

# Scents of occasion

We all recall our first fragrance with fondness, so why not update a favourite scent with its 21st-century equivalent?

Words **Eva-Maria Bobbert**



**D**o you remember your first fragrance? While you might have ditched it from your dressing table, your first scent always remains special. “We all have an emotional connection with fragrance, even if it’s not a conscious memory, so every time we smell it we relive the feeling we associate with the fragrance,” explains Valentino Arico, national training manager for YSL Beauté.

Of course, the scent that pushes your feel-good buttons often depends on fashion and cultural trends that were prominent at the time you first spritzed. “In the ’70s fragrance was influenced by the disco trend, so it was all glitz and glam with sweet but sharp scents,” explains Valentino. “In the ’80s we became more label conscious, so designer fragrances were popular. Then came the end of the millennium when fragrances with a watery or earthy base reflected our desire to get close to nature again.”

So what does the 21st century smell like? It’s a mixed bag really. While some fragrances have stood the test of time (according to Chanel, its 1920s fragrance Chanel No. 5 is still one of the world’s bestsellers), unlike our mothers and grandmothers, we are no longer loyal to one special scent. These days we tend to own several perfumes that we choose according to our mood or the image we wish to project. “We buy fragrances that are an extension of our own personality, whether it is desired or actual,” says Valentino. So a citrus-based scent oozes youthful energy, a sexy oriental is great for statement-making moments and a classic floral evokes a romantic mood.

But nothing beats the familiarity of our first fragrance. “In these uncertain times it’s like a silent message of positivity,” says Valentino. That might explain the popularity of traditional florals. “Younger girls are now coming back to classic rose-based scents because often they remind them of happy times with their mother or grandmother. The memory might be forgotten, but the positive feel-good emotion is evoked by the fragrance.”

We’re no longer loyal to one special scent – these days we tend to own several perfumes that we choose according to our mood.

## On the scent

Can’t find a fragrance you love? Here’s a foolproof way to work out which scent suits you best:

**1** “First you need to ask yourself the question: how do I want to feel?” says Valentino Arico, national training manager for YSL Beauté. The answer will guide you to a particular fragrance family: if you want to feel energetic, go for citrus-based scents. Floral perfumes are associated with femininity, while oriental or woody fragrances evoke feelings of sensuality, power and confidence.

**2** Once you’ve worked out which fragrance family appeals to you, ask a department-store fragrance expert to suggest some perfumes and try no more than two or three options at any one time. “We detect aromas through the olfactory system and after about three fragrances the receptors in our brain start to close over,” explains Valentino. Fragrance experts use the coffee-bean trick to refresh their noses (a whiff of fresh beans can re-open your scent receptors), but an easier option is to spritz on a fragrance, go for a leisurely coffee, then decide what you think of it.

**3** The key is not to be too hasty when making a decision. First impressions are important but they don’t last long – the volatile top notes (often citrus), will quickly give way to the middle notes or heart of the perfume and it can take up to five or 10 minutes for the rich bottom notes to emerge.

**4** If you admire someone else’s perfume always try it on your own skin before rushing out to buy it as fragrances smell different on everyone, depending on skin type, diet, hormones and any medication being taken. It may require a little time to find your perfect match, but it will be worth the effort. “Eventually something will smell just right for you,” says Jo Monte-Bello, training and development manager at fragrance company Trimex, who recommends taking a friend along if you find it hard to make decisions. “You’ll know a scent suits you by the compliments it attracts!”

## Set pulses racing

As Coco Chanel said, you should spray fragrance “wherever you want to be kissed”, so traditionally it was dabbed behind the ear or on the wrists. For total seduction, Valentino Arico, national training manager for YSL Beauté, suggests that modern women add one more location.

“A fragrance is like a symphony, it evolves in three movements, so apply it behind the knees and ears, and on the inside of your wrists,” he says. Contrary to popular belief, you shouldn’t use fragrance on your décolletage as it can react with the sun and cause skin pigmentation.

When spraying your fragrance, Jo Monte-Bello, training and development manager at fragrance company Trimex,

recommends holding the bottle 30 centimetres away from the skin. “That way you’ll shower a fine mist on the desired area without overdoing it,” she explains, adding that you should “never rub the fragrance once it has been sprayed on the skin as this will bruise the scent”.

However, even a powerful scent won’t last all day – an eau de toilette generally lasts about four to six hours, an eau de parfum about six hours and a concentrated perfume up to eight hours. The key to smelling lush for longer is layering – use a shower gel and body lotion with the same fragrance before you apply the perfume. “Body products permeate the pores of the skin and the fragrance will really linger,” says Jo.



## If your first fragrance was ...



**Jean Patou Joy (1930)**  
**Eau de Toilette 50ml, \$172**  
This classic floral is a graceful combination of Bulgarian rose, grasse jasmine and 100 "secret" floral essences.



**Giorgio Beverly Hills (1981)**  
**Eau de Toilette 50ml, \$115**  
A powerful floral, this uplifting scent contains narcissus, gardenia, jasmine and mandarin with a dash of vetyver.



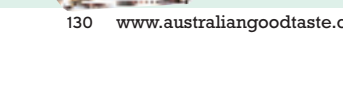
**Christian Dior Poison (1985)**  
**Eau de Toilette 50ml, \$159**  
As the name suggests, this bold mix of spices, pepper and exotic fruits is not to be taken lightly.



**YSL Baby Doll Paris (1999)**  
**Eau de Toilette 30ml, \$74**  
This zesty floral fragrance captures the vibrant essence of youth with its wild rose, red currant and peach notes.



**Chanel No. 5 (1921)**  
**Eau de Parfum 50ml, \$124**  
Launched more than 80 years ago, this timeless jasmine and rose-based scent is said to contain no less than 250 ingredients.



**Revlon Fire & Ice (1994)**  
**Cologne Spray 30ml, \$49.95**  
This commanding oriental combines citrus with florals, such as magnolia, on a base of wood, musk and rich spices.



**Elizabeth Arden Red Door (1989)**  
**Eau de Toilette 100ml, \$128**  
An intense floral, it combines the traditional – tea-rose – with freesia, wild violet and lily-of-the-valley.

## You'll also love ...



**Clarins Par Amour (2005)**  
**Eau de Parfum 50ml, \$95**  
Also based around the popular rose – the Ottoman rose – this scent has been modernised with a dash of pink peppercorns and blackcurrant.



**Estée Lauder Pleasures Exotic (2005)**  
**Eau de Parfum 50ml, \$115**  
This tropical floral is similarly vibrant – a cocktail of orange blossom, grapefruit, hibiscus and peony with a smooth woody base.



**Yves Saint Laurent Cinéma (2005)**  
**Eau de Parfum 35ml, \$95**  
You won't go unnoticed when you enter a room wearing this floral oriental – the heady florals with a woody/musk base aim to impress.



**Ralph Lauren Lauren Style (2005)**  
**Eau de Parfum 125ml, \$138**  
This floral is youthful but elegant with a burst of tangerine, jasmine, magnolia and gardenia, and a delicious vanilla and patchouli base.



**Stella by Stella McCartney (2004)**  
**Eau de Parfum 50ml, \$110**  
If you could call a rose by any other name it would be Stella. This scent takes a traditional rose base and adds a modern touch with mandarin.

**Calvin Klein Euphoria (2005)**  
**Eau de Parfum 100ml, \$129**  
This oriental opens with a burst of citrus, has a rich floral heart with notes of lotus blossom, and a base of mahogany and sensual musk.

**Givenchy Very Irresistible Sensual (2005)**  
**Eau de Parfum 50ml, \$119**  
This sensual floral has a rose base, but the addition of star anise and sweet-smelling grass gives it a distinctly modern edge. **AGT**