

4711 | THE EAU DE COLOGNE



Whether you want healing miracle water, a hint of fresh perfume on a handkerchief or a souvenir from Cologne: 4711 ORIGINAL

EAU DE COLOGNE is synonymous with well-groomed freshness all over the world. Besides, apart from the cathedral, it is the most famous symbol of the city on the Rhine. When a French corporal wrote the number 4711 on a house wall in Cologne in 1796, nobody could suspect what significance this series of numbers would one day have. The corporal was acting on orders from the occupying French forces, who wanted all the houses in the city to be numbered sequentially. It was the house of the Mülhens family in Glockengasse that was given number 4711.

It was here that businessman Wilhelm Mülhens had celebrated his wedding four years earlier and received an innocuous-looking piece of paper as a present. The Carthusian monk Franz Farina had given him the recipe for his “aqua mirabilis”, a healing miracle water. Before long, he had set up a little factory in his house to make this fragrant distillate that was used as a medical cure-all and to clean and refresh the face. He marketed it as “Kölnisch Wasser” (Eau de Cologne) under the company name “Franz Maria Farina – Klöckergasse No. 4711 in Cöln a.R.”

However, the name Farina was not exactly destined to catch the eye on the market. There were more than 50 different Eau de Cologne producers trading under this name at one time or another. So it was a clever move to put the emphasis on the house number. It was Ferdinand Mülhens, the grandson of the company founder, who came up with the idea of using the number as the trademark for his Eau de Cologne, and it rapidly became recognised around the world. In 1875, he registered the number 4711 as a trademark and placed it in the middle of the blue and gold bottle label, which was designed in 1839.

In conjunction with what was known as a “Molanus” bottle, the typical 4711 bottle which was named after its inventor Peter Heinrich Molanus, this gave the product a good recognition value, which is

a basic prerequisite for establishing a brand. The clever use of modern advertising and sales methods meant the brand could compensate for heavy losses caused by both world wars and make it one of the best known refreshing scents on the market today.

The exact composition of 4711 ECHT KÖLNISCH WASSER is still a secret today. When Napoleon ordered the disclosure of all medication recipes in 1810, the guild of Eau de Cologne manufacturers put one over on the occupiers and started selling their distillates as refreshing water for external use. The 4711 recipe is based on natural essences and oils, but is only known to a privileged few. And, like the bottle and the label, it is still timeless and unchanged today and yet current and dynamic as a brand.

Since 1997, 4711 ECHT KÖLNISCH WASSER has been distributed under the umbrella of Cosmopolitan Cosmetics GmbH. The company, which belongs to the Wella Group, is not only the market leader in Germany, but is among the world’s top perfume manufacturers. With some 35 subsidiaries and over 100 sales partners, and with perfumes and care product ranges from A for “Anna Sui” to Y for “Yardley”, Cosmopolitan Cosmetics has a presence in 150 countries worldwide. Around 35 per cent of turnover already comes from Asia and the American market.

The young international company has converted the old house no. 4711 in Glockengasse in Cologne into a modern presentation platform – combining tradition with contemporary freshness in the same way as it does for its Eau de Cologne. The introduction of various bodycare products has allowed the original use of the brand – i.e. refreshment – to be logically tailored to the current market. But, despite all this, the brand has remained true to itself: both the perfume and the design are clearly recognisable as 4711 ECHT KÖLNISCH WASSER products.



Company name
Cosmopolitan
Cosmetics GmbH

Classic product
4711 Echt Kölnisch
Wasser (since 1792)

Employees
2,500 worldwide

Distribution
in 150 countries

Annual sales
843 million euros
(2003 financial year)

Main production sites
Cologne/Germany
and Poissy/France