

What to wear on your finger now

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People in long-term relationships approach the decision differently to people who have not been together as long. "Some same-sex couples who have been together for years want the ring to make a simple statement," says Walters, "in recognition of the fact that the law has been changed to permit them to marry. For other couples the ring decision comes after months of thought. They are really into the detail of the ring, of choosing something that is symbolic of their union."

One female couple who met on an ocean cruise and wanted a commemorative ring in gold and platinum that would symbolize an ocean wave. The yellow gold represented the shore and the platinum the ocean.

White hot

Frank Damiani of Damiani Jewellers in Woodbridge has noticed that more couples under thirty are choosing white gold or platinum rings today, or a mix of white and yellow gold.

"For white gold, we recommend 14 karat," he says. "White gold needs a good mix of alloy mixed in to keep from showing yellow. If 18 karat white gold is chosen, less alloy is used, so the ring must be rhodium plated. When the rhodium wears away, people can be disappointed, as the ring begins to show a lot of yellow."

A platinum band costs three times as much as a gold band, he says. "About one quarter of our couples choose platinum."

Edith Myslicki of Victoria Fine Jewellery agrees about the popularity of platinum, though white gold also is a favourite, she says.

"The gay couples that buy from me tend to go for the high-end rings," she says. "They don't want ordinary, run-of-the-mill designs. Clean lines and a more sculptural look are the character-

istics they look for.

Female couples too lean toward simple designs that incorporate wide bands, she adds. Protruding stones are rarely the choice. Women like matching bands and they prefer only one ring.



Choosing a symbol

"People will wear their rings for a long time," says designer Anne Sportun of Toronto's Experimental. "They tend to put a lot of thought into them, basing their designs on symbols that are meaningful for them."

Sportun has designed rings with lines or dots that represent the number of years the individuals have been together.

"Right now I'm working on commitment bands for two women from Chicago. Eight one-point diamonds will be set into the top, representing a number that is special to them."



One of her most popular designs for men consists of a wide band in white gold with a channel of yellow gold set inside that rotates.

Outside the box

"When couples choose rings nowadays, the rules go out the window," says Linda Penwarden of Toronto's Penwarden Jewellery. "It's much more of an individual thing. We sell a lot of modern designs with more texture and more detail than in the past. The design often incorporates symbols or spirals, something unique to the people involved. In one case we used a representation of a Chinese dragon."

Penwarden has designed rings for both of the partner's in the relationship. For two men she recently produced engagement rings in white gold bands set with two round diamonds. When they were married they wore these rings on their right hand and simple white gold bands on their left hands. ◉

