

## **Nightlife, With Nighties**

### **Pajama Parties Catch On With Women, Retailers; Snoring at the Sleepover**

By Lauren Lipton, Entertaining  
**The Wall Street Journal**, January 9, 2004

It was a Birthday sleepover with all the classic pajama-party touches, from sinful snacks like ice cream to guest doing each other's nails and giggling late into the night. Nobody worried about homework, though since the birthday girl was turning 40 and all the guests were grown-ups. "It was a little odd," says Deborah Gavett, one of the guests. "But we definitely bonded."

These days, some grown-ups are staying in and asking their friends over to gab and even sleep over, in updated versions of the childhood pajama party. Partly, it's a case of people looking for a new party theme, with pajama get-togethers adding a new retro touch. But, marketers sense opportunity too, with sleepwear makers, cosmetic companies and event planners catering to PJ parties for the over 18 crowd. Beauty-products maker Jaqua Girls, for instance says its "Pajama-Rama" kit with nail polish, peppermint foot soak and invitations ("Come over and get beautiful!") now outsells a night out kit for one, while one record label recently released "For a Girls Night In," a CD with music from "The Sleeping Beauty."

With even small gatherings these days often turning into elaborate, themed productions thanks to the rise of the party-supply stores and catalogues, it was probably inevitable that some retailers would hit on the idea of an old-fashioned pajama party. And lately the allure of going out is wearing thin, with real-life women saying they're too tired to squeeze into Manolo Blahniks and sip cosmopolitans. Besides, they say, at pajama parties no one has to shout over the music.

Naturally, the tone of a pajama party changes a bit once everyone's gotten a drivers license. Sleeping over isn't actually required, and at many events it's not even on the program – the party breaks up late and everyone goes home in their jimmies. (Those who stay risk a long night; medical experts estimate 25% of adult women snore.) And while the casual, no make-up atmosphere is a draw to some, lingerie is usually worn only in jest, over flannel – others still say it's daunting to share their nighttime routines with a crowd.

#### **All the Extras**

Just talk to Kathy Scott. For a girlfriends sleepover in October, the Odessa, Fla., medical-office manager brought along not just cute pajamas, but also Retin-A cream, blood pressure and cholesterol medication, plus her sleep apnea mask with tubes up her nose to keep her from snoring. Mrs. Scott 54, says the mask is 'just awful,' but without it "I knew whoever I was going to sleep with was not going to be able to sleep." (In the end she posed in it for photos.)

Marketers, of course, have been looking for creative ways to target women for a while. Hotel chains from Fairmont to Ritz-Carlton have been trying women's getaway specials, while limousine companies are offering evening-on-the-town transportation packages. (At Silicon Valley's Wine & Roses Limousine Service \$738 buys six hours, flowers and unlimited Pat Benetar tunes.) Nightgown wearing is one of the newer ploys. A company called Ultimate Pajama Party is marketing hotel bashes and even cruises, while a Seattle event planner has organized more than a dozen "Crave Parties" in venues from Portland, Ore to New Orleans, where boutiques set up handbags and accessories and women shop from station to station wearing robes and slippers.

But perhaps no one has adopted these parties more than the women's pajama business, a \$1.7 billion industry, according to NPD Group. Designer Karen Neuburger staged some 500 in-store pajama parties and saw sales grow 25% in 2003. Girls Night In, a California company that markets home décor and loungewear with Tupperware-style parties, is starting to sell at pajama parties. One Web site, meanwhile, sells the same pink outfits that reality-show "Bachelorette" Trista Rehn wore at a bridesmaid's slumber party before her TV wedding.

For Anna Korchmar, it's a simple time-saver. The New York law student says she and her childhood friends are so booked with work, family and romantic obligations that they're lucky to see each other once a month. Bars are too noisy for conversation, so they've started having sleepovers. "You don't have to worry about getting home, or that your shoes hurt, or one of your friends leaving because she met some guy," she says.

In fact, women say, the low-glamour aspect may be the best part. Besides the conservative PJ's, the events tend toward eating junk food and weeping at guests' personal revelations. Not surprisingly men mostly stay away. "They're not into that," says Randi Pellegrini, a Beverly Hills, California, event producer who has coordinated all women pajama parties.

### **Gaming the System**

That leaves plenty of time for girl talk, and game makers have stepped in. The winner of "The Chick Game" is the one who reveals the most personal information to questions such as "Who is the one that got away?" and "Have you ever been 'busted' while hooking up with someone?" Players of "Heels! The Game that Heals" move shoe-shaped tokens around a board with spaces including Children Clean Room and Shop All Day. (Sample question: "Name one time a man's opinion was important to you.")

Now there are signs that PJ parties may be spreading from women to, well, everybody. In November, merchants in downtown Wyandotte, Mich., hosted a "Moonlight Madness" party with discounts for nightclothes-clad customers. The city of Philadelphia, meanwhile, held a family sleepover at a local hotel, attended by more than women, men and kids. Last Valentine's Day the Web-site Match.com held coed pajama parties for singles at chic hotels in Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York, and it's planning more events for this year.

At the end of the day, though, women may not be interested in mixing with men. When Pam Binder, a romance novelist, threw a hotel pajama party for readers in October, draws included souvenir nightshirts, karaoke and the chance to mingle with

some hunky male book-cover models. But though the men were friendly and personable, her 250 guests spent the evening drinking cocktails and dancing – with each other. “The men weren’t the focus,” Ms. Binder says.