

The Burren Perfumery in Carron, Ireland

The country's most dramatic terrain, the windswept Burren National Park, is the improbable home of an enchanting family-run perfume shop. *By Devorah Lev-Tov*



ON A GRAY DAY in County Clare, Ireland, I drove down a narrow road in the Burren National Park, a strange landscape where green grass and plumes of wildflowers grow between endless swaths of steely limestone scraped bare by glaciers. At the edge of that world—close to the Atlantic, hidden among trees—sit a few small stone buildings clustered around a courtyard. This is the Burren Perfumery, where owner Sadie Chownen concocts fragrances, cosmetics, and candles inspired by the environment. The workshop was founded in 1972 by a poet who'd studied in Grasse, the French fragrance capital. Chownen fell in love with the place 20 years ago, while designing and planting in the garden. After training as a perfumer, she bought the business in 2001.

As it began to drizzle, I ducked into the main shop. Neat rows of oils, balms, and perfumes lined the shelves, their bottles decorated with hand-drawn botanicals. Uncapping one bottle, I inhaled notes of orchid followed by the woody damp of ferns and lichens; another, grassy and sweet, transported me to a sunny meadow. My

favorite fragrance was a bright, briny mixture of citrus and the sea.

When the rain stopped, I stepped outside and headed around a bend. Moss-covered trees loomed above the slick stone path. I passed the soap room, where a gray-haired woman poured molten beeswax into tins. At the entrance to the herb garden, I paused at a round stone, set into the ground and surrounded by a circle of smooth rocks. Standing in its center felt eerie, like I'd stumbled on some talismanic Celtic monument. Down the path, herbs and plants peeked over the low walls. Sage, mint, tarragon; wispy ferns and pale roses. And moss, so much velvety moss. This was the Ireland I had pictured, but I didn't think it actually existed.

The dreamlike moment gave way to easy comfort in the bubblegum-colored tearoom. A smiling waiter in a pink apron served me tea and a slice of fruitcake soaked in Irish porter. I sipped and ate, savoring the scent of chamomile shot through with whiffs of perfume from a workshop next door. My Ireland, found. burrenperfumery.com. ✕