

Incense

Since the days our ancestors gained the ability to control fire, incense has been part of all cultures. The burning of aromatic plants is the root of medicine, perfumery and many ceremonial practices. The words perfume (lat.) *per fumum* = *through smoke* and incense (lat.) *Incensum* = *burning offered to the gods* on its own tell us about the ancient practice of smoldering materials for personal enchantment and to reach higher spirits.

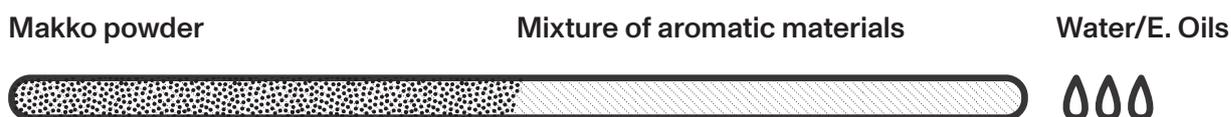
Traditional incense recipes require natural materials from species that are often endangered. To prevent the use of these precious plants it is wise to look around what plants can be used from our closest surroundings. To inform yourself on the status of the ingredients you are using or you consider to order, visit:

www.speciesplus.net
www.iucnredlist.org

Guide

For the making of incense (sticks or cones) in the Japanese style we use all-natural materials: gums, resins, woods, herbs, spices, fruits, seeds, flowers, wines, honey etc. and Makko as a binding material. It is a technique that can be compared with the proportions of a bread dough:

Flower/makko + water/essential oil + seasoning/mixture of aromatic materials = bread dough/incense dough



High resin or gum (from trees) content in your recipe means it will need more makko to make it burn (add 40-90% makko for high resin mixtures)



Incense made with mostly woods, spices and herbs will need only 5-30% makko.



Weight of mixture x percent of makko = weight of makko needed

Example:

If your mixture is all resins and weighs 20 grams test it with 70% makko:

20 grams incense x 70% makko (20 x .70) = 14 grams of makko is needed to add to 20 grams of incense.

Makko (“incense powder”) The powder from the *Tabu* or *Tabu No Ki* tree is used as base material for Japanese Incense making. It is the bark of the *Machillus Thunbergii* tree. Makko comes in four grades, and the the higher grades have less aroma than the lower ones. What makes this powder so special is its water soluble adhesive properties, an almost odorless characteristic that seems to be entirely lost when mixed with other ingredients, and its abilities to burn smoothly and evenly. It is the binder used in making Japanese incense for centuries and now finds some popularity in incense manufacture in other countries.

Frankincense/Olibanum The use of this famous incense ingredient dates back to earliest written history. Harvesting of the *Boswellia Carterii* tree occurs from December to May, when the trunk is cut and the brown-yellow solidified resinous drops are collected.

Origin: Aden (Yemen) and Oman, Northeastern Africa: Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya

Threatened Species Alert Status: several species of the *Boswellia* family are endangered

Sandalwood is also one of the oldest incense materials. Sandalwood is the common name given to the honey colored heartwood and roots of the *satantalum album* tree. Sandalwood powder was used in Chinese temples where it was spread of the floor to keep insects away. Later, either in China or Japan Sandalwood was replaced with Makko Powder as the base in Incense- sticks, clocks (coils) or trails. Harvesting and trade is strictly controlled by the governments and forestry departments of India and Indonesia but poaching and black market trading is vast.

Origin: India, Indonesia, Ceylon, Australia, Pacific Islands, etc. The finest quality comes from the forests of India; Karnataka, Mysore, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh.

Threatened Species Alert: Status: Vulnerable.

Agarwood/Aloeswood/Jinko/Oud this highly prized wood is an important ingredient in Japanese incense culture and the Japanese Kodo Ceremony. The *Aquilaria malaccensis* trees are found in Southeast Asia. In nature the trees sometimes become infected by a parasite fungus or mold and they produce an aromatic resin to ward off this illness. It's this rare and precious aromatic resin in the wood that is treasured around the world for incense use.

Origin: Malaysia, Indonesia, India, China, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia

Threatened Species Alert status: Vulnerable.

There are allowable international trade quotas each year by species and origins. Use only cultivated plantation agarwood or highly reputable suppliers of legally exported wild harvested woods.

Palo Santo/Guaiacwood this ‘holy wood’ grows on the South American costs and was originally used by the Incas for purification and cleansing rituals. The trees from the citrus family drop parts of their branches, that can are collected from the forests ground. Nowadays the *Bulnesia sarmientoi* trees are highly protected by the Peruvian government because of exports for the oil extraction for the perfume industry and home use.

Origin: South America; most notably the tropical forests of Peru

Threatened Species Alert status: endangered

Tonka Bean

Copal

Myrrh

Rose