

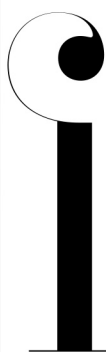


# ON THE scent

DIPTY PATEL IS STARTING OUT IN THE WORLD OF BOUTIQUE FRAGRANCE WITH HER COMPANY HOD PERFUMES AND HAS JUST BOTTLED HER FIRST SCENT. ELLIE PARSONS TALKS SHOP WITH HER.

*Photographs by Phil Bourne  
On location at Grange Hotel*

MAKE-UP BY KSAVI



IT WAS IN THE WORLD'S perfume capital of Grasse, just inland from Cannes on the French Riviera, that Dipty Patel found her calling. And who could not fall in love with the town, perched on a hill with its yellow ochre shuttered houses and fields of rose, jasmine and lavender harvested each year to make glorious scents that waft through the streets. Plus, Grasse is the home of several famous perfume museums, including Fragonard, Molinard and Galimard, and produces over two-thirds of France's natural aromas. It's known as the cradle of France's perfume industry and the perfumes produced there are on every Parisian woman's wish list.

Over in London, Dipty, born in Croydon, was a high-flying events manager working long hours with a demanding schedule. She'd reached a point in her life, after 14 years in events, when she wanted to broaden her horizons. She has a degree in marketing and accountancy and after university she went to work in her aunt's reflexology and massage clinic. Her aunt taught her all about making aromatherapy treatments and when Dipty was in her twenties she'd create lotions and potions to sell to customers. Then her career took off and she went on to run corporate events for Centaur Media, ACCA and Investor Relations Society among others.

However, a few years ago this passion for crafting scents was reawakened when Dipty happened to stumble across a perfume stand at an events show where she delighted in making her own fragrance. It wasn't until 2012 however that she really took hold of this idea of perfume making and ran with it. She remembers the turning point vividly:

she was out having a drink with a friend and they were mulling life over. Her friend put this one question to her: “What do you most enjoy doing?” She thought a little and then recalled the time she’d made her very first perfume and that was the moment that planted the seed of what was to come: a trip to Grasse to learn perfume making, followed by developing her own boutique perfume brand.

Now a freelance event manager, Dipty is following her dream; this year, she enrolled on a perfume-making course at one of Grasse’s oldest perfumeries, Galimard, established in 1747. Dipty spent her professional training among the antique copper production equipment, discovering the extraction methods of aromatic flowers and plants and in the ‘Studio des Fragrances’ mixing essential oils. She uncovered some of the mysteries behind perfume making and learnt from the best ‘noses’ in the business.

**a** lot of people create their own scents for fun, says Dipty, but after her inspiring French sojourn she decided to seriously pursue her own perfume business. She did her research – global revenues from perfume are about \$22bn and 10% of that originates from France – and she spotted the growing trend for bespoke perfumery. “Everyone’s on bespoke perfume now. Harrods has a department dedicated to it,” she says. Even Jo Malone and Diptyque are becoming quite similar to each other, she believes. “But a lot of it’s about trust in a fragrance brand,” she continues. “Sometimes it doesn’t matter if people like the fragrance or not, it’s about whether you trust the brand. I know I can create this too, having been to France and learnt from perfumers who have been making fragrances for 20 or 30 years.”

Her first fragrance, launched in August, is N-LYTEN eau de parfum



created using traditional methods at Galimard. It’s a limited edition feminine fragrance containing green tea, grapefruit and lotus, followed by notes of violet leaf and gardenia and more woody base notes. She canvassed opinion by sending samples to friends who represented her target market and they have likened her scent to Chanel or Dior. “It’s good to be trusted and I know not everyone will like my scents,” says Dipty, diplomatically, but she’s prepared to put herself out there and see where it leads. “I’m taking fragrance back to what it used to be when it was treated like gold and used as an offering to Egyptian gods,” she says. “Nowadays perfume has become

too commercialised. I want my brand to bring out who I am but also for it to be unique and affordable. It’ll awaken all your senses and make you feel confident and happy.”

Buying supplies of essences can be expensive, so Dipty has to choose which ingredients she uses carefully. For instance, oud used in perfumes in Arabian countries has a high a price tag because it comes from the bark of a tree and is hard to extract. There are also other factors to consider like seasonality and expiry dates. “Once the essential oil is finished you have to wait for the next season. For example, this year’s rosewood might not smell the same as last year’s. It’s

the same with wine; each year it tastes different depending on the climate. The elements are alive. You’re dealing with nature after all,” she says.

Before Dipty had a product to sell it was difficult to convince press and buyers of her business venture, but now she has the elegantly curved, heavy glass atomizer firmly in her hand success could be just a spritz away. It took eight months to turnaround her first fragrance; liaising with the holiday-loving French, dealing with shortages of liquid because the alcohol evaporates when bottled, ordering packaging and designing the logo. The tagline HoD ‘London’ banks on her home city as being a stylish fashion capi-

“I love my city. I had the opportunity to work abroad in the past but I never did because I love London.”



tal and it was very much her intention to include it as part of the brand positioning. “I love my city. I had the opportunity to work abroad in the past but I never did because I love London. It’s a fashion capital and it needs promoting,” affirms Dipty, who has used her own savings to launch HoD. “It’s about commitment and hard work. It’s living and breathing everything HoD and using all forms of communications to get the word out,” she says.

A sole trader, Dipty prefers a gentle approach to her business rather than all-out worldwide exposure. “I’m currently doing the PR and social media to raise brand awareness. It’s a brand rooted in London and we’ll see where it goes,” she says. She wrote a six-month business plan and now needs to do another for the upcoming year. Meanwhile her olfactory vision for HoD stays strong. “It’ll remain boutique, I’m not going to produce anything in vast quantities. I’m the sole investor and I have to do everything within my means that’s on the safe side. It’s a personal project and a challenge,” she says.

She’s in the process of contacting high-end stockists, offering them a sniff of her enchanting scents and the chance to stock her exclusive collection on a sale or return basis. Therefore every stockist gets a percentage of the sales and if the stock

is not sold after six months it can be returned. Dipty prefers bricks and mortar shops to online retailers and she’s looking for opportunities to collaborate.

If money were no object Dipty would make a TV advert for N-LYTEN casting the classy Amal Alamuddin. And if she could create a bespoke scent for any male celebrity it would have to be Daniel Craig because she loves the Bond films. As with her other customers, she’d sit him down, build up his personality profile and ask him to smell different scents before creating a perfectly matched scent for him.

**T**hat’s the fantasy anyway... On a more grounded note, Dipty also makes signature scents, massage oils and home fragrances for corporate clients such as hotels who want to stand out from the crowd. She’s not swayed by fashion – most of the hundreds of high street perfumes launched every year die a death after a short time – but rather she works in accordance with the seasons. “It’s good to have something classic,” she says. “I’m trying to grow a brand that’s unique, which is traditional yet modern.”

One day Dipty aims to have her own laboratory with hundreds of essential oils to play with. Until then she continues to learn all she can about the tantalising world of perfume. “It’s a new territory for me but I’ve created a collection that people will enjoy wearing and that makes them feel great about themselves. I’d like to continue telling my story even if I’m not sure what the next steps are going to be,” she concludes. Something tells us she’s on the scent trail of something great. London, watch out, you’re about to get an education in the art of French perfume.

Find Dipty on Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest by searching #HoDPerfumes or go to her website [HoDPerfumes.com](http://HoDPerfumes.com).