

A New Crop: the Ingredients of Innovation

As the F&F world moves into a new phase of sustainability and technology, Mane focuses its strategy on naturals and enhancing its pool of creative talent

“How do we make the fragrance industry a sustainable model?” asks Frederic Jacques, head of Mane’s fine fragrance division in the United States. “How do we re-conquer some desire from the consumer?”

These are challenges many in the fragrance industry are facing, and Mane’s emerging strategy combines its 137-year pedigree as a naturals supplier with contemporary concepts such as sustainability. In a series of conversations, Celine Roche (vice president specialty ingredients, Americas) repeatedly emphasizes ecology, social responsibility and fair trade. Seeking “a new context for the division,” Mane has refocused its energy on the materials developed out of its headquarters in Bar-sur-Loup, France.^a

Reinterpreting Classics, Developing New Raw Materials

“If we talk about creativity, the raw materials come first,” says Jacques. “What you create will be impacted by the quality of the materials.” In addition, he explains, the only way to protect a fragrance is to look for new ingredients. Since there are no international laws protecting fragrance formulas, sourcing new naturals and developing new chemical research is key.

“It is so great to rediscover classics,” says Roche, discussing the company’s range of lavender, orris and vanilla absolutes. While the company is producing traditional materials such as patchouli, today’s products are the result of contemporary extraction technologies that reinvent naturals for modern perfumery, capturing only those facets that perfumers desire. In the case of patchouli, Jacques says, this means removing the “camphoraceous top.” In addition to erasing undesirable notes, Roche says, molecular distillation allows for the removal of unwanted color.

The company has also developed a number of new materials via molecular distillation, including a vetiver absolute, which has a cucumber note. In addition, Mane has used its technological twist on tradition to produce a range of CO₂ liquid extractions, including fruity and

animalic brandy, bitter-powdery coffee, powerful and woody rum, whiskey with wine lees aspects, and French apple brandy, or *calvados*.

Meanwhile, Mane has developed a proprietary extraction kit dubbed Jungle Essence Technology.^b The pressurized device (pictured) is approximately the size of a thermos and is used in on-site extractions. The process employs an inert proprietary solvent and requires no heat—“a green process,” as Roche puts it. The technology has yielded a number of ingredients, including baie rose *Schinus molle*, orris root and patchouli. Jacques adds, “Before we create, we steal from nature.” Mane perfumer Cecile Krakower used a number of Jungle Essence materials in last year’s *Yu*. The niche scent included notes such as freesia, mandarin leaf and bergamot.



Mane’s Jungle Essence Technology is a pressurized device that employs an inert solvent for in-the-field extractions.

Sustainability

“How do we reconcile being greener with the performance attributes?” asks Jacques. With more customers playing in the murky green space, Mane has developed a number of natural compounds made with ingredients and processes approved by Ecocert. This includes materials such as the anisic-floral anethol B21 and δ -decalactone, which possesses a creamy, peach and almond character. Jacques explains that, using its biotech expertise, the company has worked to build new olfactive shapes that are markedly different from essential oils. “We could create a nice pineapple note without using a lactone,” he continues. “How do you build a fruity note with essential oils? You can’t. The answer is Ecocert compounds.”

^a The company recently launched its compendium of natural extracts available at mane.com.

^b Jungle Essence Technology is a trademark of Mane.

Natural Perfumery Partnership

As part of Mane's focus on naturals, the company is working with natural perfumer Mandy Aftel (Aftelier). Aftel creates fragrances using Mane materials for the company's clients. Roche says she felt Aftel was a good addendum to the team due to her commitment to naturals, her passion and willingness to share her knowledge about ingredients. The company saw an opportunity to take Aftel's niche experience into the mass market. Jacques adds that the partnership makes sense from a creation standpoint as Mane's perfumers are better trained to work with contemporary materials and conventional techniques.

Read more about Aftel's work here: perfumerflavorist.com/newsletter/18864824.html

The Antibiotic Mentality: Leveraging the Fair Trade Fragrance Frontier in Rwanda and Brazil

Both Roche and Jacques stress that sustainability extends beyond the characteristics of the raw materials to the effects on the local communities that produce them. The company has signed onto the Global Compact (unglobalcompact.org) with the United Nations, "a framework for businesses that are committed to aligning their operations and strategies with 10 universally accepted principles in the areas of human rights, labor, the environment and anti-corruption." The Compact's mission statement continues that it "is first and foremost concerned with exhibiting and building the social legitimacy of business and markets."



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"We are very serious about our engagement," says Celine Roche of Mane's patchouli development project in Rwanda.

Because the flavor and fragrance industry has always been tied closely with key commodities, it has often found itself entangled in the darker side of world trade, including issues of income equality, exploitation and political corruption. Meanwhile, the commodities in these regions have suffered from price fluctuations. In response, Mane has launched a pair of small-scale projects that seek to rectify these issues.

Rwandan patchouli: Rwanda, which suffered a genocide in 1994, has no tradition of producing patchouli, but Roche, partnering with the International Trade Center (Geneva, Switzerland, a branch of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), worked to change that, beginning in September of 2006. Also involved is EPCHER, a local group comprised of four entrepreneurs that is aiding the local growers (800 people at last count) in Nasho and Bugarama to extract the oil. The first product is expected by September, and Mane has agreed to purchase the patchouli oil without regard to quality in order to encourage the further development of the project. Meanwhile, two members of the local Rwandan communities will travel to Mane's Bar-sur-Loup site for training in extraction. "It's a real commitment," says Jacques. "It's more than business."

"We are very serious about our engagement," says Roche. Fair trade, she adds, has the potential to stabilize prices while cutting out the speculative aspects of a commodity trade environment. The system ideally allows growers to sell materials for their real value.

Michel Mane, president of Mane USA, says, "Sustainability's effects in fighting poverty and hunger have been sadly overlooked. Rwanda is a region that previously had no stake in the industry." Mane notes that fair trade sits in stark contrast to the colonial era in which the developing world had its resources exploited without long-term benefits or advancement for locals. The company hopes that by giving local growers governance principals of pride and continuous improvement, the ship can be righted.

"Give people a future," says Jacques. "Give the business a future ... That's sustainability." Michel Mane adds, "It's not the aspirin mentality, it's the antibiotic mentality." Roche concludes: "Developing countries have an opportunity to export their culture and knowledge, not only with raw materials, but their craft as well. To show these communities what's possible is the most moving experience and a true source of inspiration. Dealing with raw materials always gave me a great sense of social responsibility, particularly when it came to sourcing."

Brazilian rosewood leaf—the minutiae of preservation: When

it comes to sustainability, rosewood can be a contentious subject. Michel Mane and Roche are involved in a project that seeks to develop sustainable rosewood leaf essential oil in Brazil in the coming year. Mane explains that, just as in Rwanda, the purpose is to transfer the company's know-how to producing countries that lack it, allowing locals to grow new varieties of crops.

"You can exploit timber products without cutting trees, without taking the roots out," says Mane. "You can do it in a sustainable way, yet bring those unique ingredients to the marketplace. Copaiba is another perfect example, where the trees are not cut to get the essential oil—just as we exploit maple in Canada or the United States to get the olfactive fraction and do it in a renewable way. Rosewood is a very good story."

Mane believes the key to sustainability is more sophisticated than a basic "hands off" approach. More importantly, the company sees that the responsible and unobtrusive use of the world's biodiversity creates both business opportunities and sustainability for endangered plant life. This, however, is not always easy to explain to customers that increasingly seek to be more eco-conscious. Sometimes, it is easier to say no to a material such as rosewood than go through the education process on sustainability—"the minutiae of preservation," as Jacques puts it.

The customer companies need to build stories for their consumers, he continues, acknowledging that this is not an easy job. To Jacques' thinking, if the industry continuously turns its back on naturals because their sustainability stories are hard to tell, it will be turning its back on great naturals and may actually hamper sustainability.

Sustainability and commercial viability: "Customers want great ideas, great stories and cheap ingredients," says Michel Mane. "Unfortunately, you have to be affordable. Some of those [sustainable natural] ingredients are too expensive. There is no commitment from our customers to make the effort because it's hard to bring those stories to life. It takes a lot of hard work and persuasion. Raising the level of awareness is definitely one of our missions."

The Perfumers

The company has more than 50 perfumers throughout the world, 10 of whom work in fine fragrance. To this talent pool, the company recently added senior perfumer Laurent Bruyere, who is based at the company's Paris fine fragrance site. In New York, Mane recently brought on senior perfumers Jim Krivda and Ralf Schwieger.

When it comes to hiring perfumers, the growing investment isn't so much focused on growing the staff as it is boosting the quality of the members of the fine fragrance team. Building a strong perfumery group can be hampered by the difficulty of fitting senior talent into the company's culture. The team is all-important to Jacques. In his eyes, sacrificing the team flow to nab a star perfumer is not worth it.

Jacques explains the difficulties mid-tier companies face in attracting top talent. For instance, perfumers may be concerned they won't receive the same opportunities to win at the smaller companies. "You have to offer

something else," he says, "and it cannot just be money. People don't move just for money, just as people don't stay at their job just for money. You also have to offer projects and atmosphere—the proximity, the sincerity, the authenticity. If you're not happy working in the fragrance industry, how can you sell it?"

Every perfumer has a different style, and providing a wider variety of styles to a customer during submissions is key. While Mane's competitors may have more perfumers in New York than Mane has throughout the world, Jacques believes that the "more is more" philosophy is valid only to a certain threshold after which more becomes less.



Left to right: Michel Mane (head of Mane USA), Thierry Trotobas (head of fine fragrance out of Paris), Frederic Jacques (head of fine fragrance out of New York) and Celine Roche (vice president specialty ingredients, Americas).

Jacques notes that in years past, at least in the United States, Mane has suffered what he calls the "one-hit wonder" perception. The company would have a big hit and then fall back under the radar, only to resurface with another hit one or two years later. "Each time, everybody thinks, 'Oh, they're back.'" Jacques says that the solution has been to build teams that are not reliant on just one individual or personality. "It takes ... deeper systems, more strategy."

"You don't build a company on one figure," he continues. "I want a team of perfumers [with] some seniority on board." However, he notes that those perfumers are not expected to go out into the market and get briefs just because they're stars. In the long run, Jacques says, that is not the way to win. In hiring Krivda, he continues, "I didn't buy Mane a name. We bought much more than this. We bought talent. There's more to come. It's not a one-man show."



See where Mane ranks in P&F magazine's 2008 Flavor and Fragrance Leaders rankings, **Page 44**.

Mane and the Era of the Big Three

For a time in the industry, says Jacques, it seemed that all of the top-tier companies had years in which they dominated—"the Roure years, the IFF years." But today, the perception is that the top-tier organizations are somewhat locked into position. "Everyone stayed where they were because the business became more mature," he says. Jacques also attributes the change to the increasingly systematic approach companies needed to take to support growing research and faster launches. "The people who had invested in certain fields stayed strong in those fields."

This context demands that Mane do things differently—particularly in fine fragrance. The strategy that Jacques is implementing in the United States has already been put in place in France. "Our plan," he says, "is to be part of the top five. In fine fragrance, our opportunity is to be the alternative to the three big players." To be an alternative isn't a matter of size as much as of positioning. "We want to be the next company that comes to [customers'] minds, especially if they're looking for something slightly different. We're ready."

Creating a Different Path to Success

In a series of discussions, Jacques outlines Mane's strategies: focus on talent, be consistent in the long term, hit your targets, know who you are and sell that differentiation. The challenge for a company Mane's size is to develop the types of processes the giants possess. While Jacques acknowledges that the big companies have built "strong engines," he says, "I prefer to have my challenge today [rather] than theirs. Mane has as much of the market to defend as to attack." The top companies, on the other hand, have far more to defend than attack. "Their fixed costs are high," says Jacques. "How long can they really defend it? How much can they grow?"

Jacques points to Mane's family owned status, which allows management to make investments and "bets" in the long term. "If Jean Mane and Michel Mane give them-

selves five years to accomplish a goal, there's no external factor that could prevent us from implementing that strategy. It's two [different] paths to success."

Changing the Rules of the Game: Who's Going to Shoot First?

While Mane has traditionally maintained low commercial visibility, the current management teams are working to make a change. Jacques encapsulates the organization's strengths as "authenticity, tradition and science."

"It's an authentic approach to creativity," he continues. "You don't have to systematically compromise yourself to do well. There is a path, which may be more complicated—for our customers, ourselves, everyone in the business—to be truer, more authentic, more responsible. It just means be reasonable ... offer a product that makes more sense."

Jacques sees that differentiation as invaluable. "We sell pure pleasure and dreams," he says. "How much pleasure and dreams do we put into bottles?" The problem, he notes, is that the fragrance industry is not just competing with itself, but with other luxury items such as iPods—and it's often losing.

"To be reasonable is difficult," says Jacques, "because it means maybe moving slower sometimes, allowing a bit more time for creation. Who's going to shoot first? Who's going to be the first to say 'let's launch fewer, but better, products that are a bit more different, which talk more to the consumer?'" There is still a great deal of money to be made under the fragrance industry's current strategy of excess launches and clipped timetables, and Jacques believes that the industry's financials will have to take larger hits before its business model changes.

Culture Clash

Mane has spent the last 10 years flying under the radar, meanwhile focusing on naturals research, expanding its

compounding capacity, building new flavor and fragrance creative centers in Bar-sur-Loup, and launching its Manhattan fragrance studio. This low-key approach, Jacques says, is typical of a family company, where “you can have your own culture.”

While Mane has to operate within the context of the industry, Jacques says it has the option of focusing less on the “short-term gratification” of the large public operations. “Being independent means that the company can quickly reflect the will of its executives,” Jacques continues. “It’s a luxury, but it’s also a responsibility.” This sense of ownership, he says, means that corporate responsibility is a natural fit for family companies. “When you own a company for five generations, it’s very natural, because you care. You care about your job and your company. It’s a different way than if you’re just the manager of a company. There is not much difference between being the head of a family company and being the head of a family.”

What it Means to be “Green”

In positioning itself as an ecologically responsible company, Mane has had to take a harder look at what “green” is. Jacques offers a popular example of the complex nuances at work. “A Prius isn’t a green car,” he says. “It’s a greener car.”

While Mane has focused on concepts such as biodiversity and responsibility, Jacques believes that, for the fragrance industry, green often means reverting to the industry’s roots in France. “There was not such a concept [as ecology] back in the day,” he says. “It was just something you did coming from the cradle of Grasse.” Sustainability, he says, is an old concept that has been rediscovered, renamed and given industrial structure following years of environmental abuse. “Now, everyone has to redefine the rule of normality.”

Being Truly Natural

Michel Mane notes that one of the challenges of being a naturals-focused company is the misinformation found in marketing and popular magazines regarding “naturals” in fine fragrance. “I don’t think [the fragrance industry is] credible when you read ... about this incredible extract from some flower that grows in the Himalayas or some orchid—it’s all baloney. It’s giving the wrong impression and

image of our industry.” Marketers, he says, often argue that “we have to make the consumers dream.” Mane fires back, “Make them dream by telling real stories that move them. Those stories are told by companies that could care less about natural products.” He notes that these false impressions have backfired on the industry, muddying the waters. “A lot of [customer companies] aren’t really sure who’s doing what.”

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