

Home-grown Artisanal Fragrances Worth a Whiff

Elegant, atypical and often tailored to local preferences, these scents smell good and also stand out from the crowd.



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You may not think of Singapore as a perfumery hotbed. But the demand for local artisanal fragrances is growing as consumers start looking beyond familiar brands for something different.

Prachi Saini Garg, founder of Singapore Memories (the retail label of the Je T'aime Group which runs perfume customisation services and workshops), says: "Big perfume brands play it safe and may not focus on any one country, especially Singapore, as the market is too small. They create scents that sell. We create memories. When customers smell our scents, we want them to feel and remember."

For Oo La Lab founder, Terry Jacobson, fine fragrances have been dominated by European and American tastes for far too long. "We wanted to bring an Asian sensibility to fine fragrance and create a 'local' brand that people can get behind. It is time for us to sharpen our sense of smell using our own backyard as our inspiration," he says.

These artisanal perfumes are hand-blended in Singapore in small batches to maintain quality control over the ingredients and development process. They also tend to be designed with Asian preferences in mind.

Freda 'D, for instance, curates notes to suit local tastes (which it says lean towards the very sweet) and formulates its perfumes to blend well with skin and perspiration so they can last in humid weather. And Singapore Memories launched the light floral Vanda 1981 and the oriental-fresh Aranda 1965 as it found that Singaporeans generally prefer clean, uplifting scents.

At Scent By Six, founder and nose Jason Lee takes into consideration food, climate, geography and people when constructing his fragrances, which aim to capture a place's character. The Hokkaido-inspired 27°F Biei, for instance, is a crisp green-tea-

and-mandarin concoction which he describes as "alluring in a subtle manner, quaint and dainty but not weak".

An edge that all the above-mentioned artisanal labels have over their foreign counterparts is in making bespoke perfumes accessible. Whether you DIY at their perfume workshops or have them craft a personalised fragrance based on your preferences, the customisation is simpler, hassle-free and affordable, with prices ranging from \$60 to around \$150.

We highlight four local artisanal perfume houses that are leading the charge.

Singapore Memories

Founded: In 2016 by Prachi Saini Garg, who previously worked in the architecture and infrastructure construction industries.

The noses: Three in-house perfumers and two consultants (one from India and one from Britain).

The inspiration: The places, heritage and culture of Singapore.

The hallmark: The brand mainly uses oils derived from Singapore's native orchids, lending its fragrances a local identity. Vanda 1981, for example, has the scent of Singapore's national flower, Vanda Miss Joaquim. Also, the brand has updated and relaunched famous local perfumes of the past such as Singapore Girl and Reves de Singapour.

Scent By Six

Founded: In 2016 by Jason Lee, a former business executive at Swiss fragrance giant Givaudan.

The nose: Lee, who learnt the ropes through working with Givaudan's senior perfumers and evaluators.

The inspiration: The brand's first and only collection (for now) is inspired by Lee's favourite destinations. Six fragrances have been planned, with four of them released so far, based on Singapore, Hokkaido, Boracay and New York. The next collection may take its cue from art or music.

The hallmark: Scents that embody travel experiences, such as the posh but earthy 123 Tribeca, which aims to convey both the sophistication and dinginess of the New York district. Each fragrance is designed to evoke the character and vibes of the location it is based on.

Oo La Lab

Founded: In 2016 by Terry Jacobson, who has more than a decade's experience working on fragrance events and projects for clients such as Singapore Fashion Week, the Laneway Festival, Mulberry and Audi.

The noses: A small group of indie and big-house perfumers with extensive training. Jacobson says they were chosen mainly for their understanding of the brand and the kind of fragrances it wants to create.

The inspiration: Local and Asian culture, habitats, food and events.

The hallmark: Edgy and surprising fragrances with popular or familiar Asian accords. Offerings range from straightforward ones like Citrus Floral to fabric-inspired ones like Cashmere and Silk. It also has a limited-edition collaborative collection with Singapore-based multimedia artist, Mojoko, which draws on Asian pop culture.

Freda 'D

Founded: In 2014 by former air stewardess Faridah Yusuf, whose father was a perfumer for men's fragrances.

The nose: Yusuf herself. She has a team of noses, but all creations still go through her.

The inspiration: Daily experiences, including the places she goes to and people she meets. The fragrance Vogue, for example, was inspired by her favourite candy – the grape-flavoured Hi-chew.

The hallmark: Long-lasting fragrances for a tropical climate. They retain their scent even if you sweat, and reportedly withstand humidity for seven to 12 hours. – **GYH**

- 1 Scent by Six 123 Tribeca, \$66.
- 2 Oo La Lab Floral Fruity Citrus, \$88.
- 3 Singapore Memories Singapore Girl, \$38.
- 4 Freda 'D Elegance, \$63.

PHOTOGRAPHY
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In 2018, the Keepers ground of Infinite piness at the NDC veased more than vendors over two ends. About 47,000 ors showed up. "It s us the opportunity uch base with the ders rather than just ving them by name," Jason Lee, founder rfumery Scent by It's encouraging there's a growing eciation ingapore ns. "Other tries had uries

our husband moved into her parents' home, where their social life is going as strong as ever. "We're both very sociable and like to meet people and listen to their stories," she says. The couple enjoys cooking (everything

husband and I go on

HOME-GROWN LABELS THAT HAVE SHOWCASED AT KEEPERS AND FOUND SUCCESS

Gnome & Bow
Founder Quanda Ong's Book II: Jekyll's Hyde collection included a collaboration with Tiger Beer's #Uncage campaign. This involved transforming a part of Keepers Orchard into the streets of old London, complete with Broadway posters and bold stickers. Gnome & Bow has also collaborated with Zuma and Lasalle School of Fashion, and is now working on a collaboration with a hair salon and a sneaker brand.

Scent by Six
The artisanal fragrance label captures the essence of a city in a bottle. Founder Jason Lee first met Carolyn in 2017 and has found that event-wise, it's beneficial to be aligned with other quality brands in Singapore.

Binary Style
The scarves by twin sisters Santhi and Sari Tunas are known for their bright colours and patterns. Each tells a story through its depiction of local scenes, whether it's bumboats, the Mertion or orchids.