

fragrancefocus

Scents of time

Evocative and incredibly personal, a perfume is really an extension of your personality. The fragrance experts at Chanel know a thing or two about selecting the best...

Did you know that smell is the only sense that is connected to your limbic system? This complex set of brain structures is what supports functions like your emotions, behaviour, motivation and your long-term memory. And olfaction. You may have always felt that a certain smell brings you back to a time and place, or makes you feel happy (or not) and indeed it is scientific fact. It's what makes selecting a perfume to adore so personal; so experiential, so... well, damn difficult.

And it seems it's never been more difficult than it is today; there are approximately 1,000 new perfumes launched every year and one could be forgiven for thinking that the most important part of picking one lies in the colour of the bottle, or the latest pop star whose face graces the packaging. "I do think that there's a quantity, not quality element," says Joanna Norman, founder of fragrance consultancy Pandora. "They're getting very churned out." Norman lends her expertise in a variety of ways; she lectures on a fashion course in Kingston University UK, highlighting the importance of scent to aesthetic, and is even involved in a primary school initiative to help children learn about and be aware of their sense of smell, and since its connection to our emotional wellbeing is so strong. But today, she is talking in her capacity as an advisor to Parfums Chanel, with whom she has worked for over eight years.

As part of the newly launched beauty hall at Brown Thomas, Chanel is introducing its first ever Parfums Espace to Ireland, giving unprecedented access to the house's fragrances and advisors. Norman sees the services offered there as an antidote to sorts of the crowded world of perfume launches. "Personally, I think it's quite sad that it's exploded," she explains, but the backlash is beginning and those who are craving a more discerning approach are being driven towards the niche end of the market. "The experimentation and innovative qualities of the niche area are what we call Les Exclusifs in Chanel. It's where the perfumer is not rushed; he has more time, more money almost, and can do more creations. Because just to be, 'Let's have another one, just to have another flanker', is too rushed. Les Exclusifs allows the perfumer space to create." The perfumer of which she speaks is Jacques Polge, who has been the creative visionary behind Chanel perfumes for over 30 years. Les Exclusifs are the fine fragrances that he creates entirely at his own pace and each of which ties in with a specific inspiration in Mademoiselle Chanel's rich lifetime. Outside of the Chanel fashion boutiques the new Parfums Espace is the only place these niche beauties are available. It will also be a place to get some unprecedented advice for the nigh impossible task of selecting a



Mademoiselle Chanel

WOMEN IN THE 21ST CENTURY ARE LOOKING TO BUILD A FRAGRANCE WARDROBE RATHER THAN FIND A SIGNATURE SCENT FOR EVERY SCENARIO

fragrance that is truly you. "You can book a free consultation with a fragrance expert. They will help you through this minefield of fragrances and will have the raw materials – rose, jasmine – so you can smell them in their original states."

Consumer education about perfume is still low and for the majority of us, the notes, scent families and what to look out for remain a mystery – making perfume shopping an overwhelming experience. "For example," says Norman, "two words we tend to use are 'fresh' and 'sweet'. If you go to a perfumer, he/she has a very specific, technical meaning for those words, but usually when people say 'fresh' it means they like it, and when they say 'sweet' you tend to mean, you don't like it – it's too sweet."

5 Secrets of Success

EVER WONDER WHY CHANEL'S N°5 REMAINS THE MOST ICONIC FRAGRANCE IN THE WORLD? HERE'S THE BREAKDOWN:

1. THE STORY

Who doesn't love a good story? N°5 begins with Gabrielle Chanel in 1921. She is at the top of Parisian fashion and over dinner with the Grand Duke Dmitri of Russia, painter José María Sert and his wife María in Monte Carlo, the idea of a fragrance for the house of Chanel arose. Chanel was in turn introduced to Ernest Beaux – former perfumer to the tsar and a pioneer of modern perfumery. Beaux went on to create the most complex fragrance ever to exist (reportedly the fifth sample presented to Chanel was the one that was approved, hence the perfume's name), which had instant success in Paris and beyond.

2. THE SCENT

The story might pique the customer's initial interest, but the universal adoration of the scent is really down to the perfumer's blend. Briefed by Mademoiselle Chanel, Beaux blended a record 80 ingredients, making it the first 'abstract' fragrance and experts today acknowledge its arrival as a landmark one in the perfume world.

3. THE NOTES

Why the fifth sample? The story (ref: point one) goes that Mlle Chanel sent back the fourth sample and asked Beaux to add huge quantities of the most luxurious raw material in Grasse – jasmine. At the heart of N°5 is a heady mix of this, ylang-ylang and May rose – some of the world's most precious and powerfully scented flowers.

4. THE PROTECTION

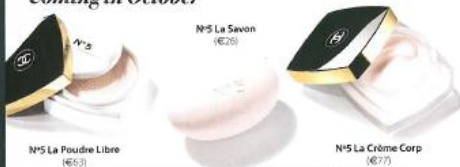
Perfumer for the house since 1979, Jacques Polge personally oversees every fragrance created. He inspects the ingredients that go into N°5 and guards the perfume's formula.

5. THE PICTURE

Finally, we go back to Mlle Chanel's first love – the look of something beautiful, as embodied by the glass bottle she designed. Parfums Chanel not only broke boundaries when it came to imagery in the 1950s, when it appeared in a television commercial for the first time, N°5 has become the signature attached to some of the last century's most beautiful women: Mlle Chanel, Marilyn Monroe, Candice Bergen, Ali McGraw, Lauren Hutton, Catherine Deneuve – who wouldn't want to be in that gang?

In a similar way, women in the 21st century are looking to build a fragrance wardrobe rather than find a signature scent that works for every scenario. "If you're on a holiday and you wear a particular fragrance, you'll always remember the holiday when you wear the fragrance and it will bring back all the emotions that go with it. In our lives, we want to separate work and play. We want to wear one fragrance to work and perhaps another when we're in a playful mood or a going out mood. Or a holiday mood, or a seasonal mood. And I definitely think different notes appeal in different seasons." Norman has some sage advice for those wondering if they have enough or indeed too many glass bottles sitting on their dressing table. "You know the saying that goes with a wedding;

Coming in October



something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue? I like to translate that. When I think old, I mean a classic; you should have a classic fragrance that you like and you go back to and it reminds you of good times. It's almost like a comfort blanket, you know it's something you enjoy. For new – experiment, be pioneering, be adventurous; it allows you to try something. If you don't like it, you don't have to go back to it, but at least you've kept your antennae open. Something borrowed: People always smell things that are recommended or have been on someone else. Again, give it a try. And something blue, to me, is something sexy! Something a little bit romantic. For example, you could go completely opulent and mysterious like Coco which has that lovely amber, vanilla ambience and it makes you feel mysterious and sexy."

But getting to the bottom of which four scents exactly will fit your life, is where we, the unwitting buyer, still need some guidance. "It's about communication and articulation. We might know we like or dislike something, but it's very difficult to explain why," says Norman. "What a specialist will do is break it down. For example, you might find vanilla or some fruity notes a bit sweet, so they'll say, okay – that's too fruity for you, you might prefer something more oriental and then they'd explain what oriental means. And amber for example – amber is an accord which is vanilla and incense – and you might find, 'That's what I like, I now know what it is'. So you're able to identify, and you'll also have a bit more time."

Armed with your new fragrance education, you'll be ready, no doubt to shop. "Choose which ones you want to try – I wouldn't spray more than three on your arms – two on one, one on the other. And then live with it for a while. Wear it around the store for an hour or so and actually wear it." Don't fret, she insists, if you can't catch the scent after an hour or so. "Actually this is a good sign. If you don't smell it on yourself, that means that you're comfortable with it and your nose has let it become part of the background and part of you."

Most of all, however, Norman advises, be true to what your sense of smell is telling you. "You're never wrong, it's about what you like. Confidence and power come from finding something that you like. And enjoy the experience – that's what going back to authentic perfumery is about." ■



READER EVENT

FRAGRANCE WORKSHOP

IRISH TATLER IS OFFERING READERS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND
A CHANEL FRAGRANCE WORKSHOP HOSTED BY EXPERT FRAGRANCE
PROFESSOR JOANNA NORMAN.

CHANEL invites you to attend the opening
of the new **Fragrance & Beauty Boutique** in
Brown Thomas Dublin on

THURSDAY 9 OCTOBER AT 7PM

You will discover the world of CHANEL fragrances,
including LES EXCLUSIFS, a collection of
rare fragrances, emblems of the life and times
of Mademoiselle CHANEL.

During the workshop you will also be treated to
Champagne and canapés, before leaving with a
luxurious goodie bag.

A booking fee of €50 applies and is **fully redeemable**
against your CHANEL fragrance purchase made in
Brown Thomas Dublin on the day of the event.

**DUE TO LIMITED AVAILABILITY,
EARLY BOOKING IS ADVISED.**

To secure your booking please contact the
CHANEL counter on **01 6171149.**

