

## HEAVENLY SCENTS

There is something magical and comforting about natural aromatics such as rose, orange blossom and lavender water, and essential oils with exotic names like musk, ylang ylang, frankincense and myrrh. They conjure up images of the Orient, the spice route, Arabia, Persia, Java and Ceylon, and eastern bazaars with stalls piled high with fragrant powders in shades of golden caramel to deep red.

Spices, herbs and aromatics are used not only in cooking, but also for their medicinal and even sensual qualities. Aromatic oils are believed to help calm the nerves, help digestion and sleeping problems, be good for the heart and soul and the skin, and even help to kill bacteria.

The benefits can be practical or emotional: rose water gives a rosy outlook; dill, aniseed and parsley help digestion; garlic is both an antiseptic and good for the blood; lavender is soothing and promotes deep sleep; rosemary is uplifting and antibacterial; mandarin energizes. And ginger is said to make people more loving – why not slip some into your arch-enemy's lunchbox when she is not looking?



### Rose-Petal Perfume

*As very young children, Rosemary and her sisters were lucky enough to live in the house that their grandparents had built in the north of Ireland.*

*The gardens had been planted with roses: climbers, standards, tea roses and, most importantly, very old varieties whose fragrance in high summer was quite intoxicating. When her parents took over the house the garden went to seed, but the roses grew wild and unruly over walls and across unweeded beds.*

*The rose-petal perfume we made was kept in glass jars and smelt lovely for a day or two, but weeks later we'd find the jars lurking forgotten in a corner with the perfume looking slightly brown and no longer smelling so sweet.*

*So, before we get complicated with more sophisticated methods involving alcohol to preserve your rose water, here is the basic method.*

- \* rose petals
- \* water

\* Half-fill a jar with rose petals and add enough water to come three quarters of the way up the jar. Leave the petals to soak for one or two days in a warm sunny place and then strain the liquid into a clean jar through a fine sieve or clean J-cloth. Squash the petals a little to get all the rose-ness out of them.

Use the perfume liberally all over your face, hands and body, or pour some into the bath. Alternatively, pour it into a nice bottle and give it to your mother or grandmother as a pretty, surprise gift.