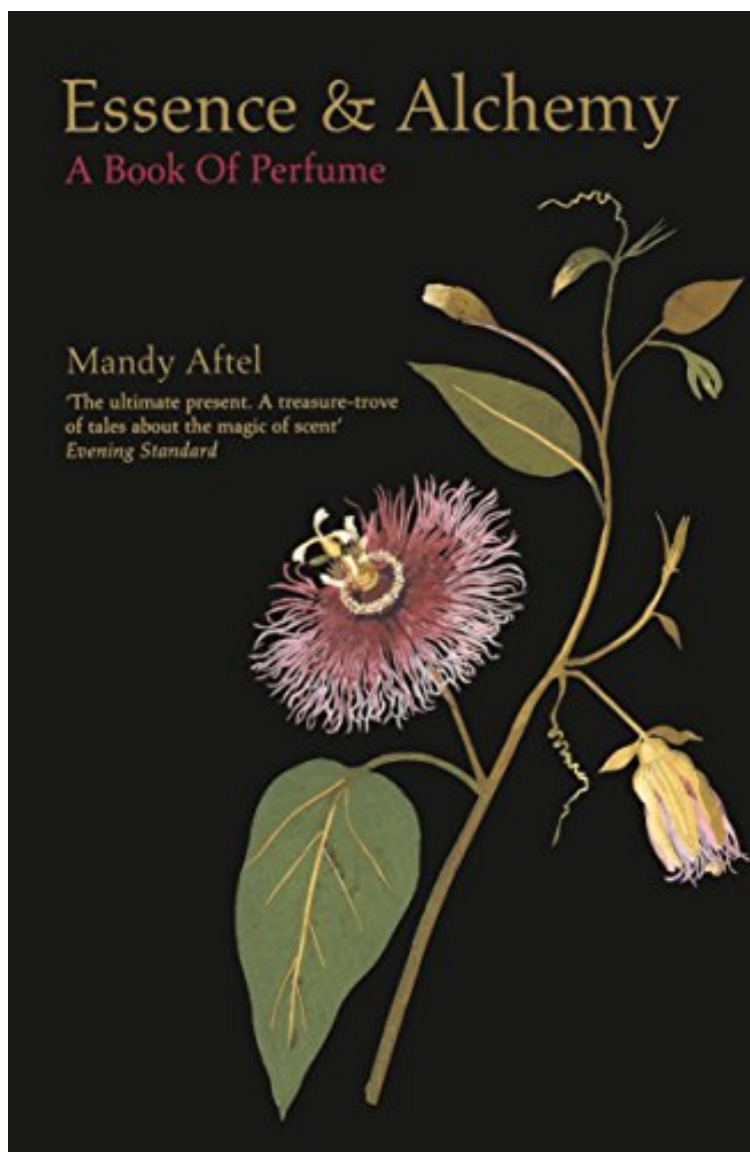


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Essence and Alchemy: A Book of Perfume



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Description : Description du produitAn artisan perfumer reveals a lost art and its mysterious, sensual history.For centuries, people have taken what seems to be an instinctive pleasure in rubbing scents into their skin. Perfume has helped them to pray, to heal, and to make love. And as long as there has been perfume, there have been perfumers, or rather the priests, shamans, and apothecaries who were their predecessors.

Yet, in many ways, perfumery is a lost art, its creative and sensual possibilities eclipsed by the synthetic ingredients of which contemporary perfumes are composed, which have none of the subtlety and complexity of essences derived from natural substances, nor their lush histories. Essence and Alchemy resurrects the social and metaphysical legacy that is entwined with the evolution of perfumery, from the dramas of the spice trade to the quests of the alchemists to whom today's perfumers owe a philosophical as well as a practical debt. Mandy Aftel tracks scent through the boudoir and the bath and into the sanctums of worship,

offering insights on the relationship of scent to sex, solitude, and the soul. Along the way, she imparts instruction in the art of perfume compositions, complete with recipes, guiding the reader in a process of transformation of materials that continues to follow the alchemical dictum *solve et coagula* (dissolve and combine) and is itself aesthetically and spiritually transforming.

Prsentation de l'diteurAs long as there has been passion, there has been perfume. Wealthy Romans used to scent their doves while in Shakespeare's time, a woman in love would place a peeled apple into her armpit to saturate it with her scent and then present it to her lover. *Essence And Alchemy* resurrects the social and metaphysical legacy that is entwined with the evolution of perfumery, from the dramas of the spice trade to the quests of the alchemists. Aftel tracks scent through the boudoir and the bath and into the sanctums of worship, and along the way teaches us the art of perfume-making, including many of her own recipes, offering insights on the relationship of scent to solitude, sex, and soul. From Publishers WeeklyTo this most extraordinary treatise on the history and making of perfume, Aftel, a writer and aroma designer, brings sheer delight in the bouquet of aromas in the natural world, as well as a "love for arcana" and an irreverent sensibility that embraces "little-acknowledged" aphrodisiacs like the smell of sweat. Smell is one of the most primal senses: even newborns orient first toward the smell of their mothers' milk. And world history is full of the manipulation of smell, she reveals, starting with the palace perfumers of ancient Egypt; the Israelite women who concocted essences for temple sacrifices; the Romans, who anointed nearly everything; the alchemists, who searched for the Divine Essence; all the way up to modern pheromone researchers who hope, finally, "to snare the sex drive." Aftel traces this history with witty anecdotes (Ben Franklin's plea for a drug to make sweet-smelling farts, Petrus Castellus's advice to rub civet directly on the penis) and well-chosen alchemical and botanical illustrations. After this seductive introduction, she shifts into the how-to mode, discussing the actual making of a scent, a process of selecting certain "base notes," adding "heart notes" and finally the "top chords." Her emphasis is on experimenting, and developing an "olfactory consciousness." Since organically based perfumes interact with the wearer, they must be designed for a particular user, not vice versa, as with commercial, synthetically based products. Aftel provides some sample formulas and concludes with a roundup of romantic, bathing and spiritual uses of perfumes. Agent, Peter Matson. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.Prsentation de l'diteurAs long as there has been passion, there has been perfume. Wealthy Romans used to scent their doves while in Shakespeare's time, a woman in love would place a peeled apple into her armpit to saturate it with her scent and then present it to her lover. *Essence And Alchemy* resurrects the social and metaphysical legacy that is entwined with the evolution of perfumery, from the dramas of the spice trade to the quests of the alchemists. Aftel tracks scent through the boudoir and the bath and into the sanctums of worship, and along the way teaches us the art of perfume-making, including many of her own recipes, offering insights on the relationship of scent to solitude, sex, and soul.