

how to spend it

The inspirational aromas of tea - in a bottle

A top perfume blogger drinks in a heady spectrum of scents for all seasons



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Warm jasmine petals, green twigs, cedarwood shavings... I close my eyes and inhale again. The top notes are crisp and bright, reminiscent of fresh leaves, but underneath I notice a musky sweetness. This complex scent is so heady and rich that I imagine it in a perfume bottle, but instead it blossoms in my cup of jasmine pearls tea.

Tea contains layers of flavours, and even a cursory exploration is exciting. White teas blended from minimally processed buds smell like white grapes and peony petals. Japanese green teas have a sparkling, verdant freshness, while Chinese lapsang souchong is the *basso profundo* of the tea world; it reminds me of smoked pinewood and pipe tobacco. All of these varieties are derived from the *Camellia sinensis* plant, but the processing methods result in a diverse spectrum of aromas. Most of them smell good enough to be worn as perfume.

As I brew cup after cup – to enjoy the scent as much as the taste – I search for the tea notes among my perfume bottles. Many perfumers find the complexity of tea inspiring, and some of the biggest blockbusters (such as CK One and Tommy Girl) are based on tea accords. Perfumer Jean-Claude Ellena was so moved by the rich aroma of teas at the Mariage Frères boutique in Paris that he created Bulgari Eau Parfumée au Thé Vert (from £42 for 75ml). This radiant perfume is based on woody violet and sheer jasmine, scents that are naturally present in certain types of green tea. It opens on an effervescent citrusy note before dying down to a velvety, warm finish.

Lancôme Aroma Tonic (£20 for 100ml) is a green-tea-inspired fragrance that spikes its lemony beverage with cardamom and osmanthus – the apricot-scented blossom of the Chinese olive. Soft and romantic, L'Artisan Parfumeur's Thé pour un Été (£55 for 50ml) is reminiscent of Le Palais des Thés jasmine pearls tea. The perfume unfolds in sheer layers of jasmine, bergamot and green-tea leaves, with a cool bite of mint lending it a crisp accent. A thin cotton dress and a splash of Thé pour un Été are the staples of my summer wardrobe.

But on cold winter days, I crave warmer blends, in both teas and perfumes. A swirl of tea in Eau d'Italie Paestum Rose (€98 for 100ml) gives its roses a dark hue. Comme des Garçons Tea (Series 1: Leaves, £48 for 50ml, from Dover Street Market), an even richer blend, amplifies the

smoky complexity of tea with incense and cedarwood. It has a tangy, leathery darkness that makes me crave a cup of Russian caravan tea. Add a warm fireplace and a sprinkle of snow, and my grey winter afternoon becomes a beautiful daydream.

Victoria Frolova has been writing her perfume blog, boisdejasmin.com, since 2005. It began as a hobby – her interest in perfume had been kindled while growing up in a family of chemical engineers – but it quickly turned into a full-time undertaking. Since receiving her professional perfumery training, she has been working as a fragrance consultant and researcher.