

Aromas Making Scents of LOVE

By Jessica Quandt

ON THE CARIBBEAN ISLAND OF SAINT MARTIN, THERE'S A LABORATORY THAT HAS SEEN MORE THAN ITS FAIR SHARE OF FLIRTING, GIGGLING AND PUPPY DOG EYES.

Not that the lab is particularly romantic in and of itself: a metal worktable spans the length of one wall; ancient-looking copper machinery and shelves of brown jars crowd the other. Yet inside, smitten honeymooners and long-time partners pinch eyeliners full of scented oil into beakers and take notes. They don white chemist's coats. They tweak formulas. And then they bat their eyelashes and pat each other's hands.

It's a double-take scene to be sure, but it's one that's been commonplace in the seaside village of Grande Case since the Tijon perfume boutique opened here in 2007. When couples get a chance to "invent their own scent," it turns out, romance quickly becomes a key ingredient.

"They say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder," my guide, Marilyn, explains as we peer through the glass window partitioning Tijon's main perfume boutique from its fragrance laboratory. "Well, smell is in the nose of the beholder."

Any scent, I learn, will take on a new life depending on who's wearing it, who's smelling it, and where. The same cologne

can smell intoxicating on one man and offensive on another. Your college boyfriend may have loved you in jasmine, but your new fiancé may go gaga for pumpkin pie. And that favorite bottle of perfume you carried on the plane from snowy Chicago could send your spouse running for fresh air on a sunny tropical getaway.

So, what better way to ensure you and your mate are in fragrant harmony than to create your own scents side by side? Inside Tijon's lab, it's not unusual to see couples grinning, leaning in, offering pointers on the scents they'd like to slow dance and snuggle up and fall asleep next to. With the help of a knowledgeable guide and plenty of input from their partners, visitors mix and match their scents from scratch. Adding gardenia or ginger or bourbon-vanilla, or any of 300 other oils, they adjust and compare until they're sure their creations push all the right buttons. And by the time they leave, each budding perfumer has bottled and named his or her own one-of-a-kind scent.

"The best perfumers are unquestionably honeymooners," Cyndi Berglund,

who owns Tijon with her husband John, tells me. "They're in love, and everything tastes good and smells good. One bride even named her fragrant formula *Honeymoon*."

But newlyweds aren't the only ones in on the fun, she adds. Scent triggers not just attraction but memories, whether of a first date or a 30th-anniversary trip. And creating personalized perfumes together can even help form new "couple memories" that will last for ages, no matter how long two people have been together.

"One couple who had been married many years created a fun, lasting event by each making their own fragrance," Cyndi remembers. "The man cutely named his cologne *The Things I Do*." ■



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