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No one does debutante style quite like Quince Girls.

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Fashion fit for a princess

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"It's one of the biggest events in a girl's life, sometimes even bigger than a wedding," says Lisa Chang, vice president at Mary's/P.C. Mary's, Inc, a Houston, Texas, dress company that caters to many quinceañeras. "These girls want to look majestically beautiful, like princesses."

Traditional styles and modern wiles

Both tradition and trends affect what the quinceañera and her corte de honor (court of honor) choose to wear for the occasion. Girls sometimes still don a customary white dress, which is thought to signify purity, much like a wedding gown. And the full skirts popular with quinceañeras today seem to echo the lavish styles worn when Carlota, the Austrian empress of Mexico from 1864 to 1867, promoted fancy-dress balls and dancing to European-style orchestras.

But 21st-century styles also influence the look of Latina debuts. Chambelanes sport collarless tuxedos that seem ripped from the Hollywood red carpet. Quince Girls put their damas in the hippest colors and styles. "I think the fun part of the quinceañera is the chance to dress up," says Sylvia Solheim of Quinceañera-Boutique.com. "The girls and their families are looking for things that'll add to the day, that'll help the girls feel beautiful."

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