

> **candles**



For customers who miss the days of their youth, the Can't Adult Today candle offers a throwback to childhood, a time when sugary cereal milk and Saturday morning

milk and Saturday morning cartoons were the norm. Evil Queen. shopevilqueen.com

CIRCLE #642

Putting the 'Me' in Meaningful Candles

The personal and emotional appeal of a candle is an increasingly important factor in a customer's purchasing decision. Here's why.

BY ALEX HERRING

Among the top emerging candle trends highlighted in the National Candle Association's (NCA) 2018 trend report were two new focuses that play up the emotional side of these popular gifts: personalized touches and nostalgic connections. According to NCA President Kathy LaVanier, the driving force behind these trends is Millennials and their successors, Generation Z, who are seeking candles that reflect their own selves—their experiences, memories and personalities. "This new generation wants a sense of identity that's

different," LaVanier explained. "They want to stand out and have something to talk about."

In response to this consumer shift, many candle manufacturers are rethinking their marketing strategies. Rather than adopt the standard "cast a wide net" approach of years past, many new wholesalers are opting for a small-batch, drill-down game plan, where a specific product is meant to fully penetrate a niche target audience, whether by connecting customers to a nostalgic past, providing unique personalization or simply telling a story they can connect to.

Committed to Memory

Within memory-specific scents, those that recall certain destinations are currently a popular theme. As evidenced by the soaring popularity of regional and personalized gifts, customers want gifts that remind them of home, or even a favorite vacation. Some candle manufacturers are responding to this demand by creating destination-based scents that represent a location of significant importance to a customer such as a beloved state, or in some cases, even an entire country.

Scents that would appear to be a questionable stretch of what the word



The story-driven focus of Whiskey River Soap's candles takes the guesswork out of gifting: its humorous "scent description" tells customers exactly who the intended recipient should be. Whiskey River Soap. whiskeyriversoap.com

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Weather-scented candles can evoke memories of a place that helps make the intangible come to life. Willow & Birch Apothecary. shopwillowandbirch.com

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"fragrance" can encompass are also on the rise, appealing more to the novelty aspect of gifting or a shared experience, which is likely to prompt a consumer to buy the product for a friend. "When people have crazy experiences, finding a way to exhibit that in a fragrance product gives you a way to sell it," LaVanier said. "It's more of flash-in-the-pan, where it's crazy but it really clicks."

Four Points Trading Company is one such candle brand where unconventional scents are fully embraced: Some of its offerings include dirt, gasoline, library and sawdust. As the company's motto explains: "We aren't just creating candles, we're recreating memories," a notion that was born out of its founders' inquisitive child. When Scott and Annie Signore's daughter began asking questions about her parents' childhoods, the Signores decided that fashioning prominent scents from their lives into candles would be a great way to share the experiences with her.

"It's the scent that connects us to our pasts; the candle is simply the time traveling vessel we chose to take flight on," Annie Signore explained. "(Our daughter has) helped create this experience of walking down memory lane for us and all who come to join us."

It's precisely because of a scent's ability to "transport" an individual back to a favorite time or place that it's widely considered to be the most emotional of the five senses. Tapping into the power of emotions by way of scent can be an extremely effective way to reach customers; doing so allows them to add their own context and special meaning into the gift.

Taking it Personally

In a market full of enticing candle options, candles with a personalized touch stand out by offering something extra: a gift that's unique to its intended recipient. Yankee Candle, for example, allows customers to print their own photos onto a jar candle and label it with lines of customizable text, perfect for capturing an important life milestone, such as a graduation or wedding day. Thus, candles not only connect customers to their

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TABLETOP/HOME FASHION CANDLES BATH & BODY STATIONERY GOURMET GIFTABLES HOLIDAYS KIDS' CORNER

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Dirt is one of Four Point Trading Co.'s most popular memory-based scents. According to Annie Signore: "There's just something to be said about the way it makes us feel like that little carefree kid just playing outside until the lights came on." Four Points Trading Company. fourpointstradingco.com

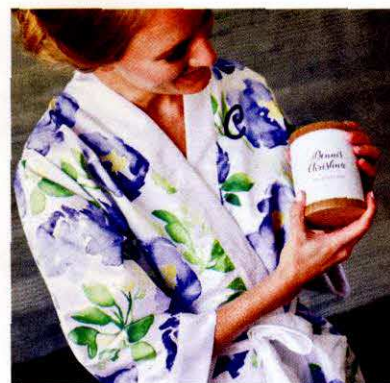
CIRCLE #645



The Countries collection contains destination-specific fragrances intended to remind a recipient of home, however far away it may be. Homesick Candles.

homesickcandles.com

CIRCLE #646



Candles with customizable labels allow customers to add a thoughtful touch by putting more of their own selves into the gift. Southern Firefly. southernfirefly.com

CIRCLE #647

nostalgic past, but also to precious moments of their present.

Southern Firefly Candle Co. owner Heather Ainsworth says that her destination candle line often gets used in a personalized way at weddings. "We've seen a big increase in working with brides and grooms to create their favors," Ainsworth said. "What we see a lot is people using our destination candles as their wedding favors, so if the bride is from Arkansas and the groom is from Tennessee, they'll get 100 of each candle and we'll customize their label for them. Or if they're getting married in Nashville, they'll use the Nashville candle as well."

Some brides and grooms decide to forego destination-themed candles, but still want a customized gift to commemorate their special day. "When they take their candle home, they can bring back the fun and excitement of their wedding," Ainsworth said. "That candle fragrance will always be a fragrance of their day."

It's not just customers who are taking advantage of customized candles, however. Ainsworth notes that independent retailers are also putting customized candles to good use; she's received requests from retailers

who've asked for hometown-specific candle scents or even boutique-specific scents to promote their brand. In each case, Ainsworth sits down with the retailer to create the right fragrance to tell their story and offer a unique gift to customers that they won't find anywhere else.

For many Millennials, this is the great appeal of personalized candles. "Millennials love to discover things," LaVanier said. "They are buying things that are personal to them that aren't widely available, so even the littlest manufacturers in garages can now compete with the biggest manufacturers in terms of getting out to the consumer. That whole process of making a candle personal to you is growing by leaps and bounds."

Scent Comes Second to Story

Most candle scents are obvious by their names—warm vanilla, chamomile lavender and citrus sage tells a customer exactly what they're getting. The new trend of emphasizing an emotion, however, means that a scent description may not be immediately apparent or foremost on a label—and that's not a bad thing. A candle simply named "American Summer" can

arouse curiosity, prompting further investigation by a customer: What does an American summer smell like?

Evil Queen's "Can't Adult Today" candle is another example where the product's name doesn't instantly reveal the scent a customer may expect to find (at least not until they read the small print). Nevertheless, it is likely to resonate with Millennials who appreciate such humor and want a candle that reflects their current attitude toward life.

Furthermore, if a candle's message has a story that customers can connect to, scent becomes a secondary factor in the purchasing decision. This is especially true when the item is being sold online, LaVanier points out.

"When you are selling product on the Internet, it isn't 'smell-a-vision,'" she said.

"I can describe to you what it smells like to the best of my ability, but you're not sampling it necessarily before you buy it. It's either a leap of faith, or you have some other reason for why you want it. So look and packaging of the product have become more important.

"Statement pieces that say, 'This is who I am'—that's where the shift is going."