

Heaven scent

We take a look at the importance of scents and find out how to find your perfect fragrance

By Shereen Low

PERFUME is not just something you splash on your skin to smell good. The film adaptation of Patrick Suskind's novel, *Perfume*, shows that fragrance is the ultimate sensory experience, calling up emotions and forgotten memories. One scent could make you irresistible – while another could have the opposite effect. The perfect perfume is one that sums up your personality through the scents you have chosen. Bear in mind you'll need at least two – one for day and one for night. With a dizzying array of scents vying for your nasal seal of approval, it can be difficult to decide where to start, let alone decide which one you like the most. Use our guide to get on the scent. Laurent Delafon from Diptyque has the following tips for finding the right perfume:



Take your time. Don't buy on impulse – to pick something that's right for you, you need to let it seduce you. It's not speed-dating. Try it on your skin, letting it rest for a while to let all the notes reveal themselves. Think exactly about what you are after, be it a scent for work, for the evening, for the summer. The same way you would choose an outfit for a specific occasion, so you should with a scent. You wouldn't wear the same outfit to a date as you would to work, so why should it be different for perfume? Shop around and ask questions of sales staff. Don't be persuaded by bargains

like 'buy the scent and get the body cream free'. Judge scents on their merits, not on the name or brand. Once you have made your decision, wear your new scent often and make it part of your life. If it doesn't work for you, you'll soon notice. Floral scents, whether light or mixed with sweet fruity notes, have always been associated with femininity. "These notes are generally quite simple, easily enjoyed. I find it's carefree, happy-go-lucky people with sunny dispositions who like floral scents," said perfumer Roja Dove, who has perfumeries in House of Fraser.

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Assert your fashion rights

January is the time to start that new fitness regime. Sportswear is high-tech, functional and highly fashionable. We find the hottest gear so you can look stylish on the slopes or in the gym

The start of the year is the time to start a new fitness regime. But as fashions change through the seasons, so does exercise wear – getting more technologically advanced year after year. Five years ago, swimsuits with built-in UV protection or jackets featuring Bluetooth technology would have been futuristic dreams, but now they can be found on your local high street. According to Mintel consumer analyst Amanda Lintott, people usually wear sportswear to work out in – but sometimes they just want to make a fashion statement.

"Consumers give out mixed messages on exercise. While more of them claim to undertake some form of sport or exercise at least once a week, participation levels in many sports are low and falling," she said.

"Only running, walking and football seem to be enjoying significant rises in participation – many other sports and physical activities are on a downhill run."

So whether your New Year's resolution is to get sportier or just get the look, you too can dress like a champion.

If you're escaping to the sun this winter, you're in luck. Not only are there funky prints and exotic colours to suit every personality, but swimsuits are becoming much more sophisticated. Speedo's swimsuits do more than keep your private parts covered. Suits in the Sculpture range, from £40 will define silhouettes with clever cutting around the bust, waist and thighs, while other swimsuits are made with chlorine and snagging resistant fabric Endurance+, to keep the swimwear's shape and colour for longer, priced from £25

Sunseeker's new collection, from £60 at Figleaves.com, features zesty print bikinis and



one-piece stunners with an exclusive UV protection microfibre to protect skin from harmful UVA and UVB rays, with an SPF of 50. Swatch's Fun Scuba watch, £50 (70 Euros), is designed for snorkelling and scuba diving fans. Water resistant up to 200 metres, it includes a dive calculator that measures the length and depth of each dive – up to 90 minutes of dive time to a maximum depth of 40 metres. There's also a log book function to automatically record your favourite dives.

Tech-savvy skiers will love O'Neill's H3 range: the collection combines technology with style. "The majority of sports lovers are technically aware and use technology a lot. Streamlining it with clothing means they don't have to give that up when they're doing sports," said O'Neill marketing manager Keeley Wilkie-Smith.

The Comm.Ent jacket, £350, has an iPod connection, Bluetooth for connecting to your mobile phone and remote control pad on the sleeves, while the Audio Beanie, £35, has integrated headphones so you don't need to worry about loose connections when you're making your way down the slopes. There's also a Fat Controller glove with wireless remote controls for your iPod, £100.

Stella McCartney's collection for Adidas is one of the most coveted sports ranges around. Skiwear includes the lightweight and waterproof Sheshat WP boots, £149, Snug jacket with pockets to hold your MP3 player, mobile phone and lipbalm, £280, and ski bum bag to hold all your essentials stylishly, £49, available from Sweaty Betty.

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Reflect on your healthy New Years' resolutions

Many of us begin the New Year with good intentions, resolving to enjoy a healthier diet or perhaps start a fitness regime by joining a gym. However, since most people's best efforts last no more than a few weeks, by February we are often left feeling miserable and guilty - if ever there was a month to indulge in a spot of pampering and kickstart a new healthy lifestyle then this is it.

And it couldn't be easier at the newly-refurbished Reflections Leisure Club at the Park Royal in Stretton. Leisure Club Manager Rob Mentha explains:

"Finding a form of exercise that you enjoy is the key to keeping it up and improving your fitness levels long-term. So many people purchase gym memberships in the New Year only to find that the gym just isn't for them - but there are loads of other fun ways to get fit and the best way to find out what works for you is simply to give them a try.

"We believe Reflections at the Park Royal is Cheshire's friendliest leisure club. It's certainly a place where you don't need to have a model figure to feel at home."

Pay a visit and not only can you give their fantastic gym facilities - including the latest Technogym fitness technology - a try but also enjoy a swim in the stunning 22 metre swimming pool. What about a game or two on the all weather tennis courts or trying one of the range of fun fitness classes on offer? Whether you fancy an action-packed boxercise class or a relaxing yoga session there is something to suit

everyone and beginners are always welcome.

As well as boosting your energy levels, Reflections at the Park Royal also offers the perfect opportunity to unwind and indulge with an extensive range of luxurious spa and beauty treatments on offer. Chill out on one of the heated loungers in the pool-side thermal suite with its fabulous rock sauna. There's also an aroma steam room to help cleanse and detox your body.

Try out the new rest and relaxation room between treatments - read a magazine and enjoy complimentary mineral water and herbal infusions or head for the lounge area where a selection of other drinks and healthy, delicious snacks and lunches are available.

Yvonne Jackson, General Manager at the Park Royal, said: "Reflections at The Park Royal is the perfect place to visit if you are thinking about a healthy new regime but don't quite know where to begin.

"We provide a bespoke and personal style of service and have created a modern club

with a warm and friendly atmosphere where guests do not feel intimidated. Matched with the new facilities and treatments available, we are offering guests a chance to reach their own personal health and fitness goals with the support of our fitness team or simply an oasis where they can relax and indulge themselves for a few hours."

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Do your homework

Home offices are all the rage – transform a room easily by using our guide to furniture and accessories

By Gabrielle Fagan

COMPOST heaps, a tool shed, a vegetable patch – and if you're over-imaginative, fairies – used to be the only things found at the bottom of most people's gardens. Nowadays, you're much more likely to find a home office – a sanctuary where you can sort out your life, deal with household paperwork or even run a mini business empire. Working among the foliage also has the cachet of being a celebrity choice – DIY queen Linda Barker, gardening guru Diarmuid Gavin, BBC journalist Andrew Marr and property expert Kirsty Allsop have all joined the garden office set. But even if toiling while looking out at the great outdoors isn't an option, working from home – even occasionally – using a simple desk in a corner of the lounge or a converted bedroom is now common. Victoria Machin, at Sanctuary Garden Offices says: "We saw a 40 per cent growth in demand last year and expect it to be even greater this year." "Home working's popularity has been rising due to a combination of factors – rising transport costs, the increasing stress of commuting as well as people's environmental concerns about burning up fuel travelling to work.

"Obviously, there's also always been a core of people who need to be based at home because it fits their lifestyle, maybe because they're caring for children or elderly relatives." It may be an increasingly fashionable choice, but you do need to make sure that your office suits your needs, is practical and attractive enough to lure you to work in it, even if you are still wearing your pyjamas! Do your homework, using our guide, so that your office is a winning space.

Reasons to work from home

If every business motorist worked from home once a week, it would reduce total CO2 emissions by 1 per cent and take 1.7 million cars off the road. A six month study has shown that by working at home two days a week, 87 per cent of participants in the study found an increase in the productivity, accuracy and quality of their work (according to the South East Development Agency). Avoiding distracting office gossip and politics and the general irritations of noisy colleagues and telephones were all reasons given for working at

home according to recent research. Estate agents say a well-built garden office can add as much as five per cent to the value of a house and often planning permission is not needed.

Room sense

Tessa Eveleigh, author of *House Beautiful*, Small Space Decorating Workshop [Hearst Books £17.99] said: "The ideal solution for the smooth running of household business is to find room for a dedicated office." "A well-planned office is easy to keep neat, orderly and under control. The best solution is to have the desk against the wall for easy access to electrical and telephone cable outlets." Opt for more formal, functional desks for a designated office space. Get an executive look with leather and steel Chicago office furniture from John Lewis. Desk £195, filing cabinet £99. Well-designed dark wenge-coloured wood furniture from BoConcept would suit an airy, streamlined workroom. Desk £379, bookcases from £275, office chair £149.



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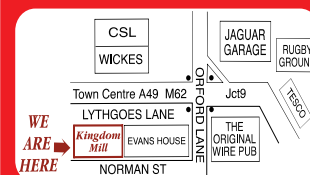


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