

# aroma crafting: the art of blending oils

Our sense of smell is one of the most primitive senses and research has shown that we are more sensitive to smell than we are to taste. Smell triggers our strongest memories. Aroma crafting brings yet another avenue for creativity to soap making.

There is a vast array of essential and synthetic fragrance oils available to use for aroma crafting. Synthetic oils do not offer any therapeutic benefits but capture fragrances not found in nature, thus extending the fragrance palette. Highly concentrated scenting materials are needed to scent your soap.

Essential oils have been used medicinally and as perfumes for centuries. They contribute beneficial properties to soaps as they can be antifungal, antibacterial, sleep inducing, can stimulate the mind, or be calming. They are the volatile, aromatic components of barks, berries, leaves, flowers, fruits, seeds, mosses, resins, twigs and stems of plants and each plant has its own unique characteristics. Research has shown that there are over a thousand different chemical compounds in the range of essential oils and many more still to be identified. They are highly concentrated medicinal compounds that should not be used neat on the skin or taken internally.

Crafting wonderful aromas for your soap creations will take a little practice so you will need to keep notes of everything. You can develop your aromas very simply by using a couple of oils or with complexity by using a wide assortment. If you are just starting out it is best to keep it simple while building your confidence.

Blending scents to achieve a balanced fragrance takes some practice and lots of experimentation. You need a small selection of essential oils to start. To get a balanced composition you need to ensure that your selection includes what I refer to as top, middle and base notes.

The top notes are the first impression of the fragrance; middle notes are the heart notes and base notes provide the foundation on which the fragrance anchors. Just get creative, break the rules and have fun! Remember to keep copious notes.

## equipment

You will need the following:

- a small glass beaker
- a glass stirring rod
- measuring cups
- measuring spoons
- glass droppers
- glass funnel
- glass bottles
- labels
- a collection of essential/fragrance oils

Choose good quality essential oils from a reputable supplier, see *resources* page 159. Blending the oils is similar to the beautiful musical composition of a symphony orchestra using its top, middle and base notes. Select oils from each category to ensure a balanced aroma. The best results are achieved by becoming familiar with the characteristics of the essential oils and testing the combinations to your personal taste. The recipes shared in this book have their own unique scents and were crafted by the author.

## top notes

These are the volatile oils, those that are smelt first within the blend and tend to evaporate first. This includes fruits, citruses and the essential oils from the leaves and herb groups.

## middle or heart notes

These oils are less volatile than the top notes; they give the blend fullness or body, making it rounded and harmonious. Most essential oils extracted from seeds and flowers fall into this category.

## base notes

These oils evaporate very slowly; give completeness to a blend and tend to be deep and intense. Most oils extracted from barks, roots, resins and wood fall into this category.

I have listed below, a few oils to help you choose oils for blending.

**allspice (*Pimenta dioica*)**

This oil offers a spicy scent and straddles the three notes. It blends well with citrus, florals, fruits, ginger, woods and spices.

**almond (bitter) (*Prunus dulcis*)**

This oil is a middle note with a marzipan scent. It blends well with citrus, florals, fruits, resins, vanilla and woods.

**basil (*Ocimum basilicum*)**

This oil combines middle and top notes with a sweet, spicy, green scent and balsamic undertone. It blends well with bergamot, clary sage, citronella, lime, geranium, oakmoss, cedarwood and sandalwood.

**benzoin (*Styrax benzoin*)**

This is a base note with a sweet, warm aroma and acts as a fixative for other oils. It blends well with cinnamon, florals and spices.

**bergamot (*Citrus bergamia*)**

This is a top note with a fresh, light, fruity scent. It blends well with citrus, florals, palmarosa, pines, spices, vanilla and woods.

**black pepper (*Piper nigrum*)**

This oil has a warm spicy scent and is used mainly as a middle or heart note. It blends well with citrus, florals, pines, resins and woods.

**cedarwood (*Cidrus atlantica*)**

This base oil has a deep, sweet, woody scent. It blends well with clary sage, frankincense, florals, pines and vetiver.

**cinnamon (*Cinnmomum zeylanicum*)**

Cinnamon leaf, with its warm spicy scent, can be used as a top, middle and base note. It is best to add at light 'trace' as it tends to make the soap mixture seize (see troubleshooting, page 82). It blends well with benzoin, citrus, frankincense and ylang ylang.

**citronella (*Cymbopogon nardus*)**

This strong, lemon-scented oil is used mainly as a top note. It blends well with cedarwood, geranium and pines.

**clary sage (*Salvia sclarea*)**

This oil adds a sweet mellow scent to a blend and is used mainly as a fixative. It blends well with citrus, florals, pines, resins, spices and woods.

**clove bud (*Zyzygium aromaticum*)**

This essential oil offers a sweet spicy scent and is used as both top and heart notes. It blends well with citrus, geranium, florals, mints and spices.

**eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*)**

This oil has a camphoric, woody scent and is used as a top note. It blends well with cedarwood, citrus, pines, lavender, mints, rosemary and thyme.

**frankincense (*Boswellia thurifera*)**

This oil has a sweet, warm and rich scent and is used as a base note. It blends well with basil, camphor, cinnamon, citrus, geranium, sandalwood, spices and vetiver.

**geranium (*Pelargonium graveolens*)**

This has a delicate rosy scent and is used as heart and top notes. It blends well with cedarwood, citrus, clove, juniper, lavender and patchouli.

**ginger (*Zingiber officinale*)**

This oil has a pungently warm, spicy scent and is used as a middle note. It blends well with citrus, florals, fruits, resins and woods.

**juniper berry (*Juniperus communis*)**

This oil has a clear, sweet, honey, pine scent that is used to add a woody base note. It blends well with benzoin, cedarwood, citrus, clary sage, geranium, pines, rosemary and vetiver.

**lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*)**

This oil has a sweet floral, herbaceous scent that is used as a top and middle note. It blends well with most oils.

**lemongrass (*Cymbopogon citratus*)**

This oil has a pungently sweet, fresh, lemon scent and is used as a top note. It blends well with benzoin, citrus, eucalyptus, fennel, geranium, lavender, sandalwood, vanilla, vertiver and ylang ylang.

**may chang (*Litsea cubeba*)**

This oil has a sweet, fruity, lemon fragrance and is used as a top note. It blends well with citrus, florals, fruits, woods and spices.

**neroli (*Citrus aurantium*)**

This oil has a light sweet floral scent and is used for middle and top notes. It blends well with benzoin, citrus, geranium, lavender, rose and ylang ylang.

**nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*)**

This versatile, aromatic spice oil straddles all three notes. It blends well with bay, citrus, geranium, lavender, oakmoss and spice.

**oakmoss (*Evernia prunastri*)**

Oakmoss imparts a deep, earthy, woody scent and is used as a base note. It blends well with citrus, florals, pines and woods.

**palmarosa (*Cymbopogon martini*)**

This oil offers a sweet floral rosy scent and is used as a middle or heart note. It blends well with amyris, cedarwood, citrus, florals, rosewood and sandalwood.

**patchouli (*Pogostemon cablin*)**

This oil has a rich, sweet, musty, earthy scent and is used as a base oil. It blends well with citrus, florals, geranium, woods and juniper.

**peppermint (*Mentha piperita*)**

This oil is refreshingly overpowering with a camphoric scent and is used for middle and top notes. It blends well with benzoin, citrus, eucalyptus, lavender and mints.

**rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)**

This oil has a fresh, herbaceous, minty, balsamic scent and is used as a middle note. It blends well with citrus, lavender, pine and thyme.

**sandalwood (*Santalum album*)**

This oil offers a deep, warm, woody scent and is used as a base note. It blends well with citrus, florals, woods and spices.

**star anise (*Illicium verum*)**

Star anise is named from the stellate form of its fruit, which is often chewed in small quantities after a meal to promote digestion and sweeten the breath. It has a spicy anise scent that is used as a middle and top note. It blends well with citrus, florals, lavender and pines.

**tea tree (*Melaleuca alternifolia*)**

This oil offers a clear, fresh, camphoric scent and is used as a top note. It blends well with citrus, geranium, herbs, lavender and pines.

**tonka bean (*Coumarouna odorata*)**

This oil imparts an odour of coumarin (new mown hay) and is used in perfumery as a fixative. It blends well with citrus, florals, resins and woods.

**vanilla (*Vanilla panifolia*)**

This oil offers a deep, rich, sweet, creamy scent and is used as a base note. It blends well with citrus, florals, resins and woods.

**verbena (*Lippia citriodora*)**

This oil offers a fresh, clear, lemon scent and is used as a middle and top note. It blends well with citrus, florals, resins, spices and woods.

**vetiver (*Vetiveria zizanoides*)**

This oil imparts a deep, earthy, smoky, woody scent and is used as a base note. It blends well with citrus, florals, resins, spices and woods.

**wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*)**

This oil has a strong minty aroma and is used as a top note. Use this oil with caution. It blends well with citrus, herbs and pines.

**ylang ylang (*Cananga odorata*)**

This oil offers an intensely rich, sweet, balsamic, jasmine-like scent and can be used alone as a single scent. It blends well with citrus, florals, resins, spices and woods.