

Behind The Buy

EVER WONDER HOW A BRIDAL BOUTIQUE DECIDES WHICH GOWNS EARN A SPOT ON THE RACK? WE JOINED THE TEAM FROM TRUDYS BRIDES — A SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA INSTITUTION SERVING BRIDES FOR 50 YEARS — AT THE NATIONAL BRIDAL MARKET CHICAGO FOR AN INSIDE LOOK.

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The showroom floors of a bridal market hum with an anticipatory energy, not unlike a wedding. Racks of gowns — draped on models, mannequins, and hangers alike — line the walls as buyers from the country's top boutiques move between appointments. They review fabrics, silhouettes, and details that will shape the season ahead. For Trudys Brides owner Steven Blechman, every purchase is made with one person in mind: the bride.

"It's not really about what we like," Steven says. "It's really the customers."

Founded by Steven's parents, Trudy and Roger Blechman, the boutique has spent half a century outfitting brides across Northern California. Steven carries the mom and pop spirit forward, cultivating close relationships not only with brides but with the designers themselves. At market, Steven and General Manager and Buyer Didi Stout meet with a tight roster of trusted partners — Maggie Sottero, Morilee, Enzoani, Allure Bridals, Eddy K, and Mon Cheri among them — working collaboratively to bring the right mix of gowns back home.

THE STRATEGY BEHIND THE SELECTION

The Trudys team comes to Chicago prepared. Months of conversations with designers and in-store feedback from brides shape a clear plan. By the time Steven and Didi hit the floor, they're not browsing. They're executing a strategy built for the Trudys bride, based on what customers are asking for, which styles are selling well, and where gaps exist in their current inventory.

At the heart of that game plan is evolution, not reinvention. The strongest designers, Steven says, refine what already works: a new sleeve treatment here, a reimagined neckline there, a subtle shift in silhouette on an already beloved gown. These fresh takes on proven designs often resonate most with brides. "When designers lean into that, our girls are smiling, and they know a dress could be a winner," Steven says.

A typical buy might run 20 to 24 pieces. Roughly 60 percent is

dedicated to restocking bestsellers — styles that have already earned their place on the floor and in brides' hearts. "The tested and tried and true," Steven calls them. The remaining 40 percent is reserved for emerging trends that designers have found success with or brides have been asking for.

WHAT'S COMING DOWN THE AISLE

This season, sleeve treatments are having a major moment — delicate, considered details that add a romantic dimension to any silhouette. Defined waists continue to reign, while beaded gowns are making a confident return.

The color palette is equally refined. Designers are leaning into softer, timeless ivory-on-ivory tones. Overall, the mood is romantic and classic, with a subtle shift away from the ultra-sheer, "naked" aesthetic that has dominated the industry in recent years.

From delicate sleeves to ivory-on-ivory color palettes and show-stopping beaded details, the bridal looks coming down the runway at the National Bridal Market Chicago signal a return to soft romance.

"Everyone's going a little more tasteful, a little more traditional," Steven notes.

SETTING THEM APART

What truly sets Trudys apart isn't just the selection; it's the depth of relationships behind every dress on the rack. Steven and Didi approach market as partners, not just purchasers. They share dinner with brand leadership, bring sales data to the table, and advocate specifically for the California bride. That collaboration translates

directly to the in-store experience.

The boutique hosts exclusive preview events, giving brides early access to new collections. Their consultants are genuine experts in each designers' aesthetics, guiding brides with insight and intention. The goal is to create a connection, not just between bride and dress, but between bride and designer. "I want every bride who comes into our store to feel like we're an amazing representative of that brand," Steven says.

It's a commitment that extends

beyond any single appointment.

With a wide range of styles, sizes, and price points, Trudys is designed to meet women at every stage, whether they first walk through the doors for a prom dress, return for a wedding gown, or shop years later for another milestone moment.

"It's not just about ringing someone up at the register," Steven says. "There's so much fear that goes into women shopping — moms, brides, prom girls. We make them feel like we're their hype people, and when they

Trudys Brides owner Steven Blechman (above center) and General Manager and Buyer Didi Stout (above left) move between show-room appointments, reviewing silhouettes, studying fabrics, and handpicking gowns for their San Jose boutique.

look in the mirror they feel amazing."

After five decades, that focus remains unchanged. The process may start on a buzzing showroom floor in Chicago, but it ends in a personal, once-in-a-lifetime moment: a bride seeing herself in the dress for the first time. Fifty years of earning a bride's trust doesn't happen by accident — it grows one appointment and one perfectly chosen gown at a time.

"We're in a business of making dreams come true," Steven says. "And I don't take that lightly."

