



We're well into the New Year and it's time for a good cleanse...

After the indulgence and richness of the holiday season I feel ready for the next chapter. Back to work, life returning to the new normal and I want to get clear, cleansed and crispy fresh... Spring cleaning has arrived very early. Much to my son's disgust; the windows are wide open, and refreshing smoke is filling the air. Yes, it's lush to get cosy and fill up on homemade soups but I love that light new energy that occupies the house after a good herby clear out!

For house cleansing I find smudge sticks the easiest thing to use.... You don't need Californian White Sage hand-tied by a guru, to free-dive for your own Abalone shell or purchase the wing feather of a Condor. As beautiful as some of this spiritual tat' is, it's not necessary and has an impact on the environment, not to mention the animals. On visiting a rescue centre in Peru, I heard awful stories of how some local people were hunting Condors for their wing feathers to sell to tourists.

You can source and hand-tie your herb of choice on your door step, blend your energies during the creation ritual, sniff on the aroma as it hangs drying in your home, add an earthenware dish, a tea-light, waft with your hand or use found feathers and you're off... All you and your intention from beginning to end.

Herbs

In the Northern Hemisphere in winter, suitable plants can be in short supply. Hardy Mediterranean shrubs such as Rosemary are easy to find, and a great ever-green that smells fresh is red cedar. A combination of the two, smell divine. One rich in oil the other in resin...both help the smudge to burn. For this 'How to', I've just used rosemary... cleansing for mind, body and the corners of those bedrooms...

Tips

- When tying smudge sticks it's best to use freshly picked sprigs. Use within about 24 hours of snipping otherwise the sprigs begin to dry out, becoming difficult to tie tightly.
- Use good quality twine or string made from natural materials (nasty fumes from cheap artificial string guarantees to kill your cleansing vibe)





- Smudges vary in size from 6' long x 1.5' wide, to single use sticks as small as your pinkie-finger. The size is personal preference. I prefer one stick for one job. I dislike keeping something half-burned so often make single-use smudges. (Shown below)

Smudgy Step by Step

Creating the smudge stick can be a ritual in its self... a meditative walk to select your herbs, opening sacred space, lighting a candle and creating your works space. Every step can hold intention, prayers and is an engagement with the Sacred.



Select your stems of similar length and strip the bottom leaves. You can use as much or as little as you like.

You can keep any trimmings and make a loose smudge for use on a charcoal disc. Waste not want not. There's a Loose Smudge 'How to' on the blog...

Cut your string (length is dependent on the size of your smudge) you'll probably need more than you think for knot tying and hanging loop.

Wrap the string around your pinkie-finger two or three times as this gives you the tension you need... Remember to leave a 'tail' for tying...

Pinch together your trimmed stems and wrap the string tightly around them 3 or 4 times just below the foliage.

Take your time, to get a good secure start. This will keep your herbs tied together during the drying process. Shrinkage varies but it's surprising how much volume you can lose.





Keeping the string taut, wind it around the herbs in an upward spiral, ensuring that you're catching the leaves as you go.



When you reach the top, check your tension and wind back down in the opposite direction... creating a criss-cross pattern.



Wrap the string tightly around the stems and tie a double knot, using the tail of string you wrapped around your pinkie. Tie the ends to create a loop.



Once you've tied your smudges be sure to hang them in a warm place with a natural airflow. I have a branch between two kitchen cupboards and leave the small window ajar. A warm, light and airy environment ensures that no mould or mildew grows on your beautiful creations. Leave them hanging for two to four weeks dependant on their size. When dried, store in paper bags or use them straight way to cleanse and clear your home.

There are so many ways to be more actively involved with nature, her moods and seasons. Living with the cycles of plants, the Moon, the highs and the lows... Smudge sticks and Herb work is just one way to learn some of the lesson Mother nature has to offer. It's a very different experience to bring home made tools to ritual and ceremony... their significance in the process seems heightened and the gratitude and appreciation runs deep.

I hope you enjoy this step in the journey, big loves, Cx

