

# THE VINSON VIEW

Quality maniac and master shopper Nick Vinson on the who, what, when, where and why



## PICKY NICKY'S TOP STAFF LOOKS

### Singapore Airlines

These traditional sarong kebayas were designed by Pierre Balmain. Each Singapore Girl has two fittings and is issued with four uniforms a year.

### Prada Foundation, Milan

Grey poplin shirts with rubberised badges, navy military-style trousers, black leather belts and rubber-soled boots. Like Prada prison uniforms.

### Spring, London

Waiters wear striped tops, white cotton jackets, long white aprons over wide-legged cotton trousers, and matching plimsolls.

### Faena Hotel, Miami

Catherine Martin, who designed the interiors alongside her husband, director Baz Luhrmann, was also responsible for the striking uniforms.

### Cambrinus, Lisbon

Waiters wear old-school single-breasted jackets in claret gabardine with a black shawl collar.

### Flowerbx, London

Couriers sport caps, heather-grey sweatshirts over white button-down Oxford shirts, cotton canvas chinos and black Jack Purcell Converse trainers, all embroidered with a single blossom.

## 01 Dressed to impress

Picky Nicky loves a man (and woman) in uniform

As a perma-traveller, I spend a fair amount of time observing hospitality staff, and my focus is often on what they wear. As a rule, my taste for uniforms is pretty old school: doormen dressed the part with coat and cap; chambermaids with crisp, starched pinnies; waiters in gold-buttoned, trimmed jackets; general managers in a really good suit. The same goes for domestic staff.

One of my favourite shops is Mercatores, in Milan's via Turati, which supplies classic uniforms for the city's better homes.

Of course, being picky, I have a few pet hates. Purple is a terrible idea (Heathrow Express, take note), as are orange and stretch jersey (I'm looking at you, Spice Market). Not all white shirts and black trousers are created equal, so don't assume that a team will look like a team if the cut, fit and fabrication don't match.

I also suffer from an allergy to stinky chauffeurs: drivers who live in the same suit day in, day out, can be highly unpleasant in the enclosed space of a car. Uniforms need changing, airing and regular cleaning; deodorant and cologne are not the answer. Claridge's employs more than 400 members of staff, who are dressed in 12 different types of uniform, including tails for the concierge. Each staff member is issued with two sets of uniform and three shirts, individually fitted by seamstresses and laundered in-house.

For me, however, the worst crime of all is shoes – all too often staff are left to provide their own. Mere guidelines on colour and heel height won't suffice; most people would never consider themselves properly dressed without the right shoes, so why should staff? It's also foolish to overlook belts: there is nothing worse than seeing all sorts of buckles and varying widths on one crew. Rather awkwardly for Hermès (sorry, you know I love you really), maître d's are rather fond of wearing its H-buckle belt. Which is why mine has remained in its box for about 20 years.

Nothing pleases me more than maniacal attention to detail. One of my favourite places to dine in London is Spring, mainly for the food and the décor, but also because the staff (who all sport the same plimsolls) look brilliant in a relaxed but formal way. It's the same at the Prada Foundation, where the uniforms are as majestic as the architecture and art. The flawlessness of the more-military-than-museum look, which includes a belt and a pair of rubber-soled boots, is exactly why I love the brand and its obsessive control freakery. And then there's Singapore Airlines, whose Pierre Balmain-designed uniforms (W\*102), which have been in continuous service since 1968, are tailor made for each 'Singapore Girl'. No compromise then, and none today.★



## 02

### Clean lines

Tomas Maier knows how men should dress for leisure. Some of his easy, relaxed spring pieces come ready-laundered for a lived-in look. [tomasmaier.com](http://tomasmaier.com)



## 03

### Staples corner

November is when I plan my own uniform for the spring ahead. Top of my wish list are staples by Officine Générale - understated but never dull. [officinegenerale.com](http://officinegenerale.com)