

NOVEMBER 08 - GREAT MOMENTS IN FRAGRANCE

Take an olfactory tour through history...

Approx. 2000BC: The earliest we know fragrance to date back to; archaeologists recently discovered, on the Island of Cyprus, the remains of an ancient fragrance factory, with around 60 distilling stills, bowls, funnels and bottles.

Ancient Egypt: As with many other civilisations, incense was a common form of perfume, lit for religious ceremonies. Egyptians offered up flowers, spices, herbs and resins to the Gods in the form of scented smoke. In fact, the word perfume derives from the latin term, 'per fumum', or 'through smoke'. But the beauty-loving Egyptians also used perfume for personal, and romantic, rituals. They poured fragrant unguents into glass bottles (glass being an Egyptian invention, by the way), and generally perfumed the world around them. Cleopatra, of course, knew how to use perfume to full effect. It's said that she covered her barge in so many rose petals, the Romans could smell her before they saw her. Marc Antony never stood a chance.



Roman Empire: The pleasure-obsessed Romans developed and refined the art of perfumery, lavishing fragrance, particularly rose water, on themselves and others. Emperor Nero was especially renowned for his rose-drenched feasts. Rosewater rained from the ceiling and misted up from pipes; while rose petals were carpeted on the floor and stuffed into cushions. With the fall of the Roman Empire, the art of perfume would largely disappear from Europe for many centuries.

9th Century: Arabian chemist, Yakub Al-Kindi wrote the *Book of the Chemistry of Perfume and Distillations*, featuring over a hundreds recipes for various types of fragrances, from oils to salves to waters.

1000: Said to be the year when Islamic philosopher and physician Avicenna first distilled oil from the rose.



14th Century: Islam spread to Europe in the Middle Ages, and brought back interest in perfumery. Flowers began to be cultivated for their perfume essence, particularly in the South of France.

1370: The Hungarians invented what is lauded as the first modern form of fragrance: a blend of oils in alcohol. It was a gift to Queen Elizabeth of Hungary and became known as Hungary Water.



16th Century: The art of perfumery flourished in Renaissance Italy. When Catherine de Medici married France's Henri II, she took her personal perfumer, René le Florentin, with her to Paris. The new Queen set up a laboratory in Grasse, in the South of France, which soon became the heart of the European fragrance industry. Perfume was in these times primarily a means of masking body odour, and one limited to the royal and the wealthy, with men and women wearing heavily scented clothes.

Early 1600s: Perfume was still largely seen as an Islamic art. Witness Lady Macbeth and her famous "Out, damned spot!" rant: "Here's the smell of the blood still; all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand."

1709: A homesick Italian perfumer living in Cologne, Giovanni Maria Farina, concocted a fragrance to evoke an Italian morning in spring. The blend of citrus oils (lemon, orange, bergamot, lime, grapefruit) became known as 'eau de cologne'. It was primarily popular among men.



18th Century: France's increasing infatuation with perfume meant that the country became synonymous with fine fragrance. Louis XV ordered every room of Versailles to be drenched in a difference scent. Even after the Revolution and the symbolic overthrow of decadence, Emperor Napoléon and Empress Joséphine kept the fragrance industry booming, dousing themselves in jasmine, musk and violet.

1853: Perfumer Pierre-François-Pascal Guerlain created Eau de Cologne Impériale for Empress Eugénie. He was named as the court's official perfumer and a beauty legend was born.



1882: The fragrance house Houbigant launched Fougère Royale, the first of what became known as the fern ('fougère' being 'fern' in French) family. Despite its natural-minded name, this soapy-smelling scent (a predecessor to such men's greats as Brut and Jazz) was the first ever synthetic-based perfume.

Ask a Beauty Question:

Guerlain launched Jicky and a sensation. It was a seismic sensory shift from the common Victorian single-noted floral scents, which women used to splash on clothes and handkerchiefs rather than skin. Jicky, which also used some synthetic ingredients (synthetics being often needed to reproduce what nature won't yield through distillation), was a grand perfume that was spicy, floral, animalic and completely knock-your-socks-off. It was an entirely new smell. It took a while for women to warm to it, but it eventually became the scent for many a strong woman - Brigitte Bardot was just one famous fan.



1913: French writer Marcel Proust published *Swann's Way*, the first of his *Remembrance of Things Past* series, and waxed lyrical about the power of smells to trigger memories. A 'Proustian memory' refers to a sudden and unexpected flashback, brought on by a re-encounter with a certain smell.

1921: The chemical compounds aldehydes had been around since 1903, often sprinkled into natural-based scents to amplify the smell, but Chanel No.5 was the first to use them to such extent and incredible effect. Coco Chanel wanted her fragrance to be inimitable, which is why only the most expensive jasmine, May rose and ylang ylang were also added. No.5 went on to become the most successful fashion fragrance of all time.

1930: A year after Wall Street crashed, Jean Patou launched Joy - tagged 'the costliest perfume in the world.' It featured Bulgarian rose and jasmine from Grasse.



1947: Christian Dior designed a new post-war silhouette for women: his waist-cinched, full-skirted collection became known as the 'New Look'. There was a fragrance to match; Miss Dior was a mossy woody scent, with an edge of green and a sprinkle of florals, symbolic of a strong new femininity. A year later, couturier Nina Ricci had her say on how modern women should smell; L'Air du Temps was a clean powdery perfume that has appealed to women ever since.

1953: Estée Lauder launched Youth Dew, initially bottled as a bath oil. In these times, perfume was primarily bought as a gift. Mrs Lauder cleverly guessed that a fragrant bath scent would sell more to her target audience. The soft oriental scent gave a sexy edge to an era that mostly tried to wrap women up as delicate flowers.

1954: When asked what she wore to bed, the ultimate screen siren, Marilyn Monroe, replied: "A couple of drops of Chanel no.5, of course." It was the all-time ultimate in celebrity endorsement.



1967: In the film *Belle de Jour*, Séverine (played by Catherine Deneuve) smashes her bottle of Guerlain Shalimar - it symbolises the end of her sheltered existence as a bourgeois wife, and the beginning of her secret life as a daytime prostitute.



1973: Revlon launched Charlie, which was marketed as a fragrance for modern working girls, and one that could be worn all day every day. The now-iconic ads featured women striding through town in trousers - Shelley Hack was the original Charlie girl (see main image).

1977: Yves Saint Laurent released the provocatively named Opium, advertised by a languorous Jerry Hall. It was especially controversial in China, where the government banned its sale. Opium ignited the trend for strong florizontals that would become the olfactory definition of the 1980s.



1981: Giorgio by Giorgio Beverly Hills was such a heady floral that it was famously banned from many restaurants, who argued that it overpowered their food.

1983: Leading fragrance expert Michael Edwards created the 'fragrance wheel', which classified scents according to families: floral, oriental, woody (also known as chypre), fougère (also known as aromatic) and fresh. 'Fresh' was a growing category that grouped citrus and oceanic scents. The idea behind the wheel was to not only plot each perfume's relationship to another and to fragrance in general, but to make buying and selling much easier. Countless retailers have relied on this system ever since.



1985: German Author Patrick Süskind released *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer*. Set in 18th century France, the book was about a boy born with no personal odour, but a super-heightened sense of smell and a murderous obsession to create the ultimate perfume. Süskind described smells in such a vivid way that the pages seemed almost scratch & sniff.



1987: Elizabeth Taylor put her name to Passion - and the first celebrity scent. White Diamonds, which she launched four years later, would become a consistent best-seller.

1991: Calvin Klein brought out Escape; the following year Issey Miyake came out with L'Eau d'Issey. These two aquatic scents symbolically washed away the power perfumes of the previous decade, and ushered in an era of clean minimalism, that would also be celebrated in fashion and homewares.

1992: Going against the minimal trend - both in fashion and fragrance - was French designer Thierry Mugler. His first scent, Angel, was inspired by such scent memories from his childhood as fairyfloss at the fairground, and his grandmother's baking. It kick-started the good-enough-to-eat gourmand category, which is still cooking strong today.



1994: Calvin Klein's cK One was a phenomenon, a citrusy unisex scent that sold its cool little socks off all over the world. At its height, twenty bottles were snapped up each minute.

2002: Jennifer Lopez launched her first scent, Glow, and with it the concept of a quadruple threat: she was a successful dancer, singer, actor and perfumer. Ever since, the mark of a made-it celebrity (Madonna being the notable exception) has been to have her own perfume.



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Chanel No.5 Eau Première, from \$180. A sweet remake of the original, with a lighter floral bouquet and a more luxurious vanilla base.



Chloé eau de parfum, from \$80. This rose-rich scent is feminine, sexy and it-girl-cool all at once.

Jeanne Lanvin, from \$80. Berries, peony and musk make for an irresistibly flirty scent; the hand-tied tulle box is a so-pretty finishing touch.

Bulgari Jasmin Noir, from \$108. With jasmine, gardenia, satin almond, tonka bean and liquorice, this is one slinky, seductive scent.

Estée Lauder Sensuous, from \$80. Classified as a woody amber, it's warm and lush and utterly gorgeous.