

## Floris

### BESPOKE FRAGRANCE CUSTOMISATION

by Suzy Nightingale

WALKING into the Jermyn Street boutique of Floris – founded in 1730 and still thriving today – you cannot help but feel its scented history surging through the place. The leather-bound ledgers boast orders from Florence Nightingale and George IV, through to Winston Churchill and Marilyn Monroe, among many others. So to have my very own bespoke experience here is not merely an intriguing exercise, but a real honour.

In-house perfumer Penny Ellis guides me into her wood-panelled office, the walls lined with historical artefacts. Behind Penny is her perfumer's 'organ' – a display stand of fragrance materials arrayed from top to bottom notes, while in a large glass cabinet beside us is a row of large bottles containing bases. 'These ready-made bases are actually the basis of most perfume creation,' Penny explains. 'So we'll begin by working out which you prefer and build your perfume from the bottom up.' A heavy brass half-moon shaped holder awaits the many blotters that will be dipped during our two-hour long session.

I select two bases from the many we smell: Bois de Jasmine – a sophisticated woody accord that whispers of rustled silk and warm skin, and a muskier woody base, which reminds me of clean washing hanging from the branches in a forest. Trying these on my skin, after a while the jasmine-y one sings out. Penny then opens the bottles of heart and top notes. She

#### Floris offer three bespoke experiences:

- Bespoke Fragrance Customisation £550
  - Together Fragrance Customisation £950 for two people
  - Bespoke Perfume Design £5,000
- Find out more and book online at [florislondon.com](http://florislondon.com)



Bespoking ingredients at Floris and (below left) Suzy's blotters



explains that, depending on the level of experience of the client, she will spend time explaining the fragrance families and asking which they are most drawn to, emotionally. As I smelled the blotters, I was taken on a tour of my own memories, and as the blotters narrowed down, there were several strong 'YES!' reactions and some nose-wrinkling 'no's.

Tuberose has always been difficult for me, and though the version Penny gave me to smell was undeniably beautiful, I put it on my 'rejects' side. But oh, the amber! And the resins and the spicy ginger! These made me lean

forward and gasp, as did a dreamily smooth blonde woods note, a sunny bergamot and a sharp cassis berry.

'Experience has helped me be more confident sometimes to tell people "no",' Penny smiles as she frowns over the amber, resins and ginger. 'I can see two of these working together but not all three.' I plumped for the ginger and that gorgeously warm amber accord.

I could practically see equations passing over Penny's face as she hand-wrote an initial formula, explaining that 'I'll mix this and we'll see what you think, but I've left some leeway for alteration.' We agreed the woodiness needed ramping up, so more blonde woods were added, which made the jasmine sing in the base. The freshness of the cassis had been hushed, so a little more of that was dropped in, and suddenly... we were there.

The finished fragrance was poured in front of me into a beautiful glass bottle already engraved with my initials (this is sent prior to your appointment, to bring with you on the day). It smelled like a walk at dusk though an enchanted forest in a fairy tale. I called it 'Nightingale Woods', and as I left, swinging my newly wrapped, completely bespoke scent, I marvelled at the fact that I'd added another Nightingale to the names in that historic ledger – my formula saved for posterity, to be ordered again whenever I want. And I certainly shall be wanting more...