



The Scent of St Martin

by Sarah Greaves-Gabbadon

What does St Martin smell like?

Anything you want it to at Tijon, a *perfumerie* on the island's French side where you can create your own fragrance and take home a 'scensational' souvenir of your Caribbean vacation.

Owned by John Berglund and his wife, Cyndi, the nine-year-old workshop is the only place in the Caribbean where you can literally make a memory, combining individual scents to make a personal blend that evokes sunny skies, blue seas and lazy days.

It all begins at the 'scent organ,' where more than 300 essential, fragrance and synthetic oils are displayed in neat tiers of brown bottles. Don your lab coat; pick three (no easy feat); and then bring them back to your station in the lab where French songs fill the air as you combine them with your choice of base oil blends, distilled water and alcohol to make your personal perfume.

It's a deeply creative and surprisingly sensual experience that requires both

focus and flexibility. But with millions of possible permutations, there's no 'wrong' way to do it, and it's highly unlikely that anyone will ever have made the scent you eventually come up with. The knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff stands by to advise on which types of fragrances pair well, but in the end it's just up to you – and your nose.

In the 90-minute class (the most popular of Tijon's three workshops) you'll make three 'accords' (a mixture of oils used to create perfume) and test them on your skin to decide which one will become the base of your signature *eau de parfum*. Once you've decided on the accord and made your perfume, you name it and Tijon keeps the formula on file so you can always reorder online.

More than 9,000 people have passed through the perfumery – "It's the second

most popular indoor activity on the island," says John with a twinkle in his eye – and as many as 20% of them reorder their creations, which are shipped from Tijon's recently opened second location in La Jolla, California.

I plan to do the same with Sarah Dippity, the fragrance I created. It's a blend of pear, tomato, clementine and mango: fruity scents that bring to mind the tropical bounty I enjoyed every morning at breakfast, and the sweet scent they lent to the island air at Marigot's *market*.

As class concludes – in appropriately French fashion with a celebratory glass of bubbly, *bien sûr!* – I feel pleased and proud. And happy to know that wherever in the world my travels may take me, St Martin is a mere spritz away.

Tijon is located in Grand Case on the corner of the French airport road and the beach road. Showroom hours are Monday - Friday, 9:30 am to 5 pm, with other times available by appointment. Hours may be limited in September and October.

For more information, ✉ john@tijon.com or call ☎ (590) 690 22 74 70 or 📞 1 721 581 4586