

## Making Scents

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These are trying times for perfumistas, scent snobs on the lookout for something beyond the latest fruity floral emblazoned with the name of the celeb du jour.

Jessica Murphy, a Hudson County art historian who moonlights as a fragrance reviewer for the must-read blog Now Smell This ([nstperfume.com](http://nstperfume.com)), compares mainstream perfume houses to the big Hollywood studios: "Everyone is so worried about the return on their investment, how cosmetics will do globally, that they've gotten very cautious and they keep repeating the same ideas," she says. "It's like remaking 'Spider-Man' again."

In her reviews, Murphy tries to do more than merely catalog accords. She conveys the mood of a fragrance and conjures the soul of a scent, but she also parses marketing campaigns, analyzes demographics, appraises the architecture of the bottle, even critiques the quality of the spray mechanisms.

The central Jersey native, who also writes about perfume and culture in her own blog ([tinselcreation.com](http://tinselcreation.com)), first started taking scent seriously about a decade ago. "I love fragrance the same way I love fashion and art and music and books," Murphy says. "I'm fascinated by its history and its creative process, and the way it can feel like everything from a stylish accessory to a private emotional space."

Jessica Murphy recommends Sephora's sampler sets, which package a range of small bottles of popular fragrances (\$42 to \$75) and come with a voucher for a full-size bottle of whichever turns out to be your favorite. Online retailers, including [luckyscent.com](http://luckyscent.com), [surrendertochance.com](http://surrendertochance.com) and [theperfumedcourt.com](http://theperfumedcourt.com), have sample programs in which you can spend a few bucks on a small spray vial. "That's much better than spending \$75 on a bottle you will not love," says Murphy.

If there's someone on your gift list who's in a bit of a fragrance rut, Murphy suggests these new, overlooked or off-the-beaten-path scents:

1. If juicy, fruity scents, such as Calvin Klein Euphoria, are her signature, try L'Artisan Parfumeur's Mûre et Musc ([luckyscent.com](http://luckyscent.com), \$100 for 1.7 ounces).
2. If she likes the elegant orange blossom notes in Dior J'Adore, try Atelier Cologne Grand Néroli (Sephora, [sephora.com](http://sephora.com), \$60 for 1 ounce).
3. If she likes light and citrusy fragrances, such as Dolce & Gabbana Light Blue, try Maison Francis Kurkdjian's unisex Aqua Universalis (Neiman Marcus, [neimanmarcus.com](http://neimanmarcus.com), \$165 for 2.4 ounces).
4. If she's partial to rose scents, such as Stella by Stella McCartney, try Diptyque's Eau Rose (Nordstrom, [nordstrom.com](http://nordstrom.com), [diptyqueparis.com](http://diptyqueparis.com), \$98 for 3.4 ounces).
5. If the vanilla in Viktor & Rolf's Flowerbomb turns her on, try Kiehl's new Vanilla & Cedarwood fragrance spray (Bloomingdale's, [bloomingdales.com](http://bloomingdales.com), [kiehls.com](http://kiehls.com), \$75 for 3.4 ounces).
6. If she finds the warm, woody feel of Estee Lauder's Sensuous appealing, try Donna Karan's new scent Woman (Macy's, [macys.com](http://macys.com), \$85 for 1.7 ounces).

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