Making Loose Herbal Incense

Materials needed:
Incense recipe (or just use a pinch of this and a pinch of that!)
Fragrant herbs, spices, woods, resins (dried plant sap), essential or fragrance oils, etc.
Mortar and pestle or blender (dedicated for incense use only; don’t use for food after making incense!)
Glass or other non-reactive mixing container
Measuring/weighing devices (measuring cups, spoons; digital scale)
Charcoal tablets
Forcing/tweezers for holding charcoal when lighting
Lighter or other flame source
Dish with sand or ash for fire/heatproof substrate
Glass or other non-reactive container with tight cap for storage if making more than you intend to use at once
Notebook or other method of keeping records of experiments

Basic Recipe¹
- 1 part* resin
- 3-4 parts dried botanicals and/or wood powder
- 1 drop essential or fragrance oil per teaspoon dry mixture (optional)

Basic Procedure²
- Measure ingredients by weight or volume
- Grind each ingredient separately to consistency of coarse sand or powder, as desired
  - Resins and gums
    - Freeze gums and resins for 15-30 minutes (or longer if very soft) before grinding
  - Woods
    - Chip to rice-size using hammer and chisel, then grind
  - Herbs, spices, flowers
    - Pulverize dried botanicals in mortar and pestle or grinder
  - Fruit
    - Citrus peel—grate using microplane grater, then dry; grind dried peel if desired
- Pre-test each ingredient for fragrance when burned—some may not be pleasant!
- Mix, recording quantities of each component used
  - Grind a bit more to help merge the scents
- Heat and test
  - Incense charcoal in sand- or ash-filled incense burner
    - Hold charcoal with tweezers to ignite one edge and place on bed of sand
      - Ready to use when red-hot and uniformly light gray all over, ≈ 5 minutes
    - Sprinkle directly on charcoal, beside it, or heat in a foil cup
      - Burning produces large amounts of smoke; indirect heating releases fragrance more slowly
  - Make any adjustments, recording changes, until satisfied with the result
- Scoop finished mixture into a glass or unglazed ceramic jar, seal, label, and let it stand in a cool dark place overnight (or longer) to blend fragrances into one complex aroma
- Enjoy!

¹ Sams, Tina, “With Loose Incense, We Are All Artisans.” The Essential Herbal; http://theessentialherbal.blogspot.com/2013/08/with-loose-incense-we-are-all-artisans.html
Suggestions for Natural Incense Materials to Grow or Purchase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural Incense Materials</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anise, star</td>
<td>Lemon Peel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Basil</td>
<td>Marjoram</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bay laurel</td>
<td>Myrrh (resin)</td>
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<td>Benzoin (resin)</td>
<td>Nettle</td>
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<td>Carnation</td>
<td>Nutmeg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catnip</td>
<td>Orange Peel</td>
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<td>Cedarwood</td>
<td>Patchouli</td>
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<td>Chamomile</td>
<td>Peppermint</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cinnamon</td>
<td>Pine needles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clove</td>
<td>Piñon pine resin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Copal (resin)</td>
<td>Plumeria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coriander</td>
<td>Rose</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dill</td>
<td>Rosemary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dragon’s blood (resin)</td>
<td>Sage – desert</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eucalyptus</td>
<td>Sage – white</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frankincense (resin)</td>
<td>Sandalwood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gardenia</td>
<td>Spearmint</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geranium</td>
<td>Sweetgrass</td>
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<td>Ginger</td>
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<td>Hibiscus</td>
<td>Thyme</td>
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<td>Hyacinth</td>
<td>Turmeric</td>
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<td>Jasmine</td>
<td>Valerian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juniper berries</td>
<td>Vanilla</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lavender</td>
<td>Vetiver</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lemon Balm</td>
<td>Violet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lemongrass</td>
<td>Wintergreen</td>
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</tbody>
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Optional: Essential oils of various kinds to add to mixture of botanicals.

Other resources:


Please note: Most people can make and use incense with no untoward effects, but some, especially those with hay fever, asthma, or certain skin problems, may have adverse reactions to the ingredients or the smoke. And be aware of the fire hazard when using incense: smoldering incense improperly contained can ignite your furniture, drapes, or other flammable things in the home. It’s best to keep incense and fire out of the reach of children and pets.³

Some Sample Recipes

Frankincense and Lavender Incense Recipe
*A cleansing and purifying blend that soothes the mind and body*
- ¼ ounce frankincense
- 1 ounce lavender
- 1 ounce rosemary
- ½ ounce sandalwood powder

Intention Setting Incense Recipe
*This blend helps you feel optimistic, passionate, and focused on your intentions*
- 1 ounce frankincense resin
- ½ tsp crushed cloves
- 10 drops orange essential oil

Four Thieves Incense Recipe
*Based on the legend of a medieval recipe from the plague years in Europe; burn in new spaces, after illness, after de-cluttering or deep cleaning, and/or after stressful events/gatherings in the home*
- 1 teaspoon lavender flowers
- 1 teaspoon rosemary
- 1 teaspoon thyme leaves
- 1 teaspoon sage (white sage or garden sage, either is effective)
- 1 teaspoon peppermint leaf
- 1 teaspoon red sandalwood powder
- 3-4 drops essential oils (any combination of lavender, rosemary, thyme, sage, or peppermint), optional

Still Spirit
*Burn this to relax for sleep*
- 2 parts* sandalwood
- ½ part chamomile
- ½ part lavender
- ½ part marjoram

Spring Cleansing
*Freshen the home for spring with this blend*
- 1 part white sage
- 1 part lavender
- 1 part sweetgrass

* “A ‘part’ is any unit of measurement you wish to use, provided it’s consistent throughout the entire recipe. We often use the conversion of 1 part = 1, 2, or 3 grams for small batches, and maybe 1 part = 5 to 10 grams for larger batches, etc. If you prefer, you can use powdered volume measurements with teaspoons, tablespoons and/or cups.” From Incense Making: Step by Step Guides to Natural Incense Making, [http://incensemaking.com/](http://incensemaking.com/)


Notes