

# LOUISVILLE LIFE

Jackie Zykan is a professional bourbon blender who has taken that skill and mixes perfume made from bourbon - the perfect fragrance for Derby called Odu Oak. MICHAEL CLEVENGER/COURIER JOURNAL



Louisville bourbon blender creates whiskey-based perfume

## WEARABLE WHISKEY

Kirby Adams Louisville Courier Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK

Walk into a rickhouse where bourbon barrels are aged or simply place your nose into a glass and take a whiff. • That unmistakable scent of bourbon is what inspired Jackie Zykan, a professional bourbon blender and master taster for some of Kentucky’s most notable brands, to create a line of wearable perfume scents based on the aromatic profile bourbon whiskey derives from the barrel. • “I can’t begin to count the number of times people would walk into a barrel tasting and I would hear someone say, ‘I wish I could just bottle that smell,’” Zykan told the Courier Journal. “I’d think to myself bourbon does smell amazing. Why can’t we capture this?” See **PERFUME**, Page 6C

## Kentucky native Carly Pearce heads home on tour



**Lifestyles**  
Kirby Adams  
Louisville Courier Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Taylor Mill, Kentucky native Carly Pearce has added Grammy Award winner to her already dazzling resume.

The country music singer-songwriter, who is currently on tour with her pal Blake Shelton and will be performing in Louisville this month, told the Courier-Journal her win at the 65th Grammy Awards in February was the icing on the cake during a multi-year run of accom-

plishments, accolades, and awards. “This is a really wonderful time in my life,” Pearce said. “It’s really hard to put into words what it is like to have everything you have ever wanted in your life to have happened. I am just feeling very, very blessed.”

Winning the Grammy for Best Country Duo/Group Performance for her duet with Ashley McBryde cemented the duo’s place in history. Pearce and McBryde are the first female pairing to win the Grammy with their chart-topping hit “Never Wanted To Be That Girl.”

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Carly Pearce is currently on tour with her pal Blake Shelton and will be performing in Louisville this month.  
ANTHONY MERRIWEATHER/TENNESSEAN.COM

# Perfume

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## Meet ODU Oak, a bourbon-based line of eau de parfums

Adept at using her sense of taste to blend the amber liquid housed within oak barrels, Zykan was already ahead of the curve in developing her bourbon-based eau de parfum, ODU Oak, when it came to understanding bourbon's inherent notes of vanilla, spice, fruit, herb, florals, and more.

"Brands will tell me what they want a product to taste like and using the inventory, I go through and puzzle piece the flavor profile together," Zykan told the Courier Journal. "I was born with a really sensitive palate and I have developed it further through years of practice."

But developing a nose for blending perfume required Zykan to learn a skill different from her talent for tasting and blending whiskey.

"There is a much different technique that goes into building aromatics," she said. "I started studying perfumery with a woman in California and started playing with the technique of using whiskey as the base with fragrance oils on top of that."

She named her line of bourbon-based eau de parfum ODU Oak for the oak barrels used in the whiskey-making process.

## How this bourbon master taster captures 'one moment in a bottle'

As if wearing a perfume based on bourbon isn't enough fun, each of her eight bespoke scents is created from a moment when Zykan was personally drinking bourbon.

"Whether positive or negative, it doesn't matter. Some of them are super silly," Zykan said. "I have taken in all the different elements of that experience and captured them into one moment in a bottle."

Hand-produced in a spare room in her St. Matthews home, the bourbon blender-turned-perfumer formulates each new blend using fragrance strips to test out scent blends. She drops the scented oil on a strip of paper and then waves it under her nose like a fan to see how the different scents work together. Also important is whether or not the blend evokes the memory of the experience she is trying to recreate.

The process has yielded winning formulations including the number one seller, "Walk of Shame." The uni-sex fragrances also include "Love and Whiskey," "Feral Gent" and "Mint Julep," which Zykan said, "smells like someone you just ran into at the Kentucky Derby and you give them a hug and feel the texture of their Seersucker suit. It's the whole vibe."

Another popular scent is Dice, which "smells like a woman who dates younger," Zykan laughs. "She has been around if you know what I mean. You always know which wine glass is hers because her lipstick is smeared on the rim and she always needs a refill."



Odu Oak fragrances created by Jackie Zykan blended with bourbon. PHOTOS BY MICHAEL CLEVENGER/COURIER JOURNAL

"Blue Jay" is the scent of a man with a beard on a boat. "Hiker Trash" embodies the aroma of the comfortable confidence of being pretty without makeup. "Sun Moon Venus" is the fragrance of the moment you truly realize your goals and your desires and have full permission to change whenever your heart says so.

"I'll start with an idea of whatever I want to capture like — I was on a hike and I ate an oatmeal cookie and there was a scent of a certain flower on the trail," Zykan said. "I add the whiskey with the flavor profile that compliments the fragrance combination and then it will need to sit from a couple of weeks to a couple of months as it all blends together."

## Where can I buy ODU Oak?

For those who can't decide which fragrance speaks most to them, Zykan sells sampler boxes called the "Roadie Set" which include a variety of four, 3-mL roll-on bottles perfect for travel or to kick off your next adventure. These small bottles are definitely a conversation starter and perfect to toss into your purse or pocket for the Kentucky Oaks or Kentucky Derby, held this year on May 6 at the iconic Churchill Downs racetrack.

The ODU Oak full-sized atomizer (30 mL) or roll-on (15 mL) are \$40 and can be found online at [oduoak.com](http://oduoak.com) or locally at:

- Dot Fox, 1567 Bardstown Road
- Revelry Boutique and Gallery, 742 E. Market St.
- Kentucky Peerless Distilling Co.,



Jackie Zykan hand-produces Odu Oak in a spare room in her St. Matthews home.

120 N 10th St.

- Forage, 1201 Goss Ave.
- Frazier History Museum, 829 W. Market St.
- Never Say Die Bar, 3900 Shelbyville Road
- Kentucky Derby Museum, 704 Central Ave.

Whether you dab or spritz a splash of "Walk of Shame," "Mint Julep" or "Dice," a bottle of ODU Oak eau de parfum is

like dousing yourself in bourbon but with a way more interesting back story.

"Creating a fragrance is very much like whiskey because they are both a game of patience," Zykan said. "Everyone has to hang out in the bottle or a barrel for a period of time to get to know each other and when it's done, I send it on its way."

Reach features reporter Kirby Adams at [kadams@courier-journal.com](mailto:kadams@courier-journal.com).

# Pearce

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Raised in Northern Kentucky, Pearce left at 16 to pursue a music career, performing at Dollywood in Tennessee before moving to Nashville. While she hasn't lived in the Bluegrass State since she was a teenager, Pearce said her Kentucky roots have made her the successful award-winning musician she is today.

"To me, it's where I found my love of music and my dream of becoming a country music artist. It's where I learned how to be myself," Pearce told the Courier Journal. "So many wonderful artists have come from Kentucky and influenced me, Loretta Lynn, Ricky Skaggs, Patty Loveless, Bill Monroe, The Judds, Chris Stapleton — I feel like they have shaped me into who I am."

Here's what to know about Pearce's upcoming tour, and her thoughts on Chris Stapleton's rendition of the National Anthem at Super Bowl LXII.

## When will Carly Pearce, Blake Shelton perform in Louisville?

Even before her Grammy win, Pearce needed to find a larger trophy case. She was honored as one of CMT's 2022 Artists of The Year, she is the reigning ACM/CMA Awards Female Artist/Vocalist of the Year and a Grand Ole Opry member — fittingly invited by Dolly Parton.

Pearce will release her first live al-



Carly Pearce honored in her hometown of Taylor Mill, Kentucky. ALEXA CAMPBELL

bum, "29: Written in Stone (Live from Music City)" while on tour with Blake Shelton. The Kentucky native's album drops on March 24, a couple of weeks after the "Back to the Honky Tonk Tour" stops in Louisville for a show on March

9.

"I love coming home to Kentucky. It's always a wonderful feeling to be back here," she said. "I am just really excited to be coming home and to be performing in Louisville."

The multi-city tour kicked off on Feb. 16 in Lincoln, Nebraska, and makes its only stop in the Bluegrass State at the KFC YUM Center. Pearce told the Courier Journal fans can expect to hear a lot of songs off her new album when she takes the stage.

## How to get tickets to see Carly Pearce in Louisville with Blake Shelton

"Back to the Honky Tonk Tour" takes place Thursday, March, 9 at 7 p.m. at KFC YUM Center, 1 Arena Plaza. Tickets range from \$30 to \$249 at [Ticketmaster.com](http://Ticketmaster.com). For information, visit [kfcyumcenter.com](http://kfcyumcenter.com).

## What Carly Pearce thought of Chris Stapleton's National Anthem performance

Pearce wasn't surprised by the outpouring of support from fans who were blown away by Kentucky native Chris Stapleton's soulful rendition of the National Anthem at Super Bowl LXII. Pearce told the Courier Journal that Stapleton, an eight-time Grammy award winner and influence in her own musical career, was simply himself.

"He wasn't trying to be anything but authentic to himself and I think that really resonated with people," she said. "I think we all want to be real and write real music and that is an area where Kentucky artists really excel."

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