

Charleston & Harlow

A handcrafted scent journey

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For thousands of years, being a chandler or candlemaker meant that you had an important, in-demand, specialized position. However, as we moved towards the end of the nineteenth-century all that changed. As other light sources became available and ultimately when the light bulb was invented, the job of a candlemaker became less relevant and the product less of a necessity.

With a creative, energized entrepreneurial spirit Jeff Reimer and Andrea Varcoe, however, have recently revitalized the Canadian candle industry and put their home-grown, local company on the centre stage.

The company, Charleston + Harlow, has become well known across North America for their premium candles. All of their products are handmade by Andrea and Jeff in their downtown Brandon studio using the finest plant-based ingredients.

With an artistic flair, Andrea had been looking for an outlet to channel her creativity. Jeff, being self-employed, saw opportunity in this genre, as there was a lot of issues with candles in general, but more-so with this new “natural” fragrance movement. The desire to create something better to fulfill their own personal love of fragrance led to this shared passion.

The idea to start making candles originated while traveling through the Balkans. As they travelled and explored other countries, the couple kept noticing the unique fragrances of various plants that they had never smelt before in person was the thing they kept talking about; it was the memory trigger. They commented on how it would be wonderful to be able to bring home such fragrances as you would a souvenir, a photo, or sand in a bottle. This idea of capturing a scent that would invoke special memories of wonderful vacations translated into trying their hand at becoming candlemakers.

After a few months of testing, researching and sourcing top of the line products, the newly developed Charleston + Harlow candles were officially launched in the summer of 2016.

These one-of-a-kind candles are made of Canadian-grown, pure soy wax, clean-burning cotton wicks, as well as the finest selection of plant-based, skin-safe fragrance and essential oils. They do not use any preservatives or additives and are non-toxic. Much of the development time was spent on perfecting the burn time and the longevity and consistency of how the fragrance is emitted. The product line includes an array of everyday scents such as Blushing Magnolia, A Perfect Pear



Quick Facts

- The company was established summer 2016
- Charleston & Harlow candles were included in Oscar nominee gift bags at the Academy Awards event in March 2018 and the 76th Golden Globes in January 2019
- Charlow, Darling! boutique gift shop opened in Downtown Brandon's beautifully restored historic Bass building fall of 2018
- The company's one of a kind candles are mixed, poured, labeled, and packaged by hand in their Downtown Brandon studio



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and Moscato Mondays. They also introduce seasonal products throughout the year. In addition to candles, they offer a wide selection of other personal and home fragrance options such as perfume oils and room sprays.

Andrea and Jeff single-handedly mix, pour, and package their own products in small-batches to maintain freshness and quality. They also manage all other aspects of the business including sales, accounting, graphic design, marketing, and promotions. The business has grown primarily through online and direct market sales, although Charleston + Harlow pop-up stores are seen throughout the province at trade shows and artisan markets.

The company was fortunate to have received star power recognition just a year and a half after launching their initial product line. As a result of favourable social media posts, they were invited to supply their product for guests of the 90th edition of the Academy Awards. As a result, their sought-after candles were included in gift bags for Oscar nominees at the star-studded event in March 2018. They were also provided in the gift bags at the 76th Golden Globes in January 2019.

While they were carefully creating and packaging their product to ship to Los Angeles, the business partners were also working on setting up a permanent retail location and moving their studio. It's Charlow, Darling! is a boutique gift shop that opened in the summer of 2018, complementing their already robust e-commerce, wholesale, and direct market sales.

In addition, they've continued to expand their product offerings. And, as such, the duo has dedicated a lot of time and effort into the research and development of an all-natural skincare line that includes bath salts, bath milk, facial products (cleansers, serums, toner, moisturizers, and exfoliant), men's grooming, as well as lip care. These products were launched in the fall of 2018.

As for the answer to the question the duo is asked most frequently, their brand is named after two of their French Bulldogs! Names and stories come naturally to these two, and the naming of their brand came to them within minutes of conjuring the idea to try their hand at a fragrance business.

Andrea and Jeff have plans to further expand their product line and explore other distribution channels. They are confident that having a solid, home base in downtown Brandon will help to reinforce positive business growth for their new company.

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