

A heady whiff of autumn in new perfumes



L.A.'s Black Phoenix Alchemy Labs offers an entire spooky, scented world. (Black Phoenix Alchemy Labs)

By **Denise Hamilton**

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For perfume lovers, the advent of cooler weather may very well inspire a shift in scents. It's a time to abandon the light florals of summer and explore fragrances that reflect autumn and conjure notions of All Hallow's Eve.

For a postmodern interpretation of fall, I reach for Like This by Etat Libre d'Orange (created in collaboration with [Tilda Swinton](#)), with its notes of pumpkin, gingerbread spice, woods, immortelle and damp earth.

Christopher Brosius, the founder of the CB I Hate Perfume perfumery in Brooklyn, is the creator of a scent called Burning Leaves, which may very well have you wondering who lighted the bonfire. Brosius' November, on the other hand, embraces the melancholy beauty of decay—with notes of pumpkin pie, fallen leaves and smoke.

If Count Dracula wore cologne, [Bram Stoker](#) might have doused him in L'Artisan's Voleur de Roses, a narcotic blend of roses and earthy patchouli that seems perfect for all undead Victorian gentlemen. Like many unisex fragrances, it's also great on ladies. (Patchouli may conjure up 1960s head shops, but perfumers love this note

for its versatility. Leaven it with roses, berries, vanilla or spices and it gets all new romantic and neo-gothy, more Duran Duran than Bauhaus.)

In Noir de Noir, Tom Ford offsets the mossy darkness of patchouli with rose and jammy berries. Noir Patchouli by Histoire de Perfumes tilts toward spices, tobacco and leather, growing sweeter as it dries.

But fall isn't only about the dark arts; the season also evokes cheery kitchens with the fragrance of baked goods wafting from warm ovens.

The complex perfumes of the Serge Lutens line are innovative, sophisticated and high-quality. One spritz of Lutens' Five O'Clock Au Gingembre makes me think of the mountains — sitting around an aromatic campfire, sipping hot lemon-honeyed tea and eating spicy-sweet gingerbread.

Demeter's Pumpkin Pie fragrance smells of pumpkins, sugar, cinnamon, ginger and cloves and costs less than \$20. Also for those on a budget, the website of L.A.'s Black Phoenix Alchemy Labs offers an entire spooky, scented world. BPAL's 2012 perfumes include Danse Macabre, Bewitched, the Twisted Oak Tree, All Souls' Night, Sugar Skull and Dia de Los Muertos. (The prices range from \$17.50 to \$30.)

Christian Dior's Poison is a natural for fall, but if you used to run away screaming, don't worry, it has been reformulated and is now milder and more vanillic. I prefer its clever variations — Hypnotic Poison (almondy), Pure Poison (powdery white floral) and Midnight Poison (orange, rose, patchouli, amber).

For those who can't abide aromachemicals, there are plenty of all-natural and organic options. This fall, I'm enjoying Yosh Han's ruby-hued Ominiscent, whose heady mix of florals and spices is both sexy and a little witchy.

Perfumes with oud and incense light up my inner goth girl. Oud, which is extracted from Southeast Asia's aquilaria tree, smells smoky, pungent, earthy and animalic and has been a hot note in perfumery for a while. For the curious, a good starter oud is Czech and Speake's unisex Dark Rose.

The Mt. Everest of rose ouds is Montale's Black Aoud, which pairs the rich attar of roses with dark, earthy, leathery mushroom darkness. Kilian's Rose Oud and Midnight Oud are also worth checking out.

When I smell incense, I think of ancient cathedrals, fallen angels, Bach's haunting "St. Matthew Passion" and Japanese temples. So it's not surprising that I'm a sucker for Commes des Garçons' incense line: Avignon, Kyoto, Zagorsk, Ouarzazate and Palisander. For incense softened with florals, aloe and musk, try L'Artisan's Passage d'Enfer.

Want to test before you buy? Dependable online sites such as Posh Peasant, Surrender to Chance and LuckyScent offer samples of most perfumes listed above for around \$7, depending on the scent.

Denise Hamilton writes about perfume for The Times.

image@latimes.com

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