

New Jersey

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Hats On at Solène in Teaneck

Teaneck milliner applies his creative touch to a family tradition.

By [Mary Ann Castronovo Fusco](#) | November 15, 2016 | Appears in the [November 2016](#) issue



Solène owner Omri Amar makes hats in the shop's basement, where he keeps materials such as felt, straw, and a variety of leather, along with vintage equipment: wooden hat blocks, a spool (for making straw hats) and specialized sewing machines.

Photo by Andy Foster

For some women, a hat is just a practical accessory for keeping warm or deflecting sun; for others, it's a wardrobe must for adhering to religious tradition or obligation. Either way, "it's a polished and refined way of finishing off an outfit," says Omri Amar, the 30-year-old owner of [Solène in Teaneck](#).

From fedoras to fascinators, about 80 percent of the hats are made on the premises in limited quantities. Here, too, old hats can get new lives with re-trimming. The price of a custom-made hat ranges from about \$100 for wool felt to \$300 for sheared fur; turnaround time is one to four weeks.

"There's a yearning for things that are handmade and of quality," says Amar, who does most of the finishing work, like wiring the ends and attaching ribbons. "While it can be fun to create very trendy or outlandish hats—and we do—the core of our collection always comprises classic looks and shapes that won't go out of style anytime soon. You can expect our hats to last a lifetime if cared for properly," he says. Most customers come from the local Orthodox Jewish and African-American communities, particularly at holiday time.

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Amar never studied fashion design, but the hat business has always been part of his life. His parents founded Sherel's, a hat manufacturer with a loyal following in the Orthodox Jewish communities in Brooklyn and Long Island for almost four decades.

After earning a finance degree, Amar felt he needed a more creative outlet, so he operated a Queens hat shop before opening Solène in January 2016. His shop stocks the Sherel's brand as well as other designers. "Every hatmaker has his or her own sense of color, style and proportion. I look for styles that I wouldn't necessarily think to make myself, but are still beautiful, chic and fit into our brand aesthetic," explains Amar. The shop also offers hair accessories, knit caps and berets, and handmade hat pins, as well as makeup application services.

For a customer who wanted a hat to match her blouse, Amar incorporated the same fabric into the hat design. "I happen to like dealing with difficult custom orders," he says. "It often forces me to be very creative, and some of my best work has ended up coming out of that."

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