

THE MIDDLE EASTERN FRAGRANCE RITUAL

HOW TO SMELL LIKE A ROYAL
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It's time to delve deep into the fragrance-obsessed culture of the modern Middle East. Let's discover the secret behind layering, mixing, and matching fragrances to customize your very own signature scent that will leave the most gorgeous invisible trail behind you, wherever you go.

If you've ever ventured into one of the wonders of the Arabian Gulf: Dubai, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, or Bahrain then it's more than likely that you've encountered a flutter of the intoxicating trail of perfume worn by local men and women, containing delightful notes of oud, rose, jasmine, amber, and sandalwood, which are often layered to release a divine waft of fragrance into the air, unlike anything you'd experience in the Western world.

A ritualistic approach towards fragrance is common practice within the Arab world and is part of one's daily routine, for both men and women. Oils are layered on the skin and hair, often containing musk, rose, jasmine, followed by hair and clothing being infused with scented smoke which is referred to as bakhour, and ends with a rich spritz of spray perfume, as a powerful finishing touch. The influence of the modern Middle East has already transformed the world of perfumery in its entirety.

Just ten years ago, a western fragrance fan wouldn't have been familiar, with the now ever-growing popularity surrounding "oud". Extracted from a South Asian evergreen tree infected with mold, it instigates the production of an overpowering resin, oud (also referred to as agarwood) which has been used throughout Arabia for centuries, often providing the base for bakhour (in which it is mixed with fragrance oils and sometimes frankincense and myrrh) and always features in the daily scent regimen. Pure oil is stroked behind the ears and on pulse points.

It was the ethereal Emirati's that formed the trend of adding droplets of oud extract, to their popular western fragrances, which some of the most reputable brands in the world began to adopt, which lead to them create fragrances with the Middle Eastern fragrance fanatics in mind, which gained popularity internationally, it's now not uncommon to find notes of oud in many of the modern-day western favourites.

One of the oud's most potent characteristics is its layerability, enhancing additional scents and boosting its staying power. Most modern fragrances are designed to provide built-in layering: The top, middle, and base notes form a slow reveal.

Adding other elements can make your fragrance richer and more alluring, or form a completely new scent. Moisture is vital as it draws and locks perfume into the skin, ensuring longevity.

Fragrance fanatics will often find that using scents that complement one another is the key to casting a spell of seduction with scent – citrus and spice bone well, for example, and florals with woody notes – can enhance or add depth to the overall effect. Ensuring that there is always a light note, means that there's less chance of going a step too far.

Simpler fragrances make the layering process much easier, creating a much better and beautiful combination. For best results, blend a diverse combination of fragrances, keeping in mind that, opposites do attract, that's why floral and woody or spicy and sweet blend well together. Where you apply your fragrance is key, it's best to apply to different areas: the heavier scents belong on the pulse points, whereas, the light is best applied to the hair and clothes, which allows them to work harmoniously together.

So, with that in mind, how is perfume layered in a traditional sense? Well, it is a four-stage process starting with a base of musk, followed by the application of oud, then a spritz of your favorite perfume, and finally with bakhoor incense. Each of the above has a distinct scent profile, so for best results, it's key to follow this process.

MUSK APPLICATION - Apply your chosen musk blend generously to all exposed areas in the same way that you would apply lotion or cream to your body. Your choice of the musk base will determine how your signature scene will unfold during the day, particularly when the base notes emerge and settle. Try **SOLID MUSK CUBES** £2.29 - <https://store.asqgrp.com>

LOUD APPLICATION - There are many different variants of pure oud, which often increase in potency as it ages. It's not abnormal to see high-quality variants selling for £1000 per ounce and upwards. Typically, it has warmed, bitter, and somewhat earthy. Oud application, as an essential part of this ritual, is key to obtaining the rich, deep woody scent trail that will follow you from location to location. Only a tiny amount of oud is required, a little really does go a long way. Apply the oud to the back of your hand and spread, gently rub into the back of your hands, before smearing behind the ears. Get started with **ELITE ALOUD OIL** £15.27 - <https://store.asqgrp.com>

PERFUME APPLICATION - At this point, you have complete flexibility with the perfume you choose going forward, it's all about setting and creating your mood for that particular day. Lightly spritz some of Jo Malone's: **VELVET ROSE & OUD COLOGNE INTENSE** £128.00 - www.jomalone.co.uk

BAKHOOR APPLICATION - The ritual ends with a charcoal disk placed at the bottom of an ornate incense burner, with scented wood chips and sweet smoke filling the air, the hair, and clothing. It's best to lean over it and allow it to penetrate your clothing, to add the final powerful touch. For the burner: **AL QURASHI INCENSE BURNER (GOLDEN COLOR)** £36.64 adds a touch of royal to the surroundings, with some **MAAMOUL AL QURASHI** £30.54 blended with the finest roses and jasmine.