



Meet Carolyn Dunster

The founder of Simply Roses lets us in on the secret behind her sumptuous bouquets and gifts



Simply Roses
020 7700 5566
www.simplyroses.com

Above right Pretty organza rosebud hearts, £17.95 a pair, can be used to scent drawers and wardrobes or simply placed around the home for a fragrant and decorative touch

Right Decadent rose bath truffles, £17.95 for a box of six, are the perfect treat for Valentine's Day

Below Let the deliciously new Roses de Jardin Interiors Fragrance, £14.95, imbue your home with heavenly scent

ANNA LAMBERT



For stockists
turn to page 122

What prompted the idea of starting your business?

As I'm a busy mother to Emily, 12, Alice, nine, and Edward, six, I was ideally looking for a business that I could run from home. I'd done a professional floristry course at Jane Packer's school, and realised that roses were always the star performers in any bouquet. Everybody loves them – they're beautiful, incredibly versatile and come in every colour and variety, from elegant long-stemmed numbers, to tiny ones with tightly closed buds. There was a problem though, as these days they're grown to last, and their scent has largely been bred out of them. If I wanted a business focusing on roses, then, I'd need to find additional products that would concentrate on their fragrance rather than their appearance. That's when I began sourcing exclusive soaps and bath products.

Has anyone in particular inspired you along the way?

Almost before I'd discovered my love of flowers, I came across Christian Tortu's flower shop in Carrefour de L'Odeon, Paris. He's an amazing man – a real artist who's full of unique ideas. Though he began simply as a florist, these days he has a whole line of products, including room scents and candles. I met him a few years ago and he was just as I hoped he'd be, charming and totally unpretentious.

Besides people, what things will always inspire you?

Well, roses of course, for starters! My favourite is the Milano – it's a glorious pink colour, and was the inspiration for my packaging labels and the mouselline ribbon I tie around our chic gift boxes. Away from work, we often holiday in Provence as a family. The food markets there, with all the scents, smells and colours, are always a delight. A recently discovered

source of inspiration is the ballet – Alice is mad about it, and I now share her passion.

What's your favourite room at home?

It has to be my kitchen, at home, an early Victorian semi in south London. I deal with orders at the kitchen table, the children do their homework at it after school and my husband joins us there for a drink later. My simple wooden units are painted in a muted green paint from Farrow & Ball, and, yes, I've even got an Aga!

And your style in the rest of the house?

I can't bear anything that looks too "show-homey". I like to go into a place and feel surrounded by the owners' special bits and pieces, so that's the look I've gone for. I love anything quirky and I'm a big fan of Cath Kidston – her ironing-board covers cheer me up when I'm doing the laundry. I also love the nostalgic prints from Cabbages & Roses as they complement our French brocante furniture.

'We often holiday in Provence and the scents, smells and colours of the markets are always a delight'

What romantic gift would you recommend this Valentine's?

It would have to be our bath truffles. They're made from shea and cocoa butter, laced with rose essential oil and rolled in crushed rose petals. Throw one into the bath and immerse yourself in the rose-strewn, gloriously scented water. Add the bath companion of your dreams and a glass of champagne, and you've got the perfect evening!

Is that how you'll be spending your Valentine's night, then?

Very possibly – but if my husband cooks me dinner beforehand, I really will be in heaven!