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It's the Christmas gift many men buy for their partner – but will she wear it?

Here's how to choose the perfect scent without losing your bottle

SO MANY SCENTS, SO LITTLE TIME – ON CHRISTMAS EVE, especially, when chaps buy gifts for their beloved in a frenzy of mulled wine-fuelled brinkmanship. A friend of mine has a theory that men home in on Chanel No. 5 because, while names frequently elude them, they never forget a number. Cynical? Research published by retail playground Brent Cross after last Christmas revealed that not only were perfume and make-up the top gifts bought by men, but that women ranked perfume alongside wrong-sized garments as the worst gifts they received. Clearly we're entering shark-infested waters here. Amelie Prot, sales development

manager of Clandestine Collection, a boutique range of scents newly launched in John Lewis, agrees it's a difficult area. 'You need to know your partner pretty well to choose her perfect fragrance,' she says. She encourages gift-hunting males to describe their partners in detail, but style interests her more than just looks. 'You can't tell body chemistry from colouring alone. How she wears her hair is the giveaway. If it's short and neat, a light floral scent will suit her better than a rollicking, feisty one. But if her hair's loose and tousled, spicy, sensual scents are more likely to hit the spot.' So there's your first clue.

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BE OBSERVANT This is the most obvious trick, but it works a treat. Rifle her shelves for the one she wears and loves. That nearly full bottle that matches her bathroom? Nice try, but it's probably the one you bought her last year. The one that's practically empty? Do the nose test. If it smells like her, it's your safest bet. Buy the entire range – scent, body crème, bath gel – all gift-wrapped, like the fresh and zesty **Floris Cefiro**, £30 for 50ml, perhaps.

BE A CLOTHES HAWK Check her wardrobe for favourite labels. Shoe-aholics into Marc Jacob's flats will adore the mod-style **Marc Jacobs Daisy Solid Perfume Ring**, £20, with its light-hearted strawberry-floral scent. If she's into 1960s nostalgia, **Pucci Vivara**, £60 for 80ml, wafts narcissus and jasmine laced with Amaretto in a bottle reminiscent of a psychedelic paperweight. If she's a rock chick, **Vivienne Westwood Let It Rock**, £29.50 for 30ml, hits the spot with jasmine, amber and patchouli. And if her style's more grown-up fashionista? Karl Lagerfeld was closely involved with fiery, orange blossom **Fendi Palazzo**, £34.50 for 30ml, or try Spanish fashion house **Loewe's Quizás, Quizás, Quizás** (sing it!), £48 for 50ml, an ambery, fruity

SCENT OF A WOMAN: 1 Marc Jacobs Daisy Solid Perfume Ring 2 Floris

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