



Classic Fragrances for Women

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Hundreds of sparkly and sultry scents are released into the marketplace every year, but only a select few become timeless treasures. The sweet smell of success is a good indicator of a perfume's quality, so we sniff out the premier potions that have made their fragrant mark on generations.

Popular brands



Ed Hardy perfumes



Burberry perfumes



Fendi perfumes



Chloé perfumes



Dolce & Gabbana perfumes



DKNY perfumes

18th Century through the '20s

The practice of anointing ourselves with heady aromas has a long and storied history. The perfecting of perfumes started in Ancient Egypt and the art and science of this trade has advanced ever since. Although many formulas have been lost to the mists of time, there are a few quite old yet indisputably classic fragrances still on the market. The unisex eau de Cologne "4711" was launched around 1772 to immediate popularity and has remained a potent part of Western mythology ever since, appearing as a cultural touchstone in works as diverse as "Breakfast At Tiffany's" and "The Rocky Horror Picture Show."

CREED's "Fantasia de Fleurs," an exotic Floral featuring Bulgarian rose and ambergris notes, can be traced back to 1862. Supreme olfactory architects Guerlain released what's considered the first modern perfume in 1889 with "Jicky," an earthy concoction in the Floral Oriental fragrance family. They followed that success with timeless classics "L'Heure Bleue" in 1912, "Mitsouko" in 1919 and "Shalimar" in 1925. To this day, "Shalimar" remains uber-popular with its deliciously dusky melding of amber, vanilla and lemon.

Arguably the most famous and enduring perfume of our time was launched back in 1922 by a feisty French fashion designer nicknamed Coco. CHANEL "N°5" occupies some rarified air—it's said a bottle of this powdery Floral concoction sells every 55 seconds. The fantastically romantic "Arpège" by Lanvin has been bewitching us since 1927 with its deeply Floral yet refreshingly sweet scent. And I've got to give a shout out to my grandmother's favorite perfume, "Emeraude" by Coty. This citrusy Oriental fragrance was born in 1921 and is still very attractively priced.



"4711" eau de Cologne



"Arpege Eau de Parfum" by Lanvin



"Fantasia de Fleurs" by CREED



"Jicky" by Guerlain



"Emeraude" by Coty



"Shalimar" by Guerlain

'30s and '40s

Some of the most indulgent and hedonistic scents of our time were released during the decades famous for

the Great Depression and WWII. The '30s kicked off with the debut of what is still one of the priciest perfumes in the world—"Joy," Jean Patou's masterful take on a full Floral fragrance. A true celebration of femininity, it doesn't skimp on the ingredients—336 roses and a stunning 10,000 jasmine flowers are needed to concoct just one ounce of this precious perfume. "Tabu" by Dana skews more darkly exotic. Released in 1932 at the height of the Depression, this Floral Oriental is redolent of rose, orange, vetiver and anchored by a sultry amber note—truly a romantic escape in a bottle.

Another 1932 debut, the House of Worth's "Je Reviens" softly blends violet, bergamot and clove notes with touches of jasmine and amber for a long-lasting Floral that became *the* scent soldiers brought home to their sweethearts during WWII. Guerlain continued their perfumery precedence with 1933's subtly unisex leather, green and amber amalgam "Vol de Nuit."

The demanding decade of the '40s was ushered in by the ethereally warm Oriental aroma of "Chantilly." Legendary perfume house Houbigant launched the scent in 1941 and it was later acquired by Dana and modernized with a lighter, softer formulation. Another reissued '40s fragrance is Robert Piguet's sweetly sexy "Fracas," a celeb favorite since its reemergence in 1998. "White Shoulders" never went away and retains almost exactly the same classic Floral bouquet it first bloomed with in 1945. Dior's storied "Miss Dior" debuted in 1947 with an offering of gardenia, carnation and sandalwood. Capping off the decade, Nina Ricci's ageless "L'Air du Temps" spicy, powdery Floral aroma is still housed in a dove-topped bottle originally designed to honor the end of the war.



"Joy" by Jean Patou



"Tabu" by Dana



"Je Reviens" by Worth



"Vol de Nuit" by Guerlain



"Fracas" by Robert Piguet



"White Shoulders" by Evyan

'50s and '60s

Two decades of prosperity, progression and sometimes cataclysmic change brought us fragrances that defined both traditional ideas of femininity and a fresh new take on youthful exuberance. It started with luxe. The house of Hermès was just as exclusive then as it is now, and their 1951 release "Eau D'Hermès" was made to smell like "the interior of a Hermès bag." The following year, Prince Matchabelli offered a much more affordable scent in the musky Floral "Wind Song" and it quickly became a classic.

Estée Lauder's first fragrance launch, the assertively spicy Oriental "Youth-Dew," was originally marketed as a bath oil until women decided they also liked it as a personal perfume. One of the most popular gift items of the '50s was Yardley London's "Lily of the Valley" for its easy-wearing and appealing scent, as well as its refreshingly affordable price.

The '60s came in like a sweet lamb with 1961 seeing the release of the uber-feminine "Calèche" by Hermès, a sophisticated take on woods and flowers. Yves Saint Laurent debuted his first perfume in 1964—"Y," a light and fruity Floral with a hint of oakmoss. Guy Laroche countered in 1966 with *his* first femme fragrance "Fidji," a sensory trip of lush tropical proportions that was not exactly shy. Makeup and skin care powerhouse Lancôme originally launched their company with fragrances back in 1935, and 1967 saw the release of "Climat," their elegantly soft Floral. "Ô De Lancôme" then debuted in 1969 and captured youth in a bottle with its bracing fresh scent—a mixture of citrus, honeysuckle and a bit of basil for a sprightly kick.



"Eau D'Hermès" by Hermès



"Lily of the Valley" by Yardley London



"Wind Song" by Prince Matchabelli



"Ô de Lancôme" by Lancôme



"Y" by Yves Saint Laurent



"Fidji" by Guy Laroche

'70s and '80s

Let's start the "Me Decade" by welcoming Yves Saint Laurent to the party. The master couturier helped set the tone for the '70s with both his revolutionary take on women's fashion and his exquisite taste in perfume. "Rive Gauche" kicked off 1970 with a very French take on the independent woman's scent—fruity and floral but with a sharp, dry down. (It's since been softened from the original formulation by the addition of warm, woody notes.) Saint Laurent bookended that success in 1977 with the even bigger splash of "Opium," a spectacularly deep and complex Oriental that remains a best-selling fragrance. "Cinnabar" from Estée Lauder launched just a year later and is a slightly fruitier Oriental, but still potently "spicy '70s."

Softer scents were also released during the '70s. Cacharel's "Anaïs Anaïs" remains unapologetically Floral, and Love's "Baby Soft" has been a favorite of crush-happy schoolgirls since 1974. At the dawn of the '70s, CHANEL released another iconic numbered scent. In "N°19," assertive green notes meet a woody and rich floral underpinning for a fragrance that's both delicate *and* strong. Revlon's "Charlie" was a marketing phenomenon pitched to the newly emerging career woman, while Estée Lauder's "White Linen" closed out the decade on a more traditional, crisply domestic note.

The '80s penchant for big hair-dos, big shoulder pads and big jewelry demanded some strong scents, and this

decade didn't disappoint. 1981 saw the ubiquitous "Giorgio Beverly Hills" emerge as the kind of intense and luxurious Floral Joan Collins would likely wear. Yves Saint Laurent continued his winning streak with "Paris," a return to classic perfumery redolent with roses and violets. More exotic terrain was explored by Givenchy's "Ysatis," which balances coconut and orange in the top notes with musk and vanilla in the bottom notes for a "power" fragrance that captures the abundance of the decade. Two wild fragrances set the stage for the erotically edgy fragrance scene of the '90s. Dior introduced their incredibly influential Woody Oriental "Poison" in 1985, while Cacharel released the sensual Tiare flower-based "Loulou" in 1987.



"Rive Gauche"
by Yves Saint
Laurent



"Opium" by
Yves Saint
Laurent



"Anais Anais" by
Cacharel



"No. 19" by
Chanel



"Ysatis" by
Givenchy



"Loulou" by
Cacharel