

# One Beautiful Thing

WFFC presents an evening of naturals and natural perfumery

Women in Flavor and Fragrance Commerce recently held the first of its WFFC Mini Series—an evening gathering at Mane’s

Manhattan offices featuring a natural raw material and fragrance creation conversation with Mandy Aftel (Aftelier). Aftel is often spoken of in terms that pit her form of simple natural artisanal perfumery against that of mainstream fragrance creation, yet her presentation de-emphasized any such notion. Rather than being anti-synthetics (she is not), Aftel says she merely prefers naturals.

She has culled a range of natural materials from numerous sources—vintage stocks from perfumers’ estates and pharmacies (sandalwood, for example; Aftel also has sourced some old Fritzsche Dodge & Olcott materials) and small African herbivores. This latter source, the hyrax,<sup>\*</sup> produces waste matter that can be tinctured to produce the civet-castoreumlike Africa stone (also known as hyraceum). Whatever the material, Aftel’s focus remains on quality: “I’d rather have one beautiful thing than 10 mediocre things,” she says.

Aftel came to her form of fragrance creation via a career in psychology and writing. Researching a novel that would never come to be, she began to collect old volumes on perfumery. It was this research that led her to a love



*Aftel is a psychologist/author turned naturals obsessive.*

of naturals. Aftel’s scents are constructed very simply compared to “traditional” contemporary perfumes, on average using just 18 materials. She formulates “in 10 mL,” using her generally expensive materials. (Aftel’s fragrances sell for around \$150 per 0.25 oz; she also operates a premium custom fragrance business for private clients.) The finished scents are typically 30% essence and 70% undenatured 200-proof alcohol. Aftel’s fragrances have low tenacity because she uses only naturals that largely disappear after a couple of hours.


Passing around blotters of materials, including the grassy-fecal Africa stone, Aftel showed off the building blocks of her scent *Fig.*<sup>\*\*</sup> The formula, starting from the base and moving up, includes:

- fir absolute (“like strawberry jam”)
- tonka
- (sweet) oakmoss
- tolu balsam
- lavender (from Seville, Spain; slightly cough medicine-like)
- jasmin sambac
- blue chamomile
- pink pepper absolute
- organic grand fir
- bois de rose
- pink grapefruit

For future WFFC events, visit [wffc.org](http://wffc.org).

<sup>\*\*</sup>Aftel explains that she tends to employ CO<sub>2</sub> extracts for topnotes.

<sup>\*</sup>The hyrax is a small rodentlike creature that is genetically the closest living relative of the elephant.

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Of her search for high-quality naturals, Aftel says, “I’d rather have one beautiful thing than 10 mediocre things.”