Perfume is always a very personal thing – but what if you had your own completely unique signature scent? Debbie Mulkern’s service provides just that with a one-to-one consultation lasting around two hours that ends with you taking away your own personally blended fragrance. It isn’t cheap at £100 for the experience, but with many ‘off the peg’ perfumes priced similarly, it’s well worth the cost for something completely unique made with natural essential oils and no synthetics. Plus, it makes a wonderful self-indulgent treat or a special occasion gift idea.

As an added bonus, you’ll come away with a much greater knowledge of essential oils and a fascinating insight into what goes into the creation of a perfume. You’ll learn the scent basics – the difference in strength between cologne, eau de toilette and eau de parfum, as well as the different ‘notes’ – top, middle and base – that are combined to make a fragrance.

Debbie has noticed that many celebrity fragrances are heavy on top notes but can lack the base notes that provide longevity – a bit like some celebrities’ careers! ‘There are definite parallels between what types of perfume are fashionable and what’s happening culturally at that time,’ she says. ‘In the 80s, popular fragrances of the day were very in your face, almost aggressive, and at the time women were wearing shoulder pads and asserting themselves in the workplace.’

My finished scent includes top notes of lemon myrtle, coriander seed, juniper and black pepper, middle notes of rose otto, neroli and may chang, and a base of cedar and sandalwood, among others. It really makes me smile and I feel uplifted every time I wear it. And it’s even attracted compliments – I just have to try not to sound too smug when I explain they won’t find this particular perfume in any shop!

It’s Aromatherapy Awareness Week this month and Debbie Mulkern of New Forest Aromatics in Hampshire could be considered the guru of essential oils. A trainer for Neal’s Yard Remedies, she is the go-to expert for top hotels and spas seeking a signature scent, and she also offers a bespoke perfume service.

Debbie explained that high quality essential oils may smell different from the more familiar synthetic versions, while some were new to me entirely, such as sugandha kokila from the cinnamon berry, which hails from Nepal.

‘Often what people think they like isn’t what they end up choosing, or sometimes something they’d never considered really appeals,’ she says. ‘Associations with scents have a big part to play as well – for those who remember the 60s and 70s, patchouli oil can remind them of a flower power youth, for instance, or someone may recoil from a certain smell that reminds them of an unpleasant experience. I have clients who become quite emotional, even tearful, during the process because of memories that come up.’

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