

Asset HealthTalk

Keeping your health and wellbeing in the know

Enlighten Your Home With the Benefits of Scented Candles



Looking for ways to decorate for the holidays on a budget? Those miscellaneous candles lying around the house could be the answer.

The aromatherapy properties in scented candles may be one of the best reasons to buy them. Aromatherapy is described as the use of essential oils from plants (i.e., flowers, herbs or trees) as therapy to improve physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

The emotional connection you have to a scent as well as the physiological effects that emotional state brings are the reasons why a scent affects your mood and physical state. Feeling relaxed slows your heart rate, and feeling excited accelerates it. Believe it or not, but if lavender creates the feeling of calm for you, it's because you have felt it as a result of being exposed to lavender in the past.

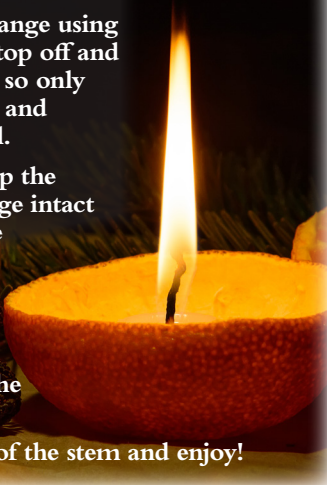
Did you know that lavender and orange citrus scented candles are cheap and easy to find, and just a quick whiff can be enough to turn down your emotional temperature and slow your heart rate? In fact, they have both been scientifically proven to induce relaxation, improve sleep quality, increase positive mood and alleviate tension during stressful situations.

Research has shown that the scent of lavender has been discovered to make people feel more relaxed and sleep better. And experiments have even revealed that a citrus-orange scent is better at making people feel happier and less tense in a stressful situation than mood music.

What's really important is that you find a scent that makes you feel good, and any scent will do. As you can see, aromatherapy can be an efficient and cost-effective way to not only help you feel good, but to do your holiday decorating. You can even make your own organic candles with orange peels, some oil and a knife.

How to Make Orange Peel Candles

1. Carve your orange using a knife. Cut the top off and remove the flesh so only the skin remains and resembles a bowl.
2. Be sure to keep the stem of the orange intact as it will become your wick.
3. Pour your oil (either canola or olive should work fine) into the orange peel.
4. Light the top of the stem and enjoy!



Something important to keep in mind is the effects of aromas can be idiosyncratic, which means if you don't like the smell of lavender or orange then you aren't going to feel relaxed after smelling them; you may even feel irritated. And, if you've never smelled lavender or orange before, these scents won't calm you either.

Using other seasonal items you have lying around the house or from nature can help reduce your decorating costs while boosting the holiday spirit in your home as well. You can create your own wreaths by collecting pine branches. Or you can take bare branches and stick them in a vase or pot and, if you have a chandelier, find a way to weave the branches through the lights and then spray them with fake snow, which can be found at most arts and crafts stores. To create a beautiful centerpiece, core some apples and stick candles inside of them.

Reminder: Prevent burns by keeping lit candles or any open flames out of reach of children and pets. Be sure to extinguish candles or flames before leaving the room.

"How to Decorate Your Home for the Holidays on a Budget," Kerry Sherin, money.usnews.com, Oct. 26, 2015.

"Aromatherapy for the Holidays," Rachel Herz, psychologytoday.com, Dec. 9, 2009."

"Craft of the Day: Orange Peel Candle," Kaitlyn Davis, huffingtonpost.com, Jan. 31, 2012.

"Aromatherapy and Essential Oils (PDO®)," National Cancer Institute, cancer.gov, accessed Nov. 4, 2015.



A COLORFUL PALATE

Can the Hue of Food Change How We Taste It?

Have you ever noticed that you expect a bright red strawberry to be intensely sweet? It may be because your brain remembers that the last time you had a delicious, juicy strawberry, it was deep red.

The taste we experience when eating and drinking has more to do with our brain than it does with our taste buds. For starters, half of our cranium is devoted to our visual sense, while a small percentage is used to interpret taste.

Visually sizing up the food in front of us helps our brain predict what it will taste like well before it reaches our mouth, based on past experiences and associations.

Conversely, when foods are a different color than what we've experienced before, they may taste odd, even if the color is the only change that occurred. Do you recall Heinz's purple ketchup phase? It wasn't on the market long because the condiment's consumers weren't fond of its hue change.

Here are some other ways taste is very much a visual sense:

- We might confuse white wine for red wine: Research participants described a sample of white wine as having red wine characteristics when the wine was dyed red.
- We might be tricked by the packaging of products like chips: When it comes to packaged foods, researchers found that participants thought salt and vinegar chips were cheese and onion flavored simply by switching the bag the chips were in. Our brains pick up associations and use them as shortcuts. When we see a color of food and expect it to taste a particular way, odds are good that we will taste what we expect, unless it's wildly different.

"Taste seems so inviolable because it takes place inside of us; like a secret memory, only we can taste what we can taste—how could it betray us?" says Tom Vanderbilt. "But before food gets to us, our eyes have already seasoned it."

Next time you sit down to dine, see what your brain expects the food in front of you to taste like.

"The Colors We Eat: Food Color Does More Than Guide Us - It Changes the Experience of Taste," Tom Vanderbilt, nautilus.us, July 9, 2015.

"How Color Changes What We Taste," Yahoo! Food & Wine, yahoo.com, Aug. 5, 2015.

"How We Taste Different Colours," Amy Flemming, theguardian.com, March 12, 2013.



Healthy Holiday

Hot Chocolate Cookies

The holidays are just around the corner—to celebrate, we're gifting our readers this scrumptious hot-chocolatey recipe that would even warm the Grinch's heart. It is a wholesome alternative to traditional cholesterol-laden seasonal cookies.

Enjoy, and don't forget to share!

Ingredients

- 1 cup spelt or all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons cocoa powder
- 1/4 cup pitted dates, packed
- 1/4 teaspoon sea salt or pink Himalayan salt
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup chocolate chips
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 3 to 4 tablespoons unrefined coconut oil

Directions

1. In a food processor, blend the first five ingredients until the dates are finely crushed.
2. In a separate microwave-safe bowl, combine the vanilla extract, coconut oil and 3/4 cups of the chocolate chips.
3. Melt the ingredients in the microwave (about 1 minute), then stir.
4. Pour the dry ingredients, as well as the remaining 1/4 cup of chocolate chips, into the wet ingredients. Stir until evenly mixed, making sure to break up any big clumps. It'll seem dry at first, but keep stirring until the batter all looks dark and shiny.
5. Bake at 350° F for 7 to 8 minutes. (Take the cookies out when they are still undercooked; they'll continue to cook as they cool.)

(Adapted from chocolatecoveredkatie.com)

