FRENCH SEAM IN AN ARMHOLE

By Sandra Betzina

French seams is the preferred seam finish in a blouse or a dress, on lightweight fabrics such as chiffon, georgette, silk charmeuse or silk crepe de chine. A beautifully executed French seam gives a nice finish to the inside of the garment while eliminating bulk. That being said, a French seam can be tricky when setting in a sleeve, but with one extra step, all problems are eliminated and your French seam in the armhole will be flawless. Seams in both the sleeve and the garment must be finished in a French seam before put the sleeve in the armhole.

Start all fine silk projects with a brand new needle 70/10 HM or HJ and 100 % cotton thread. This combo will eliminate any puckered seam problems. Before you begin, make sure that the dot at the cap of the sleeve and the notches are clearly visible. For starters, run an easeline along the cap of the sleeve, between the notches ¼ inch away from the cut edge of the fabric. Crimping as this technique is called is created by pushing on the back of the presser foot. For finer fabrics your stitch length should not be longer than 2.5mm. Don’t push too hard on the back of the presser foot or you will create too much ease.

As with all French seams, the initial seam is sewn with wrong sides, instead of right sides together. Pin sleeve into armhole with wrong sides together, matching the dot on top of the sleeve cap with the shoulder seam. Sew sleeve into armhole with a ¼ inch or less width serger seam.

Set up the serger, removing the left needle, using only 3 threads. What you want is a long narrow serged seam without too much thread in it, so lengthen the stitch length but make the seam narrow without creating a rolled hem. Serge the newly sewn armhole seam, serging off ¼ inch of the seam allowance. You are serging right next to your conventional stitch seamline.

Enclose newly serged seam, with your fingers, bringing right sides of the fabric together. Pin or hand baste seam in place, close to the seamline along the outside edge. The will hold the seam in place for pressing.

Press.

Now, back at your conventional machine, using a zipper foot, with the serged seam enclosed in the layers, sew close to the edge of the seam, hidden inside, sewing a seam width one eighth to one quarter inch width wide.

Press well.