



## Fragrant: The Secret Life of Scent

By Mandy Aftel

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**Winner of the 2016 Perfumed Plume Award**

**The “Alice Waters of American natural perfume” (indieperfume.com) celebrates our most potent sense, through five rock stars of the fragrant world.**

**Look out for Mandy Aftel's new book, *The Art of Flavor*, on sale in August!**

Mandy Aftel is widely acclaimed as a trailblazer in natural perfumery. Over two decades of sourcing the finest aromatic ingredients from all over the world and creating artisanal fragrances, she has been an evangelist for the transformative power of scent. In *Fragrant*, through five major players in the epic of aroma, she explores the profound connection between our sense of smell and the appetites that move us, give us pleasure, make us fully alive. Cinnamon, queen of the Spice Route, touches our hunger for the unknown, the exotic, the luxurious. Mint, homegrown the world over, speaks to our affinity for the familiar, the native, the authentic. Frankincense, an ancient incense ingredient, taps into our longing for transcendence, while ambergris embodies our unquenchable curiosity. And exquisite jasmine exemplifies our yearning for beauty, both evanescent and enduring.

In addition to providing a riveting initiation into the history, natural history, and philosophy of scent, *Fragrant* imparts the essentials of scent literacy and includes recipes for easy-to-make fragrances and edible, drinkable, and useful concoctions that reveal the imaginative possibilities of creating with—and reveling in—aroma. Vintage line drawings make for a volume that will be a treasured gift as well as a great read.

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## **Fragrant: The Secret Life of Scent By Mandy Aftel Bibliography**

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## Editorial Review

Review

**Praise for *Fragrant: The Secret Life of Scent***

**Named one of *Time Magazine* and *Flavorwire's* Best Fall Reads**

"Aftel could be considered the scent world's Alice Waters. ... She writes passionately about scent ... pass[ing] through the histories of [her five] "landmark scents" like an anthropologist jotting down field notes. ... A welcome perspective." —*New York Times*

"Sublime..." "From astonishing, almost mythic accounts of the ancient spice trade to easy-to-follow formulas that will allow readers to try their own hand at perfumery, *Fragrant* is a lush must-read for all lovers of perfume." —*Elle*

"Mandy Aftel's seductive *Fragrant* plumbs the power of ancient and exotic smells to ignite desire, discovery, and transcendence." —*Vanity Fair*

"A powerful history of the senses. "People sailed around the world the wrong way just to get different aromas into their lives," explains Aftel. In the spirit of those spice-seeking adventurers, she sets off on a sweeping narrative tour, exploring the role of scent in everything from Greek mythology and classic texts like *One Thousand and One Nights* to its impact on modern medicine, and even flapper-era cocktails." —*Vogue*

"[Aftel] writes passionately about our emotional connection with scent, its powers of transcendence and her mission to create perfumes that are the antithesis of overly chemical, mass-produced fragrances... deftly weaving in the Bible (the scent-drenched Song of Solomon), historic remedies (how to make 19th century Vienna Bitters)...linguistics (the Sanskrit origins of the word "musk"), literature (Charles Darwin waxing rhapsodic about jasmine), history (the spice route) and science (how frankincense may relieve depression)" —*Los Angeles Times*

"Cinnamon, mint, frankincense, ambergris and jasmine seem to waft from the pages as Aftel interprets their history, mythology and ethereality, providing the reader with a heady literary elixir." —*San Francisco Chronicle*

"A valuable recent addition to the perfume nerd's informational arsenal... Reading [Aftel's] book makes a person wearing perfume feel connected to every human in every era who has ever done so." —*Bookforum*

"This fall's most compelling tome of highbrow nonfiction by a Berkeley author ... is [this] authoritatively voiced, utterly fascinating, fact-laden look into the surprisingly complex world of scent." —*San Francisco Magazine*

"Aftel offers intriguing insight into world cultures through the history of five key scents – including why mint tea is a sign of hospitality in the Middle East, and how the Dutch policed the cinnamon black market in Ceylon." —*Food & Wine*

"A fascinating mixture of history and personal anecdotes about perfume and the role scent plays in our lives." —*Largehearted Boy*

"A strong case for the powerful sense properties of scent." —*Bay Area Reporter*

"Sumptuous and gorgeous... I want to give [*Fragrant*] to every woman I love" —Sophie Uliano, Gorgeously Green

"Working with archetypal aromas cinnamon, mint, frankincense, ambergris and jasmine- Mandy uses aroma as muse and guide into an exceptionally well documented unfolding of the human experience." —Cafleurebon

"I'd highly recommend [*Fragrant*] if you're at all curious about aromatic ingredients. She'll teach you how to interact with a perfume—how to smell it, think about it, experience it. Best of all, you'll learn olfactory factoids that are perfect cocktail party fodder." —Paths & Errands

"Riveting and indulgent. [*Fragrant*] is like a well-crafted piece of fine art, or a gourmet meal. You want to savor every single word on every single page" —The Girl Who Knows

"A *Botany of Desire* for scent." —Michael Pollan (via Twitter @MichaelPollan)

"Masterful storytelling awaits within the pages of *Fragrant*. We are treated to natural history, adventure, the enmeshing of scent with human civilization... This cornucopia of information is delivered to us engagingly, summoning all of our senses in the process. Scholarly meets sensual, intellectual meets tempestuous, the creative marries the practical. The illustrations and cover art alone would be worth the purchase of this precious volume; they possess a life all their own." —Fragrantica

"Ms. Aftel's previous career as a writer along with her experience as a natural perfumer allows for a perfect synergy... [*Fragrant* is] as easy to read as a true-life adventure... I learned so much I didn't know about ingredients I thought I knew a lot about. The section of my bookshelf which houses the books on scent and perfume that I think are essential is pretty small. With the publication of *Fragrant* it just got one volume bigger." —Mark Behnke, Colognoisseur.com

"In this sensuous and profound exploration of the history, science, and art of perfume, expert perfumer Aftel seduces readers with a sensualism that only intensifies as her stories unfold. ... The book is peppered with fascinating trivia [and] recipes and tidbits ... that entice readers to wake up their noses and perhaps engage in their own scent alchemy." —*Publisher's Weekly* (starred review)

"Aftel's vast knowledge and passion for perfumery are on full display here, and her personal anecdotes read like an old friend sharing a cherished recipe. ... Strongly recommended for casual readers interested in the basics of scent and perfumery." —*Library Journal*

"Aftel will greatly expand ... what readers think they know about fragrance as she chronicles the medicinal, culinary and spiritual uses of aromatics from antiquity to the present... [Aftel] doesn't merely create pleasant aromas; she opens an olfactory portal to the sensual and spiritual appetites that make us feel alive and in the moment... Evocative, heady and overflowing with history and lore." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"*Fragrant* is a thoughtful, beautifully written meditation on scent; I love that Mandy is both intrepid researcher and sensualist, with an innate gift for storytelling and an abiding curiosity in the provenance of her ingredients. This book vividly shows how the aromas of the natural world have the power to open the pathways to our minds, guiding and defining our traditions, our history and our future." —Alice Waters

"Reading Mandy Aftel's thoughtful and charmingly written *Fragrant*, I was taken on a journey of intrigue and fascination that operated on all my senses. Who knew there was so much to learn about the human affection for smelling good? Or, indeed, for the adventure of smelling itself."—Alice Walker

"Mandy Aftel has been tutoring my nose for many years. I've been lucky enough to make regular pilgrimages to her perfume studio to smell with her through the hundreds of materials in her collection, to browse in her wonderfully eclectic library, to be informed and inspired by her passion for scent in all its forms. In *Fragrant*, she distills that passion into an eloquent account of the forgotten stories of nature's aromatic materials, the pleasure and meaning that they've given to people through the centuries, and simple ways of bringing those riches back into our own lives." —Harold McGee, New York Times columnist and bestselling author of *On Food & Cooking*

#### About the Author

**Mandy Aftel** is an internationally known artisan perfumer and the author of six previous books, including *Essence and Alchemy: A Natural History of Perfume*. Her work has been featured in *The New York Times*, *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, *O, The Oprah Magazine*, *Elle*, *In Style*, *W*, and *Bon Appétit*, among many other publications. Aftel lives in Berkeley, California.

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An engraving from the 1576 English edition of *The New Jewell of Health* symbolizes the art of distillation, which was used to extract essential oils from fruits, flowers, and other materials.

The "Boat of Foolish Smells," in a caricature engraving published in Josse Bade's 1502 edition of *La Nef des Folles* (The Ship of Fools).

Odors have a power of persuasion stronger than that of words, appearances, emotions, or will. The persuasive power of an odor cannot be fended off, it enters into us like breath into our lungs, it fills us up, imbues us totally. There is no remedy for it.

—PATRICK SÜSKIND, *Perfume*

Egyptians emptied corpses of their organs and filled the cavities with aromatics to prepare them for the afterlife. Romans splashed doves with rose water and set them loose in banquet halls to scent the air. Marie Antoinette employed her own perfumer, Jean-Louis Fargeon, who created bespoke perfumes to match the queen's many moods. People have feasted on aromatic materials, scented temples with them, offered them to guests. Whatever the vehicle—flowers or food, incense or perfume—people in every time and place have gone out of their way to exercise and indulge the sense of smell. Why? Because no other sense makes us feel so fully alive, so truly human, so deeply, unconsciously, and immediately connected with our memories and experiences. No other sense so moves us.

As an artisanal perfumer who works with extraordinary aromatic ingredients from all over the world, I venture deep into the fragrant world every day. And one of my greatest joys is bringing other people there, too, and watching as they immerse themselves in the experience. Scent is fun, sexy, visceral, transporting: it reminds us who we are and connects us to one another and to the natural world. Of all the senses, the sense of smell is the one that reaches most readily beyond us, even as it most powerfully taps the wellsprings of our inmost selves. It has an unparalleled capacity to wake us up, to make us fully human.

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde portrays the deep, instinctive connection between scent and our unconscious thoughts and emotions:

And so he would now study perfumes and the secrets of their manufacture, distilling heavily scented oils and

burning odorous gums from the East. He saw that there was no mood of the mind that had not its counterpart in the sensuous life, and set himself to discover their true relations, wondering what there was in frankincense that made one mystical, and in ambergris that stirred one's passions, and in violets that woke the memory of dead romances, and in musk that troubled the brain, and in champak that stained the imagination; and seeking often to elaborate a real psychology of perfumes, and to estimate the several influences of sweet-smelling roots and scented, pollen-laden flowers; of aromatic balms and of dark and fragrant woods; of spikenard, that sickens; of hovenia, that makes men mad; and of aloes, that are said to be able to expel melancholy from the soul.

Wilde knows that aromas can take us anywhere, that they are a magic carpet we can ride to hidden worlds, not only to other times and places but deep within ourselves, beneath the surface of daily life. We close our eyes—we do this instinctively before we inhale a scent, as if preparing for the internal journey—and before we even consciously recognize what we're smelling, we are carried away without our consent. Or we are stopped in our tracks, brought entirely into the present moment. (The next time you catch a whiff of skunk, try thinking about anything else at all.)

I'll never forget the first time I smelled the intense aromatic essences that are the perfumer's palette. I had signed up for a perfume class at a nearby aromatherapy studio. The teacher laid out many small bottles of naturally derived botanical essences for us to compose with: oakmoss, angelica, jasmine, frankincense, patchouli, kewda, sweet orange, lime. I leaned over to smell each one, amazed at how rich and complex and singular and stinky and alive they were, how transporting. As I took in the oils, in all their gorgeous diversity, it was as if a mirrored sensation were occurring inside me; I felt as if I were becoming one with the oils, as if they were entering me. I couldn't tell where I left off and they began. I couldn't and didn't want to find the words to describe them; I just felt radiant and alive—as radiant and alive as they were. I fell in love immediately.

By then I'd already lived for more than twenty years in Berkeley, California, where I had a thriving psychotherapy practice and had written a few books. The city itself had had a profound influence on me from the moment I arrived there, after an upbringing in Detroit. In Berkeley, I found the bohemian ambience I had longed for, an energy that was palpable in the streets, in the restaurants and cafés and shops. It felt as if behind every Arts and Crafts façade there were people making pottery or jewelry, writing books, doing improv, inventing new recipes, collaborating in a kind of rampant cross-fertilization of creativity.

As it happened, I moved into an Arts and Crafts house right behind the restaurant Chez Panisse, where Alice Waters had just begun to spread the gospel of locavorism. Three houses down was the original Peet's Coffee, where Mr. Peet himself roasted the beans. My block was redolent with the smells of fresh coffee and of vegetables roasting in Chez Panisse's wood-fired oven. In Detroit, front yards had been clipped, manicured, rolled-lawn affairs, but here in Berkeley people's front yards overflowed with casual cottage gardens of fresh herbs and heritage roses, fruit trees in bloom, jasmine and wisteria climbing from basement to attic. I had never seen such a gift to the street! Despite Berkeley's reputation as the epicenter of the counterculture, the aesthetic it was steeped in was simple, almost Old World. It spoke to me, and it played a great role in shaping my own aesthetic. Working with the best ingredients, doing only what needed to be done and no more—this became my creative mantra.

It was a mantra that guided me through several career turns, fueled by the Berkeley milieu. As a weaver I worked with a range of natural materials—horsehair, goat hair, wool, silk—learning to spin them into yarn, and dyeing them with herbs and lichens I gathered. I developed an appreciation for the ways that raw materials were grown, processed, and used all over the world. Later I trained to be a therapist and focused my practice on artists and writers, to whose brilliance and creative energy I was drawn. Researching a book I was writing on Brian Jones, founding member of the Rolling Stones, I was drawn to his fascination with the

costumes and music of other cultures, and to the way he embodied the conviction that anything is possible and that creativity is what life is all about.

I wrote another book, *The Story of Your Life*, marrying my fascination with plot and narrative to what I had learned about character and transformation through my years as a therapist. Then I decided to write a novel, with a perfumer as my protagonist. I knew nothing about the craft of perfumery, but its aura had allure. I signed up for that perfume class, little dreaming that in the process of researching my novel I was about to discover my true calling and become the artist I had only planned to write about.

Not only did I fall in love with essential oils, but I discovered that I had a knack for blending them. Just as sometimes you meet someone it seems you've known forever, the essences, with their distinct personalities, had a mysterious familiarity to me. I could appreciate their textures and shapes almost instinctively, like a language in which I was already fluent. As I started making perfumes, I could identify where and how I'd made mistakes, and in correcting them I learned so much about the way each essence interacted with others. I set up my own perfume business, a true cottage industry. Gradually I developed a following for my artisanal fragrances, developed from entirely natural materials that I sourced from all over the world.

At the same time, I immersed myself in the rich history of scent, acquiring more than two hundred rare and antique books on perfumery, one book leading me to the next as I fell under the spell of their charm, beauty, and eccentricity. Discovering the universe they contained was like being the first explorer in a cave that harbored the unsullied pottery and intact arrowheads of a lost civilization. In the stories of perfume, one could relive the world being discovered, retrace the footsteps of the people who came upon spices in faraway places and learned to extract the aromatic oils from exotic plants. In their intricate woodcuts and engravings, old distilling apparatuses looked like crosses between lab equipment and the tools of witchcraft. It wasn't just the history of perfume I was discovering. I had entered a heady world in which perfume commingled with medicine, science, alchemy, cooking, mysticism, cosmetics, and craft. There lay the richer, more synesthetic sensibility of a bygone time, a beautiful and mysterious universe of magical things jumbled together.

Eventually I did write another book of my own, not a novel but *Essence and Alchemy: A Natural History of Perfume*, which introduced perfumers and "perfumistas" to the sensual history of natural aromatics and the building blocks of creating perfume with them. The nascent natural/artisanal perfumery movement embraced the book, and I began to teach the art of perfumery as well as to practice it. I also began to confer and collaborate with chefs and mixologists who were coming at natural essences via food and drink. I found myself in the vanguard of a surge of interest in scent as a key component of flavor, an exciting new arena I explored in a cookbook I coauthored with Michelin two-star chef Daniel Patterson.

In my nearly two decades of peregrinations through the world of scent, the wonder of encountering amazing new fragrances has never left me. And everywhere I've gone, I've had the joy of giving other people that experience. Sometimes they try to head me off, claiming they are "not into perfume." Instinctively repelled by their exposure to an olfactory diet that's the equivalent of fast food—the assaultive, artificial scents that saturate what we eat, our cleaning products, mass-produced perfume, the very environment—they've come to believe they have no appetite for scent itself. Watching them discover authentic aromas and their sensual pleasures is profoundly thrilling, like watching a starving person feast on a delicious meal. It's these experiences of reawakening people to scent that led to this book. I wanted to write next for everyone, not just for the perfumers and perfumistas—though I think they too will find new information and inspiration here, as their passionate interest in high-quality perfumes has fueled the trend toward niche brands and small-batch perfumery.

As Michael Taylor observes in *Rembrandt's Nose*, that great painter intuitively understood that the nose was



the key to understanding a person's face. He painted noses that "possess a will of their own."

They have their own inclinations and seem to obey their own promptings rather than the laws of objective resemblance. They are long and slender, flat and squat, smooth or wrinkled, bony or fleshy, dainty or gross, pitted, scarred, inflamed, unblemished—less, one feels, for reasons of fidelity to the sitter than for reasons dictated by the artist. . . . He rendered the complexion of a nose with the same fastidiousness that he brought to paraphrasing the sheen of velvet or fur. In his portraits and self-portraits, he angles the sitter's face in such a way that the ridge of the nose nearly always forms the line of demarcation between brightly illuminated and shadowy areas. A Rembrandt face is a face partially eclipsed; and the nose, bright and obvious, thrusting into the middle of halftones, serves to focus the viewer's attention upon, and to dramatize, the division between a flood of light—an overwhelming clarity—and a broody duskiness.

I feel a bit about the nose as Rembrandt evidently did. The nose is idiosyncratically central not only to our sense of smell but to our sense of who we are, in our most primal appetites. For the idea of appetite pertains to food as well as to all the sensual and spiritual experiences that drive us, give us pleasure, make us feel more alive in the moment. Scent is a portal to these basic human appetites—for the far-off, the familiar, the transcendent, the strange, and the beautiful—that have motivated us since the origins of our species.

As I researched and thought about the deep ways that perfume touches our most primal selves and the collective self of our species, I realized that I had the makings of an adventure story of sorts, an entrée to writing about scent as a series of excursions into the fragrant world that I think will return you more awake and alive, more profoundly able to "smell the roses."

To narrate it I chose five landmark scents—think of them as five rock stars of the aromatic world. Each represents a key story line in the history of scent, intricately bound up in its adventures and intrigues and moments of discovery. Each also represents a class of material from which are derived the ingredients essential to the art of perfumery (and also to the art of cooking and flavoring). And each touches on—and stirs—one of the basic appetites that define us.

- CINNAMON, among the spices, attests to our appetite for adventure—the pursuit of the exotic and the luxurious. It's a link to an era of risk and discovery, a time when not all was mapped and known.
- MINT, among the herbs, speaks to the lure of home—our hunger for the familiar, the authentic, the native. Mint is the quintessential American plant and a link to the "weird old America" of a bygone era that lives on in the national character, beneath the topsoil of modernity. But it is also indigenous to almost everywhere, a universal symbol of welcome.
- FRANKINCENSE, one of the deeply aromatic resins traditionally used in incense, represents our inclination to the spiritual. The trees these resins come from are like a manifestation of the urge they embody—to reach beyond, to transcend our temporal being by means of ritual and out-of-body experience.
- AMBERGRIS, an animal essence, is testament to our unquenchable curiosity—our fascination with the unusual, the strange, the wondrous, the "other."
- JASMINE, among the floral fragrances, stands for our yearning for beauty, for an aesthetic that embraces the evanescence of our existence as well as what endures—an aesthetic embodied in the Japanese design philosophy of wabi-sabi.

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In *A Natural History of the Senses*, Diane Ackerman reminds us that our prehuman selves started in the ocean, relying on the nose to seek out food and identify enemies. "In our early, fishier version of humankind . . . smell was the first of our senses," she writes, and cognition evolved from it: "Our cerebral hemispheres were originally buds from the olfactory stalks. We think because we smelled." Scent has helped each of us,

since we were babies, to recognize what is of us (familiar) and not of us (other). Babies learn to recognize their mothers by smell—so important when you spend a lot of time with your eyes closed!

On a molecular level, scent actually touches your nerves. In order for you to perceive a distinct smell, some volatile constituent of the odoriferous substance must vaporize, waft deep into your nose, and settle on your olfactory receptors. Vision and hearing, by contrast, depend only on the perception of light waves or sound waves that emanate from or are reflected by the object in question; in a sense they only describe the object in question, while smell involves physical contact with its emanation. If someone places a batch of just-baked chocolate-chip cookies on the counter, their tantalizing aroma enters your nose and triggers a sensory response, touching you even before you can reach out your hand to grab one, even if you leave without taking a bite.

A single smell instantly brings forth a cascade of memories. Experiences and emotions get primally attached to smells, and those associations of memory and feeling are immediately triggered when the smell is next encountered—even if “next” is twenty years later. We eventually put words to these associations, to make them into stories—you associate the smell of pipe tobacco with being in your grandfather’s study—but they start as a visceral connection, fundamental to our human DNA. These primal associations make scent incredibly personal and specific, its associative fingerprint unique to each individual. As the philosopher Michel Serres writes in *The Five Senses*:

Smell seems to be the sense of singularity. Forms reappear, invariant or recurrent, harmonies are transformed, stable across variations, specificity is countersigned by aroma. With our eyes closed, our ears stopped, feet and hands bound, lips sealed, we can still identify, years later and from a thousand other smells, the undergrowth of such and such a place in a particular season at sunset, just before a rain storm, or the room where feed corn was kept, or cooked prunes in September, or a woman.

And yet the power of scent also derives from its ubiquity. At a given moment, it seems to be pervasive, everywhere at once. Smells emanate from unseen sources, often from many sources at once. They have no GPS tracking built in to tell us where they come from. They are like the ultimate superhero—invisible, untraceable, and sometimes overwhelming. Noxious smells seem like the very vehicles of contagion. Before the discovery of germs, writes William Miller in *The Anatomy of Disgust*, people thought that unpleasant odors spread disease while pleasant smells cured it. The associations persisted beyond the advent of germ theory, in fact—which is why cleaning products “must have a smell that accords with our beliefs about the smell of asepsis,” Miller observes, even though the smell has nothing to do with their cleansing properties.

Perfume would seem to be one of the elements, one of the original secrets of the universe. How it gets into flowers, and certain uncouth creatures, as for instance, ambergris in the whale, or civet in the civet cat of Abyssinia, or musk once more in the Florida alligator, is a hidden process of the divine chemistry, and why it affects us as it does no philosopher has yet explained. Literally, it belongs to those invisible powers whose influence is incalculable, and as yet unknowable.

—RICHARD LE GALLIENNE, *The Romance of Perfume*

Notwithstanding the inroads that scientific knowledge has made, scent remains one of the most accessible yet irreducible experiences of magic that we have. Indeed, entering the world of fragrance is like falling through the looking glass and finding on the other side an everyday miracle, a mystery, a source of wonder. It is a truly transformative experience, and one that I am passionate to share.

So smell has a potent pull on human beings: it has a prehistory with our species. But the unique power of scent has also given it a rich history with humanity. Lands have been discovered and conquered for the sake of perfumed materials; with them the most elusive lovers have been seduced, the most implacable gods

worshipped. They fuel the pursuit of the extraordinary and return us to the comfort of home. Aromas come freighted with the stories of where they've been and what's been done and dared in their name, as surely as do legends from far away and long ago. Through them we feel our place in the long narrative that is history: they bear the imprint of our cultural DNA.

Evidence of the vibrant aromatic life of bygone times is as rich and compelling as any archaeological find. The beliefs of the ancient Romans emanated from a scent-steeped existence: "Spiced wine mingled with frankincense could drive elephants mad, even if militarily trained; wild beasts could be lulled to sleep with flower petals and aromatics," writes Susan Harvey in *Scenting Salvation*. "Perfume was lethal to vultures, a bird that lived on putrid carrion, but could tame an entire flock of doves. Panthers could emit a sweet scent by which to beguile their prey. The ancient industry of aromatics was less an attempt to harness the powers of smells than to participate in their abundance."

Life in earlier epochs was imbued with a full panoply of aromas, including the impolite smells of humans and animals: urine, feces, rotting food, smoke, sweat, illness, and death. Without modern means of hygiene and sanitation, odors—both good and bad—were irrepressible, pulsating with life, and intensity was the norm rather than an occasion for disgust. As Paul Freedman observes in *Out of the East*, "It is precisely because of this inevitable familiarity with awful odors that people in premodern societies were entranced with beautiful smells. They experienced a wider spectrum of olfactory sensations than we are familiar with, both good and bad. What tended to be missing was the neutral non-smell of modernity."

There are signs that we are all tiring of this neutral non-smell of modernity. Since I published *Essence and Alchemy*, a new world of appreciation has sprung up around smell, much the way the world began to wake up to food a decade or two ago. People inspired by Alice Waters, Michael Pollan, and other apostles of the Slow Food/locavore movement have taken an interest in the provenance, quality, and variety of what they consume, not only for health reasons but to have a pleasurable, authentic connection to a universal experience. Perfume, which used to be covered by the press only twice a year and solely in women's fashion magazines, is now covered by the minute, by literally hundreds of perfume, fashion, and makeup blogs that have mushroomed on the Internet. The perfumistas who follow these blogs do not blindly buy the most heavily advertised perfumes but read, talk, meet, and breathe scent, developing and voicing their own sophisticated opinions. The ranks of those interested in wearing, using, and knowing about scent are growing exponentially. As I meet and talk and tweet and Facebook with them, I have been privileged to witness, again and again, the profound power of the sense of smell, the longings and impulses it stirs, the desire and appreciation for a richer connection with life.

"I remember with gratitude the moment when a great wine gave me a new mouth," writes Michel Serres on savoring a bottle of 1947 Château d'Yquem Sauternes. I want to give people a new nose, to introduce them to the heady sensuality of a fully engaged sense of smell. I want them to reawaken to smell, the way they have begun to reawaken to taste after a decades-long slumber. Often the path to awakening scent comes through taste, its closest sibling among the senses. In fact, "taste" is really a product of the two senses—the sensation of taste on the tongue plus smell in the nose—so the reawakening to food has really been in part a reawakening to smell. By focusing on scent, I want to make us aware of its primacy and power, but the two remain entwined, to the enrichment of both. As with taste, the pleasures of fragrance are transitory and evanescent, but they offer an incomparable, unadulterated experience of joy—they speak to first principles of pleasure, and for the moment that we experience them, our appetites are stronger than the fragility of life.

In *Worlds of Sense*, Constance Classen writes about the Ongee, an isolated tribe of hunter-gatherers living on a remote island off the coast of India, who are the most aromacentric community I have ever heard of. For the Ongee, smell is a source of personal identity, a system of medicine and communication:

When an Ongee wishes to refer to “me,” he or she puts a finger to the tip of his or her nose. . . . The most concentrated form of odour according to the Ongee are bones, believed to be solid smell. The Ongee thus say “smells are contained in everybody like tubers are contained in the ground.” An inner spirit is said to reside within the bones of living beings. While one is sleeping, this internal spirit gathers all the odours one has scattered during the day and returns them to the body, making continued life possible.

The Ongee hold illness to result from either an excess or a loss of odour. . . . The basic treatment for an excess of odour consists of warming up the patient in order to “melt” the solidified smell. A loss of odour, in turn, is treated by painting the patient with white clay to induce the sensation of coolness and restrict the flow of odour from the body. . . . The concern of the Ongees to maintain a healthy state of olfactory equilibrium is expressed in their forms of greeting. The Ongee equivalent of “how are you?” is . . . “how is your nose?” Or literally, “when/why/where is the nose to be?” . . . Death is explained by the Ongee as the loss of one’s personal odour. They believe that they kill animals they hunt by letting out all of their smell and that they themselves are hunted by spirits, called tomya, who kill them by absorbing their odours. Birth, in turn, is caused by a woman’s consuming food in which a hungry spirit is feeding. . . .

A newborn has soft bones and no teeth, hence possesses little odour. On growing up, a child develops the condensed odour contained in hard bones and teeth. In old age a person loses odour through illness and the loss of teeth, until death reduces the person to a boneless, odourless spirit—which will eventually be born again as a human. . . .

Living in a community is believed to unite the odour of individuals and lessen their chances of being smelled out by hungry spirits. When moving as a group from place to place, for example, the Ongee are careful to step in the tracks of the person in front, as this is thought to confuse personal odours and make it difficult for a spirit to track down an individual.

We don’t analyze scent; it unfolds in us. Aspects of an aroma strike us, then fade away as other notes emerge and gradually disappear. Like music, smell is an evolving experience, always in motion; the nuances of aromatic notes are experienced in transition from one to another. And as with music, the intangibility of scent allows us to experience it in a state of dreaming imagination. Smell is an invitation to a journey: it allows us to leave the ordinary course of things and go on a trip, to absent ourselves.

Not everyone has the desire or the ability to become a perfumer, any more than everyone has the desire or ability to become a chef. But I fervently believe that everyone can regain an authentic connection to the sense of smell. Ultimately my aim is not to dissect its power—not to pluck out the heart of its mystery—but rather to allow anyone with curiosity and a yearning to inhabit life fully to enter deeply into it.

With the aromas of cinnamon, mint, frankincense, ambergris, and jasmine as our spirit guides, we will explore the secret life of scent. Along the way we’ll stop in at my workshop—less to make a perfumer out of you (unless you’re so inspired!) than to introduce the essentials of scent literacy. In the same way that knowing a little about how to play an instrument enhances your enjoyment of music or taking an art history class makes you a more sophisticated museumgoer, understanding the basics of how scent is composed deepens your appreciation of the fragrant universe. And I’ll share recipes for some easy-to-make perfumes and edible, drinkable, and useful concoctions that will reveal the imaginative possibilities of creating with—and reveling in—aroma.

## **Users Review**

**From reader reviews:**

**Joel Faulkner:**

Information is provisions for anyone to get better life, information nowadays can get by anyone on everywhere. The information can be a information or any news even an issue. What people must be consider when those information which is from the former life are challenging to be find than now could be taking seriously which one would work to believe or which one the actual resource are convinced. If you obtain the unstable resource then you have it as your main information it will have huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen inside you if you take *Fragrant: The Secret Life of Scent* as the daily resource information.

**Peggy Dunn:**

The particular book *Fragrant: The Secret Life of Scent* will bring that you the new experience of reading any book. The author style to explain the idea is very unique. When you try to find new book you just read, this book very ideal to you. The book *Fragrant: The Secret Life of Scent* is much recommended to you to study. You can also get the e-book through the official web site, so you can quicker to read the book.

**Gary Carter:**

The particular book *Fragrant: The Secret Life of Scent* has a lot info on it. So when you check out this book you can get a lot of advantage. The book was authored by the very famous author. The author makes some research just before write this book. That book very easy to read you may get the point easily after perusing this book.

**Julie Long:**

The book untitled *Fragrant: The Secret Life of Scent* contain a lot of information on this. The writer explains her idea with easy technique. The language is very easy to understand all the people, so do not necessarily worry, you can easy to read this. The book was compiled by famous author. The author gives you in the new age of literary works. You can easily read this book because you can read more your smart phone, or gadget, so you can read the book within anywhere and anytime. In a situation you wish to purchase the e-book, you can wide open their official web-site and also order it. Have a nice study.

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