and updated over time. With a location in Maple Shade,

Ethan Allen sells several types of these couches, as does Crate & Barrel, where they're priced between \$1,499 and \$3,000.

"They're very easy to care for and you don't even need to Scotchgard," says Michael Robinson, assistant manager at the chain's Cherry Hill Mall store. "But they

are natural fabrics so they will fade."

To determine whether a slipcover makes sense for a renovation, Tocco-Davenport recommends browsing magazines and showrooms for ideas. This season, she says, what's in are solid, neutral colors, especially when accented by patterned

pillows that tie together other hues in the room.

If there's some hesitation over whether the cover will enhance the room or fit snugly enough, Tocco-Davenport advises, "Try it at home."

"If you don't like it, you can return it."

Marry/Combining styles in the new home

Continued from Page 1C

a design show with her. But some nights, "These ideas start percolating. We're watching and he says he loves something, and sometimes I'm like, 'No way. That is ugly.'"

It's possible to decorate without battling, says interior designer Kathryn Bechen of Solana Beach, Calif., who teaches a seminar called "Decorating without Divorcing." But conflict is common when both partners weigh in on which sofa to buy and where to put it.

Bromstad suggests couples approach a joint decorating project by going together to favorite "bars, restaurants ho-

Money is a common source of arguments, so Bechen advises couples to agree on a budget in advance. Designer Brian Patrick Flynn, founder and editor of the online design magazine decorde-mon.com, says it's important to discuss priorities.

"If she wants to spend \$1,500 on a nice damask wallpaper," Flynn says, "he may think \$1,500 for something that goes on a wall is ludicrous. But maybe he just spent \$1,800 on surround sound."

"They need to compare notes on how much they value certain things."

Candace Moody and her husband, Thom, have spent portions of their 30-year mar-

els.

Today, they have a home in Florida. "When people come in, they say, 'Your house feels so much like you.' And it does," Moody says. "It's us together. It's our story."

Shades of gray and green are gender neutral, and couples often agree on them, according to Flynn. Even some purples — deep royal purple, for instance, or a rich violet — tend to appeal to both sexes. Again, planning and discussion help. As they look at specific shades, couples may find they agree on more than they expected.

When decorating an entire room, says Bromstad, start by agreeing on one major piece — perhaps the bed or sofa

sometimes creates the best result.

"If he wants to use a pair of masculine, leather club chairs," says Flynn, "let her choose a pink throw pillow. It's still a man's chair, but you're bringing in that little ounce of femininity."

Bromstad agrees: Let one person pick a modern sofa, while the other chooses an antique looking, ornate side table. Or if one partner has an old heirloom piece of furni-

ture, let the other partner choose a nontraditional color to paint it. Bold contrast looks great, and leaves everyone feeling represented.

If you have enough space, Bechen suggests letting each person have one room that's entirely theirs to decorate. That tends to make compromising in other rooms more palatable.

If disagreements get heated, Flynn says, bringing in an outside voice can help restore

the peace. Interior designer will do a consultation, offer for just a few hundred dollars giving you detailed design recommendations and information about resources.

In the end, says Bechen, "the focus should be on the relationship," not the rooms.

"The purpose of organizing and decorating is to enhance the relationship," she says, "not the other way around."



HADDONFIELD HOME

