

>> DT: 20th March 1996
>> HD: Ready for an oil change
>> BY: EDDIE ALBRECHT
>>
>> A new business has been built out of the tragic war in the former
>> Yugoslavia.
>> Eddie Albrecht reports.
>>
>> OILS ain't oils, the catchcry that became a household phrase
> courtesy of a
>>
>> petroleum company, has become a maxim in the less crude aromatherapy
>> market.
>> And smells is smells. As Michael Balic will tell you, smell in
>> aromatherapy is
>> important in the personal selection of an oil.
>> He returned to working with essential oils four years ago.
> His family
>> has
>> been involved in the trade on the Croatian island of Hvar for
> decades -
>> the
>> region has been famed for it since antiquity.
>> Historically, the Dalmatian coast was an important source of
> oils for
>> the
>> Greeks and the Romans, who used essential oils in their baths
> and burners,
>> as
>> well as for massage in the gymnasiums,' Mr Balic, the founder of
>> Mediterana
>> oils, explains.
>> My family has been extracting oils, mainly lavender, for 50
> years.'> Hvar is about 40km south of the port city of Split
> where the Roman
>> Emperor
>> Diocletian built his palace at the end of the third century AD
> and which
>> is
>> still a sprawling home to artisans. It has no major industry and is
>> virtually
>> pollution free. Its main source of income is tourism, fishing, sheep
>> farming,
>> viticulture, olive and essential oil production.
>> Mr Balic, 36, started up Mediterana oils in Perth not only
> because he > always wanted to own a business but because of the
> conflict in the former
>> Yugoslavia.

>> During the recent war and the ensuing difficulty of
> movement, my
>> family
>> was saying: "We have so much oil but we can't sell any", so I
> thought I
>> would
>> try and, after I checked out the quality of oils in the shops
> here, I
>> decided
>> I would really go for it,' he said.
>> The other (catalyst) came when I developed hay fever and
> went to the
>> doctor who gave me some tablets and spray. The spray worked for
> about a
>> week,
>> the tablets not at all. Then I remembered when I was small I
> would have
>> sage
>> inhalations if I caught a cold, so I tried it for hay fever.'
>> The 'improvised' treatment worked, though Mr Balic said it
> might not > succeed for everyone.
>> I tell people they are their own best doctor because for any
> given > complaint there are usually two or three recommended oils
> ... choose the
>> one
>> which appeals to you.'
>> He believes the secret behind the success of his oils is
> Hvar's hot and
>> dry
>> climate, unpolluted salt air and his strict adherence to buying
> only from
>> the
>> island's suppliers.
>> The herbs are picked by hand, loaded on to donkeys - the way
> we did it
>>
>> when I was a kid - and steam-distilled with rainwater in a wood-
> fired> still -
>> everything is natural, no machines are used to harvest the
> herbs, no
>> chemical
>> fertiliser is applied. The herbs grow in small outcrops, which means
>> disease
>> can never decimate the whole crop, and no pesticides are used.
> Which is
>> why I
>> claim my oils are organic and why I don't produce some other
> oils, like > mandarine, because such plants usually need some

> fertiliser or pesticide.'

>> The oils are then scooped off the top of the condensed steam
> and air > freighted in special aluminium flasks to Perth. They are
> bottled in
>> Ballajura
>> using a purpose-built, stainless steel bottling mechanism
> imported from > Germany.

>> From humble beginnings, Mediterana has expanded its range from
>> lavender,
>> rosemary, sage and laurel bay oils to 22 products stocked in 35
> health> shops
>> around Perth.

>> Mr Balic says the oils should not be used neat on the skin
> but in a
>> carrier
>> oil, like the almond or jojoba he buys from Carnarvon. This aids
> slow
>> absorption and alleviates any irritations. He recommends a blend
> of about
>> 25
>> drops of essential oils to about 50ml of carrier oil for a
> massage oil.

>> The oils are also popular in sprays or atomisers. Lavender
> has been
>> used in
>> UK hospitals to reduce patients' intake of sleeping tablets by
> more than a
>>
>> third. According to Mr Balic, some nursing homes in Perth have
> adopted> this
>> practice, with similar results.

>> British Airways offers rose or lavender scented oils for jet
> lag. They
>> are
>> thought to force a traveller's circadian rhythms - his or her
> body clock -
>>
>> back into synchronisation. Some Japanese companies use essential
> oils in
>> the
>> air conditioning to improve productivity.

>> The chemical-free Mediterana's oils have caught the eye of Lyall
>> Williams
>> from Macquarie University's chemistry department. Like most
> academics, he > cares little for hearsay or home-spun remedies and
> everything for
>> empirical
>> knowledge.

>> Usually plants for the commercial production of essential
> oils are
>> grown
>> as monocultures and invariably attract pests and diseases, which
> are
>> controlled by pesticides or fungicides - now more generally
> known as
>> biocides,' Dr Williams said.
>> If these chemicals are carried over with the essential oil
> during the
>> steam distillation step, eventually they may be transported
> during the
>> aromatherapy massage into fatty tissues of the body. The
> essential oils of
>> the
>> Mediterana range are not grown in monocultures and so have not been
>> subject to
>> pesticides - they are truly organically grown.'
>> The endorsement has heartened Mr Balic so much that
> Mediterana has
>> arranged
>> for Dr Williams to examine each batch of oil for purity. Mr
> Balic is also > preparing to take Mediterana oils to the first
> international aromatherapy
>> conference next week in Sydney.
>> My aim is to promote the totally organic nature of
> Mediterana and for
>> these oils to be recognised for their quality ... the benefits
> will flow
>> from
>> that,' he said.
>> Already they have found their way into bathrooms and bedrooms
> not only
>> in
>> Australia and Croatia but Japan, Singapore, New Zealand and Taiwan.
>>
>> SZ: LARGE
>>
>>
>>
>> DT: 14th July 1997
>> HD: Coaxing out the good oils
>> BY: EDDIE ALBRECHT
>>
>> EVERY summer from the age of eight, Michael Balich would tag
> along with
>> his
>> mother to the lavender fields on his native island of Hvar, one

> of the
>> biggest
>> and more prosperous in the Adriatic Sea, 40km south of the port
> of Split.
>> By 10, he was helping with the harvest and lending a hand with the
>> wood-fired
>> still and learning the art of maceration - separation by
> steeping the
>> relevant
>> part of a plant in liquid.
>> Lavender, sage, pine, and hypericum were all coaxed to release their
>> precious
>> ingredients.
>> By the time he was 15, he could judge the purity of an oil by merely
>> rubbing
>> it between his thumb and index finger.
>> An essential oil should not leave a stain or leave an oily area
> on your
>> skin
>> - it should soak in or evaporate very quickly,' explained Mr Balich.
>> He rekindled his involvement in the oils about five years ago,
> importing> them
>> in special aluminium flasks to Perth and bottling them under his
>> Mediterana
>> label.
>> But while aromatherapy has taken off, Mr Balich finds many
> people use the
>> oil
>> incorrectly, sometimes with painful results.
>> Sage, rosemary and thyme can burn or cause rashes to people with
> sensitive>
>> skin. The oils should not be used neat on the skin but in a
> carrier oil,
>> such
>> as almond or jojoba, he said.
>> This helped slow absorption and alleviated any irritations. He
> recommended> a
>> blend of about 25 drops of essential oil/s to about 50ml of
> carrier oil
>> for a
>> massage oil.
>> To help people understand aromatherapy, Mr Balich, in
> conjunction with
>> accredited aroma- therapist Maggie Ashton, will conduct a five-week,
>> 15-hour
>> course in Perth to give people a solid foundation in using
> essential oils.
>> It starts on July 21 and costs \$240. For more information, call

> (08) 9349 > 5067.

>>

>>

>>

>>

>>

>> DT: 1st February 1999

>> HD: The good oil on lavender

>> BY: EDDIE ALBRECHT

>>

>> The popularity of aromatherapy is leading to a resurgence of

> interest in

>> the

>> oils produced in war-torn Croatia. EDDIE ALBRECHT reports.

>>

>> A STOUT, barrel-chested man stokes the fire, sweat pouring down his

>> monolithic

>> frame. He taps a gauge on an old, blackened boiler towering

> above him. It > flickers in response.

>> Noting something which only years of distilling essential oils could

>> teach, he

>> grabs a wrench and gently taps a pipe.

>> He watches the pipe intently, almost tracking the steam's

> progress to an > antiquated still where moments earlier two men

> had been stomping on more

>> than

>> 500kg of lavender.

>> Anto Ivankevich, an impossibly fit-looking 64-year-old, repeats

> the

>> tap-and-knock procedure before barking for the copper lid to be

> lowered on

>> to

>> the still.

>> Pleased the boiler has achieved its purpose, he relaxes for a moment

>> before

>> turning his attention back to the trembling machinery which

> produces some

>> of

>> Hvar's most famous export - lavender oil.

>> It is, and has been for centuries, one of the most widely used

> oils for

>> many

>> complaints and ailments - insomnia and headaches, skin problems

> such as

>> acne,

>> eczema and psoriasis, and relief from burns (including sunburn)

> and insect

>>

>> bites.
>> Rome's legionnaires revered its antiseptic qualities and carried
> the oil
>> on
>> campaign to bathe and clean wounds.
>> But the use of aromatic plants and oils predates both the Greek
> and Roman > civilisations.
>> The ancient Egyptians are widely acknowledged as the early
> masters of
>> aromatic
>> plants, with manuscripts dating to 2800BC recording the use of many
>> medicinal
>> herbs.
>> The Vedic literature of India, dating from around 2000BC, lists
> more than
>> 700
>> substances, including cinnamon, myrrh, coriander and sandalwood.
>> Similarly,
>> the Chinese have an ancient herbal tradition dating from the
> same time.
>> Lavender use was probably spread through Europe by the Greeks who
>> colonised
>> many islands in the Mediterranean - including Hvar, which was
> settled in
>> the
>> fourth century BC by Greeks from the island of Pharos in the Aegean.
>> While lavender grows in many countries, including Australia,
> Bulgaria and > Russia, it is native to the Mediterranean region.
>> But Provence in France and Hvar in the Adriatic Sea are
> generally regarded
>> as
>> producing the best lavender - Hvar by virtue of its soil, sea
> air and sun,
>>
>> while Provence's advantage lies in its higher altitude.
>> Today, Mr Ivankevich's village of Bogomolje, near the south-
> eastern tip of
>>
>> Hvar, Croatia's fourth biggest island, is almost deserted.
>> In our heyday between the 1970s and 80s, we used to fill this
> still up to
>> 800
>> times,' he said.
>> We worked day and night - non-stop for six weeks distilling the
> lavender
>> flowers from around Bogomolje.
>> Up to 400 families took turns to use the still, bringing their
> bales of

>> lavender, each weighing about 50kg. But some also used their
> brandy stills
>> so
>> that they didn't have to wait too long if the distillery
> couldn't fit them
>> in
>> - lavender doesn't sit for too long.'
>> Drop by precious drop initially, then in a steady stream, oil
> mixed with
>> water
>> starts to flow from a nozzle at the base of a cooling chamber
> next to the > still into a 20-litre drum filled with water.
>> A young man who has returned to Bogomolje from university
> studies keeps
>> watch
>> before he starts to scoop the oil off the top of the water.
>> The 500kg load of lavender will produce between 25 and 30 litres
> of oil,
>> most
>> of which will flow in the first 30 minutes, but the steam will
> continue to
>>
>> assault the lavender flowers for a further two hours to extract
> every> drop.
>> Mr Ivankevich says it is best to scoop the oil off as soon as
> there is
>> about
>> 4cm of it floating on the top of the water.
>> How much oil is produced depends on what percentage of the load
> is flowers
>> and
>> what is stalk - placing great importance on the expertise of
> people who
>> cut
>> the lavender, which is still done by scythe. The type of season
> is another
>>
>> major factor. Last northern summer was particularly hot. But
> though the
>> lack
>> of rain and extreme heat resulted in smaller lavender flowers and,
>> therefore,
>> less oil, the oil's potency remained constant.
>> With no more oil dripping out of the still, the oil-less flowers and
>> stalks
>> are tipped out and used to mulch what little soil there is on
> this part of
>> the

>> island.
>> Villagers have hewn small plots out of the rock, building rough
> stone> walls
>> around these areas to protect the precious, dark brown soil from
> erosion.> The smaller plots also mean that any diseases or insect
> infestations will
>> be
>> contained and not wipe out a harvest.
>> Mr Ivankevich says the villagers have experimented making
> briquettes from
>> the
>> used flowers and stalks to burn during Hvar's bitter winters,
> and while
>> the
>> briquettes burn well and slowly, there is not the machinery
> available to
>> make
>> this venture viable.
>> Michael Balich, a native of Hvar and the managing director of
> Mediterana> Oils,
>> a Perth-based company he founded six years ago, is trying to return
>> Bogomolje
>> to its former glory and importance.
>> Before coming to Australia in 1984, he used to spend his summer
> holidays > harvesting and working in the distillery.
>> After the outbreak of war in the former Yugoslavia in 1991, the
> local> people
>> told him of their difficulty in selling the oil and he decided
> to help.
>> With the explosion of alternative therapies - in this case
> aromatherapy -
>> he
>> hit on a winner. Last year he returned with three Australian
>> aromatherapists
>> to show them where the plants are cultivated and harvested, how
> the oil is
>>
>> produced - and bring some much-needed machinery to the island.
>> Mr Balich has high hopes for his former home - to replace old
> boilers and > stills, and bring modern harvesting machinery to the
> island.> But his problems are greater than just a lack of
> technology. New bushes
>> have
>> to be planted because, with the decline in the early 90s, many
> of them
>> have
>> died or become ragged and difficult to harvest.
>> Water is also a problem. Rainwater, on which the island depends for

>> drinking
>> water, is used in the steam distilling process, but the concrete
> catchment>
>> area has become overgrown and in need of repair. On top of this, the
>> town's
>> rainfall is unpredictable.
>> Meanwhile, Mr Ivankevich works on. Just as the still is cleaned
> out, he
>> opens
>> the furnace door and starts to stoke the fire, ready to coax the
> good oil
>> from
>> another load of sweet, lilac flowers.
>>
>> DT: 27th November 2002
>> HD: Aromatherapy beginnings
>> BY: OLGA DE MOELLER
>>
>> SMELLS can move us in powerful ways. A whiff of orange blossom,
> the aroma
>> of
>> baking bread or a particular perfume can instantly conjure up
>> long-forgotten
>> images and emotions from the past - all things that herbalist Nerys
>> Purchon
>> knows only too well.
>> Her Handbook of Aromatherapy (Hodder Headline, \$35) has just been
>> reprinted in
>> response to the growing interest in essential oils, which are
> extracted> from
>> plants to calm, balance and rejuvenate body, mind and spirit.
>> The former nurse has launched a range of handmade aromatherapy
> soaps to > complement her skin-care line. She needs no convincing
> about the
>> therapeutic
>> benefits of her craft, which she learned as a child from her
> Welsh
>> grandmother.
>> These days, 72-year-old Purchon, who established Rivendell Farm
> in the
>> Ferguson Valley with her husband in the 1970s, lives in
> Australind and
>> will
>> not go anywhere without her plastic zip-lock bag full of Chux
> wipes soaked
>> in
>> alcohol, lavender and eucalyptus, which she uses in public
> toilets and in > supermarkets to wipe down trolley handles.

>> Lavender and eucalyptus are my two most used essential oils,'
> she said.
>> If
>> in doubt, use lavender - and for beginners it's really one of
> the safest
>> oils.
>> Unfortunately, despite the growing popularity of aromatherapy,
> a lot of
>> people don't know the difference between canola oil and rosemary
> essential oil
>> - and they mix up essential oils with fragrant and perfumed oils
> all the
>> time.
>> They don't realise that essential oils are very potent and
> contain dozens
>> of
>> different ingredients.'
>> Nobody knows exactly where and when the ancient healing art of
>> aromatherapy
>> began.
>> The medicinal use of plant oils is recorded in some of the earliest
>> Chinese
>> writings; Cleopatra is said to have doused herself in aromatic
> blends before
>> embarking on her seductive pursuits.
>> French chemist Rene Gattefosse revived the 20th century interest
> in plant
>> oils
>> after accidentally discovering the healing power of lavender
> essence for a
>> bad
>> burn.
>> His work was furthered by French physician Jean Valne and by French
>> biochemist
>> and beautician Marguerite Maury. Aromatherapy lecturer Madeleine
> Sewell, who
>> runs Essential Touch Aromatherapy, said France was the only
> country where practitioners were trained to administer essential
> oils orally.
>> In Australia, aromatherapists will generally only prescribe
> essential oils
>> for topical application in massage blends or for use in sprays,
>> compresses,
>> baths and inhalations,' she said.
>> People need to be aware that they usually need to be diluted in
> an
>> appropriate medium and don't blend with water. I know of someone
> who put peppermint oil in a bath and ended up burning their skin.

>> Essential oils smell wonderful and offer plenty of avenues for
>> creativity,
>> but it takes tonnes of plant material to make just 10ml, so what
> you end
>> up
>> with is an incredibly concentrated substance which has the
> potential to
>> harm.'

>> Sydney-based aromatherapist Mark Webb said aromatherapy was
> still in the > touchy-feely stage in Australia, where essential
> oils were popular for
>> massage
>> and for use in burners.
>> He will present two workshops on the chemistry and pharmacology of
>> aromatic
>> compounds in WA next month. Inquiries to Sandra Maynard, at the
> University> of
>> WA, on 9380 3827.

>>
>> HD: Aromatherapy precautions
>>

>> THE Australian College of Natural Health Sciences includes the
> following> in
>> its list of aromatherapy precautions:
>>

>> ¿ Keep essential oils away from the eyes and do not rub your
> eyes after > handling them.
>> ¿ Never take essential oils by mouth, rectum or vagina.
>> ¿ Avoid citrus essences on the skin if you have symptoms or a
> history of
>> melanoma, pre-melanoma, senile patches, big moles, warts,
> extensive dark > freckles or skin cancer. | If you suffer from
> epilepsy, avoid essential
>> oils
>> of rosemary, fennel and sage.
>> ¿ Asthmatics should avoid steam inhalations. | If you are
> pregnant, it is
>> best
>> to avoid all essential oils and seek expert advice before use.
>>

>> HD: Guide to essential oils
>>

>> OILS ain't oils for importer Michael Balich, who has gone back
> to his
>> roots on
>> an island in the Adriatic to source his precious drop.
>> Lavender, rosemary, peppermint and myrtle are among his
> Mediterana range

>> of
>> essential oils, which are steam distilled from mostly wild plants
>> harvested on
>> Hvar, 40km south of Split, and transported to stills supplied from
>> Australia.
>> Balich, a former surveyor, has just opened an aromatherapy
> clinic in
>> Malaga.
>> He said there was a huge market for lavender worldwide, with
> Provence, in > France, and Hvar generally regarded as producing
> the best essential oil.
>> You quickly learnt to recognise the quality of an essential oil
> by its
>> smell
>> and to judge the purity by rubbing it between your thumb and index
>> finger,' he
>> said.
>> Balich said a good essential oil should make a scraping sound
> and not
>> leave
>> any oily residue. If unsure, people could put a drop on a piece
> of paper > overnight - and by morning it should have evaporated
> without a trace,
>> though
>> some dark oils, such as chamomile, might leave a mark. Another
> option was
>> to
>> ask for an analysis of chemical constituents, called a gas
> chromatograph, > which reputable suppliers should be able to
> provide for each batch.
>> Balich said most essential oils needed to be diluted before
> being applied > topically because they readily permeated the skin
> and entered the
>> bloodstream.
>> He recommended beginners start with the following five essential
> oils:> Lavender. Commonly known for relieving insomnia, lavender
> has excellent > calming and relaxing effects. Peppermint. Highly
> recommended as an
>> effective
>> emergency treatment for travel sickness and hangover nausea.
> Simply inhale
>>
>> directly from the bottle or put a few drops on a handkerchief.
>> Peppermint will also provide temporary relief from head colds,
> bronchitis,>
>> sinusitis and coughing when used as a steam inhalation, but
> cover the eyes
>> to

>> avoid irritation. It also makes a soothing foot bath.
>> Rosemary. Commonly known for its stimulating properties, it
> helps clear
>> the
>> mind and improves concentration, so it can be used as an aid when
>> studying.
>> Used in a massage blend, it can improve circulation and warm the
> body. It
>> is
>> also excellent for oily hair and dandruff and a few drops in the
> rinse> water
>> will add lustre to dark tresses. Rosemary should not be used by
>> epileptics.
>> Sage. In small doses, sage is a relaxant and in high doses,
> uplifting. As
>> it
>> helps to dry mucus, a few drops on a handkerchief will help
> relieve hay
>> fever.
>> Blended with lavender in a carrier oil, sage is beneficial in
> healing> wounds.
>> It is also an excellent hair tonic. Sage aids in the relief of
> pain and is
>>
>> good for rheumatism and arthritis.
>> Hypericum. Also known as St John's wort, hypericum takes its
> name from the
>>
>> Knights of St John of Jerusalem, who used it to treat wounds on
> crusade > battlefields. Obtained by maceration - steeping in
> liquid - it is the most
>>
>> popular of all oils used in Europe. It is extremely healing for
>> rheumatism,
>> aches, sprains, bruises, acne, nappy rash and arthritis.