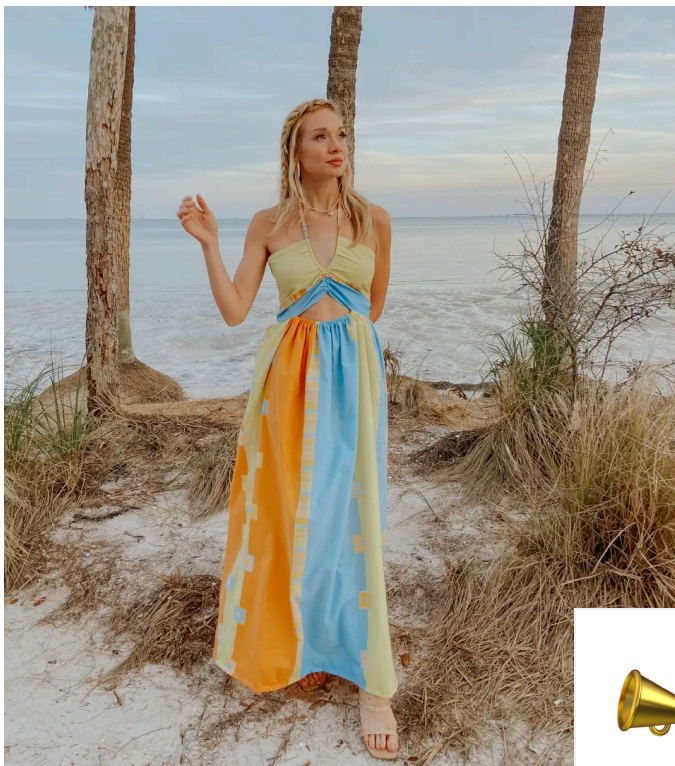


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Sewing without Joann: Where to find fabric and supplies in Tampa Bay



Kathryn Varn



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A couple of Renckens' favorite outfits made from thrifted fabric — mostly bedsheets. Photos: Courtesy of Ali Renckens

- That's part of why the [fabric and craft retailer's closure](#) is so sad, Renckens, of St. Petersburg, told Axios: It's integral to beginners.

Yes, but: These days, as a seasoned seamstress who models her handmade clothes [on Instagram](#), Renckens finds fabric almost exclusively from a less-conventional source: the linens section at local thrift stores.

Why it matters: Renckens' use of thrifted bedsheets, tablecloths and more offers DIYers a creative way to source fabric in lieu of the well-tread path to Joann.

- "It's such a great sustainable and cost-effective option," she said.
- Plus, cheaper fabric means less pressure to get it right the first time. "It gives you a lot of freedom to just start and to experiment," she said.

State of play: While getting back into sewing over the last 2-3 years, Renckens stumbled across YouTube videos of DIYers turning vintage linens into outfits and thought, "Oh, I could do that!"

- Her outfits show just how far she's come: a [Winter Wonderland dress](#) with fur trim made from a curtain; [red gingham shorts](#) made from a tablecloth; and [a dupe](#) of a \$280 [Reformation two-piece set](#) made from pillowcases she thrifted for \$2.

Her tips: Be flexible. Thrifting is hit or miss.

- Pay attention to fabric quality. Touch it yourself, but also look for a tag with the fabric composition.
- Look for holes, discoloration and other imperfections to ensure you have enough fabric for your project.

Her favorite thrift stores: [Sunshin](#) [here](#)).



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👋 **Kathryn's thought bubble:** I also talked to Jennifer Fairbanks, founder of [Sew Pinellas](#), about local fabric stores she'd recommend in lieu of Joann. (I took the studio's intro to sewing class in January and loved it!)

- [Sew Pinellas](#) sells fabric and other supplies at its location in Lealman. That includes stock from The House of Make Believe, a costume store in Clearwater that closed last year, Fairbanks said. She also takes requests and will likely travel to Los Angeles later this year to source more fabric.
- [Bottom of the Bin](#) sells secondhand art and craft supplies at storefronts in Seminole and Brandon.
- [Lakeland Fabric Warehouse](#) sells fabric, supplies and more north of downtown Lakeland.
- [Fabric Smart](#) in St. Pete is a great destination for quilting fabric, Fairbanks said.
- [Pennie Fabrics](#) in Sarasota sells high-end fabrics and includes its [stock](#) online.



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