

## 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

Forceps/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 Recipe<sup>1</sup>

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

### Basic Procedure<sup>2</sup>

- 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!

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<sup>1</sup> 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>

<sup>2</sup> Incense Making: Step by Step Guides to Natural Incense Making, <http://incensemaking.com/>

## Suggestions for Natural Incense Materials to Grow or Purchase

Anise, star	Lemon Peel
Basil	Marjoram
Bay laurel	Myrrh (resin)
Benzoin (resin)	Nettle
Carnation	Nutmeg
Catnip	Orange Peel
Cedarwood	Patchouli
Chamomile	Peppermint
Cinnamon	Pine needles
Clove	Piñon pine resin
Copal (resin)	Plumeria
Coriander	Rose
Dill	Rosemary
Dragon's blood (resin)	Sage – desert
Eucalyptus	Sage – white
Frankincense (resin)	Sandalwood
Gardenia	Spearmint
Geranium	Sweetgrass
Ginger	Sweet Pea
Hibiscus	Thyme
Hyacinth	Turmeric
Jasmine	Valerian
Juniper berries	Vanilla
Lavender	Vetiver
Lemon Balm	Violet
Lemongrass	Wintergreen

**Optional:** Essential oils of various kinds to add to mixture of botanicals.

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### Other resources:

Cunningham, Scott. 2002. *The Complete Book of Incense, Oils and Brews*, Llewellyn Publications, 2nd Revised edition edition; ISBN-10: 0875421288

Sams, Tina, and Schwartz, Maryanne. 1999. *Making Your Own Incense: Storey Country Wisdom Bulletin A-226*. Storey Publishing; ISBN 9781580172752

Wylundt and Smith, Steven R. 2007. *Wylundt's Book of Incense*, Red Wheel / Weiser; ISBN10: 0877288690

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**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. <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "Making Herbal Incense." Sandy Maine, *Mother Earth Living*; <http://www.motherearthliving.com/health-and-wellness/making-herbal-incense-zmaz91djzgoe.aspx>

## Some Sample Recipes

### Frankincense and Lavender Incense Recipe<sup>3</sup>

*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<sup>4</sup>

*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<sup>5</sup>

*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<sup>2</sup>

*Burn this to relax for sleep*

- 2 parts\* sandalwood
- ½ part chamomile
- ½ part lavender
- ½ part marjoram

### Spring Cleansing<sup>2</sup>

*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/>

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<sup>4</sup> "Loose Incense Recipes." *Tazeka Aromatherapy*; <http://www.tazekaaromatherapy.com/blogs/tazeka-blog/16435905-loose-incense-recipes>

<sup>5</sup> "Four Thieves Incense," *Frugally Sustainable*; <https://frugallysustainable.com/how-to-make-your-own-loose-incense-four-thieves-medicinal-incense-recipe/>

## Notes