

Critical Mass: A Fragrance for the Pure of Heart

By FAYE BROOKMAN

NEW YORK — Pregnancy spurred Wendi S. Berger to give birth to a collection of 100 percent natural fragrances she named Pour le Monde.

Fastidious about what she ate and applied to her body, Berger was frustrated she couldn't find quality natural, vegan and gluten-free scents. "I was doing everything I could — not consuming anything in plastic, no lunch meat, no peanuts, and I was upset I couldn't wear fragrance [because of formaldehyde and other chemicals]," said the self-described fragrance junkie who got hooked on scents when she received a bottle of Love's Baby Soft for her ninth birthday.

The former publishing executive — who had stints at Vanity Fair, InStyle and Elle — decided to create her own fragrances. Inspired by a friend living with multiple sclerosis, Berger also wanted to give back through the sales of her line.

It took more than two-and-a-half years and countless naysayers before bringing three scents under the Pour le Monde logo to fruition. "People kept telling me it 'can't be done.' I didn't accept that," said Berger.

Finally she linked with Symrise's subsidiary PureScents to create three unique scents called Empower, Together and Envision. Creating natural fragrances is difficult, but not impossible," said Debra Bornstein, vice president, NA Fragrance Creation, Home & Personal Care at Symrise. The challenge was constructing the scent with a limited palette. "Our team thrives on this challenge."

The 1.7-oz. eau de parfum sprays will be launched on Saturday online at pourlemondeparfums.com retailing for \$95. Realizing online fragrances sell best if sampled, Berger offers all three in 1-ml. vials priced at \$18. Brick-and-mortar retailing is on Berger's to-do list but she's looking for a "long-term partnership," and considering both traditional and unique distribution channels.

Pour le Monde is free of chemicals including phthalates, chemical sunscreens, petrochemicals, synthetic fragrances and dyes. Packaging materials are all made from recycled materials. The fragrances are created with natural ingredients such as Italian bergamot, patchouli, cedar wood, Persian lime, lavender and vanilla infused with grain alcohol. Pour le Monde is one of only two companies with fragrances currently carrying the certification by the Natural Products Association. Other certifications include PETA's cruelty-free and vegan bunny logo, The Forest Stewardship Council seal and The Certified Vegan logo.

Ten percent of sales will be donated to three philanthropies corresponding to the fragrance — the Guiding Eyes for the Blind (Empower), the Cancer Support Community (Together) and the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (Envision). "We are up front about what we donate," said Berger, adding there are select days, such as World MS Day, when the portion is upped to 15 percent of sales from the fragrance linked to the appropriate charity.

The altruistic positioning strikes a chord with Millennials and Gen-Yers who Berger said have a strong desire to "give back," and make a positive impact. "I love the idea I can purchase this for my friends with MS and help us all out while getting a fragrance that won't cause me any harm," said Ann Silla, who is in her 30s and diagnosed with MS three years ago.

The natural positioning — especially the vegan and gluten-free aspects — get high marks from an audience seeking healthier lifestyles. A Harris Interactive poll conducted last year found almost 70 percent of American adults purchase at least some "green" products. And, although there is always a portion of Americans who demand chemical-free products, improving economic conditions are expected to boost the natural market, which sometimes carries higher price tags to cover higher production costs.

But the biggest push could come from a population more educated about the perils of chemicals. That point was hammered home during the WWD Beauty Summit in New York last week when Norma Kamali, known for her passion about wellness, told the audience to look at fragrance "alternatives" to what they are using on their bodies.



Together by Pour le Monde
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