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**STYLE** *Knitfluencers* are breathing new life into an age-old hobby

**FOOD** Where and what to eat in the city *this month*

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### THE WALMART CANADA EDIT

## New Year, *New You*

But Make it *Fun*



**JANUARY ENERGY IS ALL ABOUT FRESH STARTS**, good intentions and the glorious illusion that this is the year you'll suddenly become that person—organized, glowing, hydrated and somehow already 10,000 steps ahead. Whether you're building better habits or hitting the reset button on your self-care routine, Walmart Canada has everything you need to step into 2026 feeling refreshed, recharged and ready for whatever comes next. Here's your feel-good, do-good roundup of New Year must-haves. [Walmart.ca](http://Walmart.ca)

**1. NOURISH LIKE YOU MEAN IT** *Bloom Nutrition Greens & Superfoods Powder* provides a daily boost of greens without the grimace. Add to water or smoothies for a quick and easy way to support digestion and energy—perfect for kickstarting your healthy-habits era.

**2. MAKE YOUR HOME A HAVEN** Fresh, bright and soothing—the *Better Homes & Gardens Blue Fern & Citrus Candle* resets the vibe instantly, perfect for journaling, cleaning binges or simply pretending your life is a Pinterest board. And consider the *Sunbeam Electric Heated Blanket* your winter survival essential. Snuggle into 12 heat settings, curl up on the couch and let the cosy season begin.

**3. MOVE MORE (WITHOUT EVEN NOTICING)** If your resolution is to walk more—

but your reality is endless Zoom calls—the compact *GoZone Under Desk Treadmill* is your new productivity sidekick (multi-tasking has never looked so healthy). For stretching, flowing or lying dramatically on the floor after your first workout of the year, the *GoZone 3mm PVC Solid Yoga Mat* is a simple, no-excuses mat that makes movement feel approachable again.

**4. RESET YOUR ROUTINE (GLOW INCLUDED)** Hydration meets heavenly texture. *Bubble Skincare Cloud Surf Water Cream* lightweight moisturizer leaves skin bouncy, fresh and ready for makeup or a makeup-free fresh start. And, for a gentle, glow-boosting cleanser that removes oil, makeup and leftover holiday stress *Aveeno Positively Radiant Brightening Cleanser* is a staple for smoothing tone and kicking off your skincare resolutions.

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EDITOR'S  
DESK



**A NOTE FROM NOA** We're counting down to December 25 with 30 contests on Instagram; enter over @vitadailymedia! Even if you aren't our daily winner, you'll still get great gift ideas from our feed. Good luck!

*Noa Nichol*  
Editor-in-Chief  
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Noa's  
Gift Picks



1. **Moose Knuckles' Eaton Reversible Bunny** (\$595) offers two distinct looks—silky-soft faux fur on one side, eco-conscious nylon micro ripstop on the other—ensuring you stay dry during a rainy Vancouver winter. [mooseknucklescanada.com](http://mooseknucklescanada.com)

2. **Coach's Bleeker Bucket Bag** (\$730) exudes a sophisticated New York attitude. Crafted from soft double-faced natural sheepskin, it has a wide adjustable strap to wear comfortably on the shoulder. It's finished with an inside snap pocket and a convenient removable zip pouch for small essentials. [ca.coach.com](http://ca.coach.com)

3. Savour the refined freshness of **South Kelowna's Ailm Estate's** effortlessly elegant 2021 Blanc de Blanc (\$65). With its lively bubbles and a delicate blend of golden apple, brioche and subtle salinity, this wine offers a bright, elegant expression of Chardonnay from an exceptional vintage. This sparkling wine honours the spirit of togetherness, inviting you to celebrate the connections that endure, generation after generation. [ailmestate.com](http://ailmestate.com)

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The Making of the British Columbia  
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# The Fresh Sheet

Words by  
Katie Nanton

**KAVITA** Not at the beginning, but at the end of chef Tushar Tondvarkar's amma-kase set dinner, a small envelope appears. Tucked inside is the menu of what guests have just enjoyed, complete with pictures of India and written memories of Tondvarkar's upbringing in Mumbai. "I like guests to be surprised with the dishes as they eat," he smiles. On any given night the nine-plus-course menu could include Atlantic cod amti (curry) and Wagyu bavette, housemade buffalo milk paneer with korma, kokom sorbet with roasted cumin and a snack of lichen chaat. The latter, fried forest-foraged lichen, is a wild bite: drizzled with a sweet sauce, the lichen evaporates on the tongue like cotton candy. The à la carte menu draws inspo from India's festival calendar and mirrors the tasting menu's experimentalism, weaving tradition

with West Coast influence. Snag a bar seat to watch the kitchen action while eyeing row upon row of bright spices lining the shelves—the Himalayan mustard is brought in specially from one of the cook's family farms. Craving a taste of Kavita at home? Chef Tondvarkar also owns The Indian Pantry, a line of sauces and spice blends stocked at fine grocers around town. 250 West 3rd Ave., [Restaurantkavita.com](http://Restaurantkavita.com)



**GIUSTI** One of the oldest buildings in Mount Pleasant has seen many restaurants come before it—The Whip and Bar Susu, to name two—but perhaps none with the staying power of handmade Italian cuisine in a city obsessed with it. Helmed by chef Mark Perrier of Savio Volpe's opening team plus a handful of other pasta-restaurant veterans, Giusti is a cosy spot with the rich dishes you'd expect from an Italian kitchen, plus some hearty greens and veggie sides to accompany. On a recent eve, ricotta gnocchi swam in a pine mushroom-cream sauce; pockets of sweet pumpkin cappelacci were bathed in butter and topped with crispy sage; and a full round of burrata was plated alongside delicious braised bitter greens with pesto and fresh focaccia. Of the two dessert choices, tiramisu should probably be yours—it is scooped in enormous portions from a decadent dessert drawer, "just like at Nonna's house," says our server—but if you simply have no room, no problem. Go off-menu with a double-shot espresso poured over a scoop of housemade vanilla gelato and you're good to go. 209 E. 6th Ave. [Giustivancover.com](http://Giustivancover.com)



Photos by Sherman Chong

**JEJU** Sequestered behind floor-to-ceiling doors, Van Isle darling Jezu just opened on East Broadway and it's already the hottest ticket in town—booked solid until the end of the year, we're told. The modern Korean restaurant is a certified vibe, with sultry mood lighting and a perfectly translucent Clarified Bloody Mary to sip while you order for the table. Don't miss The Galbi, a showstopper share-dish made famous by Jezu's Tofino locale: a sliced spread of smooth-as-butter prime short rib, aged 35 days, served with myriad tiny-plate sides like housemade cabbage kimchi, spicy radish salad and sweet Jangajji with pickled cauliflower. Pair it with rich Bulgogi rice with rib eye and truffle, and coal-roasted eggplant stuffed with prawns (they look like perfectly roasted marshmallows) and a few more plates, and you've got yourself a meal. Speaking of, flip the tableware around and you might find Jezu pressed into the bottom; a special-order from a Korean ceramicist. Also special? The chillies, sesame seeds and a few other ingredients are imported direct from co-owner Sungeun "Sung" Kim's grandmother's family farm in Haenam, Korea. 540 E. Broadway, [Jezu-restaurant.com](http://Jezu-restaurant.com)



Photo by Niko Myyrä

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# LEADERS *of the Pack*

It isn't always  
what's inside that counts

Words by  
Jill Von Sprecken

LAST SUMMER, CHEEKBONE BEAUTY RELEASED A LIMITED-EDITION MAKEUP BUNDLE with some of the cosmetics company's greatest hits. But what really made it special was the box. Packaged in a vibrant sleeve, the case unfolded into a large frameable print by celebrated Cree artist Kent Monkman—and quickly sold out.

Purchasing fine art by an artist like Monkman is beyond many budgets, but collaborations like these instantly make his work more accessible. It also creates buzz, turning a product into a collector's item.

In Cheekbone's case, the sleeve was created under the assumption that customers would display it. "We purposely made it so it would fit a traditional frame," says company founder Jenn Harper. From the get-go, she explains, they wondered, "How can we make it so that someone could actually use it? And the way they were able to do the die lines and the seaming; if you lay it flat, the crease from the box will eventually fade."

Not all packaging is created quite so purposefully. Often the bag, box or bottle is meant to be discarded—turning a fleeting, often throwaway container into a canvas. But that doesn't stop fans of the art from ensuring it gets a second life.

Aritzia's Artistic License series splashes retail bags with works by artists and photographers like Carlijn Jacobs,

and has Reddit forums and TikTok videos—including one that's closing in on 2 million views—dedicated to ways of repurposing the art. (The synopsis: carefully clip and frame it or use it to wrap notebooks or gifts.)

No frame is necessary at adult-beverage company Collective Arts, where cans and bottles are the canvas. But there are still collectors. "We've had consumers who find the art on our cans, and then they get really passionate, and want to go and find the art or buy prints," says Toni Shelton, VP of brand and strategy. She recounts a customer that "was so connected to the art, he found the artist in Mexico City." He didn't stop there: he planned a visit and even reached out to the brand to ask for beer to bring to the artist.

That deep engagement with customers is a benefit of artist collaborations. Of course there's something in it for the artists, too. Brandon Medeiros is one of 1,200 artists from 45 different countries who has worked with Collective Arts. He said by email that the brand stands out to him as one that "actually cared about supporting artists and bringing creativity into the world ... they truly put artists first."

Exposure can be invaluable to a new artist—or even an established one. "We have other companies and brands reach out to us looking for help curating local



FESTIVE IN STYLE

Step into the wondrous world of Fairmont Pacific Rim this holiday season, where each moment is infused with festive magic.

[fairmontpacificrim.com/holidays](http://fairmontpacificrim.com/holidays)

artists," says Shelton. "Lululemon, in particular, featured Cecil Warner after we hired him."

Combining business and art isn't new—but it makes a lasting impression. An important consideration when attempting to stand out from the crowd. Costa Gavaris, co-founder and winemaker at Rigour & Whimsy, says that collaborating with artists on wine labels was conceived early, as part of the brand's identity. The two co-founders had a vision: "We wanted to bring beauty into people's lives," he says. "That meant the outside of the bottle and the inside of the bottle, that both those things were really important."

An eye-catching label is key, as anyone faced with picking a bottle from a wall of wine knows. One of the brand's most meaningful labels is a Cabernet Franc called Licorice Daddy, so named when Gavaris' son—three years old at the time—combined the two (both close at hand) to name his dance move. It struck a chord, and they decided he should create the label art, too—Twizler as paintbrush, of course. "Art was family, it was fridge art," says Gavaris.

"Of all of the art experiences we've had through Rigour & Whimsy, that's been one of the most fulfilling."

That personal connection can go beyond the artwork itself, and into the relationship. When Cheekbone negotiated with Monkman, they had worked with the artist on a smaller project, then reached out with a larger idea. "We don't have massive budgets as a small business," Harper says. "It really became more of like a trade situation. Trade for product, trade for work. Which I love, because I feel like that is extremely Indigenous."

"For our purpose, it's always to highlight Indigenous artists and definitely up-and-coming [artists]," she continues. That objective will be carried forward by the brand's next artist collaboration, which features the work of Inupiaq artist Haley Putruq on their limited-edition holiday gift sets.

In the end, it's about creating "emotional connection," according to Shelton. "As soon as we do that, like an artist getting a paid opportunity, and then we can put it on merch ... it's this flywheel of community engagement. I think that is what keeps artists coming back." V





Knitfluencers are breathing new life into an age-old hobby

# Happens

Words by  
Jill Von Sprecken

**JUST MENTIONING A KNITFLUENCER CAN SPARK EXCITEMENT.** “Just look how cute,” my friend said, pointing excitedly at an Instagram post of a speedo-clad Tom Daley. The British Olympic-medal diver, and yes, knitter, has parlayed 3.8 million Instagram followers into a show, *Game of Wool: Britain’s Best Knitter*, that’s basically *The Great British Bake-Off*, but knitting.

Knitting—as a hobby, trending fashion, and platform—has clearly exited your grandmother’s crafting circle, and stitched and purled its way into mainstream fashion.

“In an age where you can buy literally anything, I think to be able to come back to something tangible, like making things yourself, is really special,” says Elise Michie a knitter and the founder of Sunday Fibre Co., an online shop for her hand-dyed yarn. Her Instagram page of the same name presents her beautiful yarns, all creatively packaged into colourways inspired by Wes Anderson movies, *The Beatles* and the 1970s.

Trends are fleeting, but knitting’s popularity has risen steadily. The pandemic provided a bump at a time when people were looking for meaningful ways to while away the hours. “It was kind of an underground community,” says Michie. “But when people were at home and wanting to make their own sourdough bread and to learn how to knit, this is when my business exploded.”

For others, it’s more than a way to keep idle hands busy—it’s a way to create representation. Plus-size knitter Whitney Swinimer was inspired to knit by a vest in *The Hunger Games* movie but soon found a larger purpose. “I came to knitting as a way of making clothing that would fit on my body, rather than having to make my body fit the clothing that I bought from stores,” she says. “If I wanted to see more plus-size representation, I had to do it myself. And over time, it started to build.”

Community is a common theme among the knitters we spoke to—after all, they all exist in the centre of a larger online group. But this solitary craft has always held a sense of community for those who assemble both online or in real life.

Calgary-based knitter Chantal Miyagishima has nearly a quarter of a million followers on her Instagram @knititude, but she was still inspired to take her online community into the real world. “I was driving my husband up the wall. He was like, ‘I don’t give a shit about all these yarns,’” she says. So Miyagishima did what any self-respecting knitter would do: “I started up a knit night.”

These groups go by many names, such as Stitch n’ Bitch, where like-minded fibre artists gather to discuss patterns, snags (literal and figurative), and of course, gossip. “I think people go into crocheting or knitting, and they think that it’s going to be solitary, but social

media has brought so many people together,” says Miyagishima.

Take Kirk Dunn, for instance. The fibre artist makes his work a point of connection, while challenging the ideas of what knitting is for—and can accomplish. “I don’t just knit to wear or look at it. I’m interested in trying to say something,” he says. “I’ve heard craft described as a gentle art of protest.” His projects include a large-scale fibre art project, *Stitched Glass*, that connects the three Abrahamic faiths through “stained glass” panels. The project took 15 years, inspiring his play *The Knitting Pilgrim* about faith, failure and the artist experience.

Dunn is also a skilled “yarn bomber,” a form of fibre graffiti where public objects like trees and benches get their own cosy sweater. It’s done for fun, or it’s a statement. “There’s a very, very good one of a tank on display somewhere, and the yarn bombers just covered it in pink yarn.”

In that way, knitting can attempt to change the future, and in other moments look over a shoulder into the past. The Cowichan sweater has been crafted by Coast Salish knitters since the late 19th century and is famous for its quality and unique design. A combination of Coast Salish weaving and European knitting, the iconic pattern features traditional figures like thunderbirds and whales.

Kari McLay is the director of community engagement and fund development at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC), and their Instagram @knit\_with\_purpose highlights the beautiful work of the Coast Salish knitters who keep the craft the alive. “It’s very important to us to not only continue the sweaters themselves as iconic cultural treasures,” says McLay. “It’s a way of life.”

Not to mention trendy. “People from all over the world, the United States, they know them. They recognize them,” says McLay. “We’re selling them online and shipping them to socialites and celebrities in New York City.”

Knits have been a fixture of mainstream style for years now, and they’re not going anywhere. Arielle Berze of @thechicnarrative is popular for her handmade fashions and styling. By email she predicted that “florals and colourwork” are trending, alongside “more textured and intricate patterns.” She notes that “argyle and jeweled accents were seen on runways this year, as well as draped knits with scarves attached to cardigans and coats.” But she adds, “I haven’t seen these make it into the knitwear designers’ radars yet.”

But in classic minimalism-maximalism style, two opposing looks have risen to the top: classic Scandinavian knits in neutral colours, and offbeat designs in kaleidoscopic hues.

Falling firmly in the latter camp is Erin Guimond, @pickyfemme. Her pieces are full of geometric patterns, animal faces, and blocky florals—sometimes all in the



GOGO Sweaters



Elise Michie, Founder of Sunday Fibre Co. wearing a Robinia sweater by Anne Ventzel and beret knit with colours from her most recent collection, *The Seventies Issue*.



ABOVE Skeins from *The Seventies Issue*, a 1970’s inspired collection by Sunday Fibre Co.

BELOW Arielle Berze of @thechicnarrative



Chantal Miyagishima of @knititude

same sweater. “Knitting is a really cool way to make something that no one else could ever have, because it has your hands and your style,” says Guimond. “The trend that I’m seeing is people making things that you could never buy in a store, you could never really dream up, except in your own mind.”

Guimond’s pieces owe their prismatic colourways to her use of scraps and thrifted yarn, dovetailing with larger trends around sustainability and secondhand shopping. “I try really hard to use what I have and not to buy things without intention. And so for me, sustainability is kind of around using what you have as opposed to buying more,” says Guimond. Plus it adds a degree of difficulty she enjoys.

South van der Lee is the president of GOGO Sweaters, a Banff-based company started by her mother in the late seventies. “There’s super chunky, there’s appliques,

there’s words and images,” says van der Lee of the fun, off-beat designs. But the No Waste line has a little something extra. They’re made from yarn scraps for pieces studded with rainbow hues. Plus, with the exception of very few sweaters, all are made to order, reducing waste. “It’s not like to be sustainable then you’re sacrificing the look or design of the item.”

Like all handmade pieces, they’re an heirloom that can be passed down, and in GOGO’s case, the wool is biodegradable. “I would die if someone put a GOGO in a landfill,” she says. “But honestly, if that happened, it wouldn’t be the worst thing.”

She’s not alone. “I think, secretly, every single knitter is against fast fashion, whether they realize it or not,” says Miyagishima. “And there’s really nothing like that feeling of like popping your head through the top of the sweater that you’ve created yourself, which is such a beautiful moment.” V

## Sip, Stream, Repeat

If holiday movies were wines



**HOLIDAY MOVIES AND WINE GO TOGETHER LIKE FUZZY SOCKS AND FIREPLACES**— perfectly, effortlessly and with just the right amount of comfort. Instead of debating what to watch or what to pour, we’ve matched iconic festive films with wines that mirror their mood, energy and main-character vibes. Consider this your cosy-season cheat sheet for Netflix nights, group hangs or those evenings you absolutely must wrap gifts but would rather be sipping something delicious.

**1. THE HOLIDAY (2006) × CEDARCREEK JAGGED ROCK CHARDONNAY** If any movie were a wine-soaked hug, it’s *The Holiday*. Warm, charming and a little chaotic, it leaves you believing in cottage escapes and life swaps. CedarCreek’s Jagged Rock Chardonnay is its perfect match—creamy, comforting and golden, with a luxe richness that pairs beautifully with snowy scenery and Jude-Law-in-glasses energy.

**2. YOU’VE GOT MAIL (1998) × OUR STORY CABERNET MERLOT** “Don’t you just love New York in the fall?” Yes—and even more with a glass in hand. Our Story Cabernet Merlot is smooth, nostalgic and softly sentimental, ideal for a rom-com built on books, banter and dial-up-era charm. It’s basically the taste of strolling past twinkly-lit shop windows with Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks bickering adorably beside you.

**3. DIE HARD (1988) × PENFOLDS BIN 389 CABERNET SHIRAZ** Is *Die Hard* a Christmas movie? Pour Penfolds Bin 389 and decide. Bold and unapologetically

iconic, this Cab-Shiraz blend matches Bruce Willis crawling-through-air-vents energy. Strong enough for explosions yet smooth enough for holiday snacking, it’s the perfect pairing for anyone whose festive vibe leans full-action chaos.

**4. MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET (1994) × LOUIS LATOUR BOURGOGNE PINOT NOIR** Sweet, sincere and full of believe-in-magic warmth, *Miracle on 34th Street* calls for a classic. Louis Latour’s Bourgogne Pinot Noir is bright, delicate and beautifully balanced—basically holiday innocence in a glass. Sip with a blanket, a nostalgic heart and your yearly “is Santa real?” moment.

**5. CAROL (2015) × ALOIS LAGEDER PINOT GRIGIO PORER** Elegant and emotionally charged, *Carol* is pure cinematic seduction. Alois Lageder’s Pinot Grigio Porer mirrors its cool sophistication with crisp layers and a luminous finish. It’s a slow-sip kind of wine—perfect for basking in Cate Blanchett’s hypnotic glamour and Rooney Mara’s soft-beret aesthetic.

# Scent Stories

How one perfume brand founder captures the spirit of an entire island

Words by Noa Nichol

“BERMUDA IS AN EXQUISITE PLACE,” says perfumer and entrepreneur Isabelle Ramsay-Brackstone, her voice warm with reverence. “The island exudes its natural beauty from every corner you turn to—the botanicals, the ocean, the little alleyways. After living here for 22 years, I still think this is the most beautiful place on earth.” For Ramsay-Brackstone, who has helmed Lili Bermuda since 2003, this isn’t just home—it’s her muse. Every fragrance she creates is infused with the island’s rhythm: the salty ocean breeze, the luminous blooms, even the effervescent hum of daily life. “My perfumes have a distinct sense of place,” she says. “They are luminous, happy, simple and beautiful.”

Ramsay-Brackstone is originally from Montreal, and also acts as Honorary Consul of Canada in Bermuda. “It may seem like an odd combination, and it is,” she admits with a laugh. “But ... both roles are about care and connection—one through diplomacy, the other through scent.” To her, perfume is deeply personal—a form of storytelling more intimate than words. “Perfume is probably the most intimate of all arts,” she says. “It tells something profound about the artist—what motivates them, what they love.”

Her creations are autobiographical, revealing different facets of her own identity. “With white flowers, I like them sharp, super sexy, but luminous,” she explains. “The ocean, for me, is salty, ozonic, filled with the energy of a crashing wave. And cedar—it’s strength, security, heritage.” Ramsay-Brackstone’s journey began under the mentorship of Bermudian perfumer David Bothello, whom she describes as “like a father.” His philosophy still guides her today: work well, take care and create with love. “He taught me that a perfume complements someone’s soul,” she reflects. “It’s so much more than a colour of lipstick or a pair of shoes. It’s an intimate part of

yourself that you reveal to the world—so it has to be perfect.”

Now, that legacy is expanding—literally—within her own family. “My daughter Gabrielle recently graduated in marketing and joined me,” she says proudly. “She’s young, but she has 22 years of experience just from growing up around the perfumery. She has opinions, and you can smell her influence in our new fragrances.”

Together, they’ve co-created Golden Hour, a lush, sun-kissed scent inspired by amber, roses and peach nectar. “It was her love for amber—specifically ambroxan—that started it,” Ramsay-Brackstone explains. “She even named it Golden Hour, evoking her favourite Friday evening sunset cruises. It’s wonderful to grow up in Bermuda.”

Each Lili Bermuda scent begins with a spark—an emotion, an ingredient or sometimes a memory. “When we created 32 North and 64 West, I wanted to capture the duality of Bermuda,” she says. “The ocean side—salty, sporty, luminous—with mandarin, lavender and mint; and the earth side—cedarwood, greenery, Suriname cherry leaves. Two directions, one island.” Another scent, Petals, was inspired by a honeysuckle bush that perfumed her walk to a café in St. George’s. “It took me years to get it right,” she admits. “It’s probably one of the toughest fragrances I ever did, but I love it with all my heart.”

Even her son has contributed inspiration: “He was surfing one day at Hungry Bay,” she recalls. “I was reading about the Fibonacci spiral in *National Geographic*, and the wind, the salt, the waves—it all came together. That’s how Nautilus was born: a crashing wave sculpted by nature.”

Of all the stories bottled at Lili Bermuda, none captures the imagination quite like Mary Celestia—a perfume resurrected from the depths of time. In 1864, a ship carrying luxury goods, including fine perfume, sank off Bermuda’s south



shore. More than a century later, divers recovered an intact bottle, still sealed, its fragrance preserved in the seabed.

“When the bottle first landed in my office, I had the feeling that I was literally touching history,” Ramsay-Brackstone recalls. “I wanted to honour this artifact and the story behind it.” She assembled a team of top scientists to study the perfume’s contents before attempting a recreation. “It wasn’t about a quick commercial success,” she explains. “This artifact belongs to the people of Bermuda.”

The reimagined fragrance revealed a simple, elegant blend of rosewood, neroli, amber, and grapefruit—an olfactory time capsule. “Back in 1864, fragrances weren’t gendered,” she notes. “They were worn on scarves or garments to mask unpleasant odours. It’s fascinating how scent tells the story of an era.”

As Lili Bermuda approaches its 100th anniversary, sustainability and craftsmanship remain at the heart of its philosophy.

“Our new bottles are refillable, our packaging recyclable and our cedar boxes are designed as keepsakes,” Ramsay-Brackstone notes. “Our fragrances are made with the highest quality essential oils in compliance with IFRA standards. Sustainability and excellence go hand in hand.”

Visitors to the 18th-century St. George’s Perfumery can even craft their own signature scent through hands-on workshops.

Asked what advice she’d give to other creators building brands rooted in authenticity, her answer is simple: “Trust in what you know works for you and your clients. You don’t have to be everything to everybody. If you are true to yourself and your family, you will succeed. And work hard... very hard.”

For Ramsay-Brackstone, perfume isn’t just a business—it’s a bridge between memory, place, and passion. “I’m always working—but not really,” she muses. “Smelling is what I do all the time. It’s who I am.” ▾

Fragrance experts dish on what makes a perfume last on skin

Words by Aleesha Harris



Jean Paul Gaultier  
Le Mâle Elixir



Canadian fragrance brand founder Barb Stegemann of The 7 Virtues

FEW FACETS OF FRAGRANCE CAN BE AS FRUSTRATING AS A DISAPPEARING SCENT; you spritz on your favourite fragrance in the morning, only to discover it has seemingly disappeared without a trace by the middle of the day. So, what makes a perfume last? According to Quentin Bisch, a perfumer for the Swiss multinational manufacturer Givaudan, it’s all about the base.

“Longevity is closely linked to the concentration of perfume oils in the formula,” Bisch explains. “The higher the concentra-

tion of perfume oil content, the deeper and more lasting the scent will last.”

Lighter formulas such as an eau de toilette presents a softer presence that lasts for a few hours, the professional fragrance creator says. An eau de parfum, on the other hand, offers more depth and endurance on skin: “Intense versions and elixirs with the highest concentrations can reveal their scent for many hours, sometimes up to 24 hours. Perfume extrait holds the highest concentration of fragrance oils. This higher concentration delivers greater intensity,

longevity and a certain audacity for the wearer, making it a bold and memorable olfactory statement.”

A perfume is made up of three layers of notes: the top, heart (or middle) and the base. And, when it comes to finding a fragrance that has staying power, Canadian fragrance brand founder Barb Stegemann says it’s important to pay attention to the foundational notes of the scent first: “The base notes are the ones that truly endure. Vanilla, amber, oud, musk and woods have larger molecular structures that cling to the skin longer. That’s why you’ll find them in so many of our perfumes.”

The homegrown fragrance collection from The 7 Virtues, available at Sephora stores across Canada, keeps longevity top of mind during the creation phase. “We use 22 per cent fragrance oils, nearly double the industry average,” Stegemann says. “We also use the highest-quality ingredients that meet Clean at Sephora standards, which means our perfumes aren’t just long-lasting, they’re also safe and sustainable.”

Noting testing was carried out on The 7 Virtues scents by a third-party lab, she says the brand’s fragrances will last up to a full 24 hours on skin thanks to the quality of ingredients used, such as sustainably harvested vanilla and natural vegan musks, which she says “help anchor and extend the scent.”

One thing to keep in mind when testing new fragrance options—and you really should try before you buy—is that fresh and airy notes such as citrus or green elements fade more quickly, according to Bisch. “This difference comes from the way each ingredient interacts with the skin and the air: heavier, rounder scents tend to settle and gently release over time, accompanying the wearer for hours after application,” he notes. “In [Jean Paul Gaultier] Le Mâle Elixir and Le Mâle Elixir Absolu, for example, the warm tonka bean, labdanum and benzoin enrich the base, supporting the fragrance’s persistence long after the fresher opening notes have softened.”

A basic rule to follow when searching for a significant scent is to look for a higher concentration of “juice”—the fragrance format such as perfume extrait or eau de parfum—combined with richer base notes.

Says Bisch: “A well-balanced pyramid ensures that after the brighter top notes fade, the heart and base note continue to evolve, giving the wearer a scent that accompanies them throughout the day.”

There’s another important element to consider when it comes to scent longevity, one that has little to do with the perfume type: a person’s unique skin pH. Lev Glazman, co-founder of fragrance brand The Maker, explains: “Everybody’s body chemistry is different, and that can influence how certain fragrance notes develop on the skin. Some people naturally amplify musky tones, while others may bring out more floral or spicy elements.” And so, he adds, a particular perfume that smells one way on a tester blotter can change completely when applied to the skin.

“That’s why it’s important to choose a fragrance that harmonizes with your individual body chemistry,” explains the perfume pro, who develops the brand’s bestselling scents, including Lover, with longevity as a top priority. “That’s why The Maker scents have a concentration of 25 to 35 per cent, which are technically considered an extrait over an eau de parfum.”

In addition to a person’s pH, there is an interesting lifestyle aspect that can play into perfume performance. According to Stegemann, a person’s diet can also impact the overall scent and longevity of a fragrance on skin: “If you love spicy food like I do, I’m obsessed with chili and heat, that can subtly change how a fragrance blooms on your skin. Everyone’s chemistry is unique, and that’s what makes perfume so personal. It becomes part of you.”

Exactly where a perfume is applied to the body is yet another element that can impact how well it wears over time. “On the skin, it develops in harmony with body heat, especially on pulse points,” says Bisch. Key application areas include the wrists, neck and behind the ears. (A perfumer also once advised me to apply it behind the knees, too.) For those who find their favourite scent slips away frustratingly fast, Glazman suggests simply keeping a travel-sized fragrance handy in order to “refresh the scent” while on the go. Sometimes, only a fresh spritz will do. ▾

# THE KITSMAS GIFT GUIDE

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KNIX 2146 W 4th Ave  
KOTN 2064 W 4th Ave  
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REFORMATION 2262 W 4th Ave  
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MAENAM 1938 W 4th Ave  
OOH LA LA DONUTS 1818 W 4th Ave  
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SOPHIE'S 2095 W 4th Ave  
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WOW INTERIORS 1823 W 4th Ave  
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