

BEAUTY

Here's how candles lead the wellness industry during the pandemic

With the global population left homebound for the better part of the past two years, here's how we found comfort in scented candles

BY HASINA KHATIB

Once the remit of last-minute, hastily-wrapped housewarming gifts, candles have had the glow-up of a century over the course of two years. Further proof can be found in the numbers, with [reports](#) stating that 49% of scent shoppers used their go-to fragrances less often in 2020, but 85% used home scents in the same time period, with candles leading the category. So, how did the needle move from gifting and decor to wellness essential for the candle industry? We investigate.

Let there be light: How candles became the unlikely hero of the lockdown

Abigail Cook Stone, co-founder and CEO of Otherland, believes that the extended periods of lockdown have altered the way we view candles. “The events of the past year have made us crave feel-good things to look forward to, such as the anticipation of receiving a package in the mail, the joy of unboxing a candle, popping the lid and taking that first whiff of a new scent. More than ever before, people have witnessed the need to unwind and create an experience at home to spark joy. Scent is the strongest trigger of memory, and when we can tap into this, it brings feelings of comfort, safety and joy,” she says.

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The notion is seconded by Astha Suri, founder and creative director of NASO Profumi, who confirms that candles have witnessed a boom during the pandemic. “The extended periods of stay-at-home have made us invest in ourselves and pay attention to the space and the aura we choose to surround ourselves with,” she says. She believes that the therapeutic benefits of essential oils used in candles have a major role to play in wellness. “We’ve witnessed that healing candles are welcomed by youngsters who are adapting to the work-from-home landscape. Our tamarind and bergamot blend eases anxiety and soothes the mind, while the Indian herb, *imli* makes for an unconventional companion with Italian bergamot to aid concentration,” she adds.

How candles helped us rediscover our zen during the pandemic

If you've walked out of the lockdowns of the past two years with a newfound addiction to scented candles, there is a deeper reason for it. Pooja Khera, a certified well-being and happiness coach, believes that the lockdown was a period of introspection. "People realised the importance of going back to eating right, focusing on emotional bonds and the overall importance of mental and emotional balance in life. Against this backdrop, scented candles emerged as the new go-to for accomplishing peace in your mind, body and soul," she observes.

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Further proof of the sway that candles hold over our psyche can be found with leading beauty blogger, Malvika Sitlani. For the launch of her label, MASIC Beauty, she chose to eschew popular makeup basics in favour of this humble staple. “Candles are wellness in a jar,” she declares, and adds, “During the lockdown, I have come to realise that self-care doesn’t have to be an expensive affair. The easiest way to take time out for yourself is to change your ambience and make your surroundings cosy and warm by lighting a candle.” And during the launch of her label, she had a chance to put the theory to the test. “I remember a particularly overwhelming day when we were stressing about building the website, figuring out logistics and coming up with product names. We decided to take a break and light one of the candles that had just come in from a batch of samples and now, it has become my go-to ritual for unwinding after a long day,” she signs off.