

WINTER SANTA

Sali Hughes sniffs out Crimble's cool gift scents. Now all you need is a nice boyfriend to buy you everything on your Christmas wish list

a Christmas is traditionally a truly dreadful time for grooming. Come Christmas Eve, your local Boots will be rammed to the rafters with defeated mothers clamouring for a drop of Davidoff Cool Water with free towel bale for their oldest, trying to convince themselves that, "well, it's practical too, isn't it?". Bless 'em. Worse still, on December 25th in houses all over the nation, the only thing more potent than Christmas spirit is the Tabac after-shave and soap-on-a-rope gift pack bestowed upon you by your Auntie Jean. You graciously spritz it on for the waiting masses, only to choke on your mince pie when you realise that it could quite effectively strip floors. But there is hope for the long-time receiver of horrid smells and their offensive gifts-with-purchase. This year, there are leagues of fragrant alternatives that won't have to spend Boxing Day onwards repelling moths at the back of your wardrobe.

A no-risk choice for someone who likes to present his family with the minimum number of options, is **Christian Dior's Higher**. It's a light, unobtrusive and very wearable scent in a very Hedi Slimane-esque aluminium canister, and best of all, it's available in department stores everywhere.

Thierry Mugler's Cologne is another shiny gem, with the added bonus that its very large splash bottle will make Aunt Maude feel like she's getting more bang for her buck.

If you like to take a step back from the gazillion-dollar mega-brands and keep it indie, then indulge in the new fragrance from Trendy-Wendy grooming brand **Zirh**, as worn by the *Friends* and *Ally McBeal* boys. You'll be able to wear it safe in the knowledge that no one will pass you on New Year's Eve and say 'God, who's wearing Obsession/Fahrenheit/Opium?'. Another well kept secret is **Hombre des Flores** by niche brand **Fresh**, a high glam, cut-glass bottle of liquid sophistication. Also frightfully cool is the classic **Acqua Di Parma**, a low-key classic that you can never quite put your finger on when some gorgeous man walks into a room wearing it. Both are available at cult emporium **Space NK**.

You should, of course, include some low-cost options for Santas on a short leash. And the good news is there are inexpensive stocking-fillers aplenty for little boys who have been very good all year. Madonna's high street hangout **Lush** has gorgeously sinful hand-made soaps and bath bombs that smell, to quote Helen Adams, 'lush'. For less than a fiver of your granny's pension, **Original Source's** new aromatherapy body sprays

will revive your flagging Christmas spirit and make even the Queen's speech seem exhilarating.

Aromapharmacy's painfully hip candles (disguised as tranquilliser bottles) are also cheap and chic, and guarantee that your two-up-two-down will smell like the boudoirs of fellow Aromapharmacy fans Robbie Williams and Leonardo Di Caprio. Which we love, obviously.

If money is no object to your benefactors, then our advice is to exploit their kindness and ask for a glorious crystal flacon of **Lalique Pour Homme**, which as an added bonus, smells out of this world.

Jo Malone perfumes and colognes are another way to flash the cash - our favourite is the shamelessly carnal **Tuberose Cologne**. The most expensive men's fragrance in the world, Guerlain's **Mouchoir de Monsieur**, also smells utterly divine, and gives today's pretenders a real run for their (lack of) money. Most decadent of all is a bespoke personalised fragrance from exclusive perfumer **Miller Harris**, priced from £1,000. If this seems unachievable, then get creative - let's face it, Christmas is always a good time to enrol a Sugar Daddy, before politely letting him go in time for the New Year's Eve pulling fest. JOKE.

And what of the women in your life? Right or wrong, as a gay man in a sea of straights, who think kitchen appliances make romantic gifts, you will almost certainly be relied upon to inject some glamour into your mum's Christmas stockings. Give your mother an antidote to the menopause with ultra-hip perfume du jour, **Nu by Tom Ford for Yves Saint Laurent**, a sweet, fruity, beautifully packaged number, which is high in cache and off the Richter scale in glamour. Female sidekicks and siblings will go mad for **Chanel's new Coco Mademoiselle**, little sister of the classic Coco and an obligatory accessory for budding ingenues.

And finally, if you're still not sure which fragrance to put on your Christmas list, then there is one fail-safe option. There is simply no better smell on a Yuletide morning than an enormous bottle of Baileys. At £12.99, it's a cheapo winner guaranteed to get you through the day's festivities, even as you're unwrapping that fantastically lovely Old Spice bathrobe.

Photography by Nigel Spalding

Styling by Richard Bence

Model: Olof Perrson @ Models 1 Men

Embroidered 'Sailor' jumper by Dries van Noten

Lalique Pour Homme Crystal Falcon EDP is

£425 for 100ml

