

## ***About the Bulgarian rose water***

Rose water has made a significant mark in human history.

The clean and fresh taste of this fragrant liquid has been used in perfumery, cosmetics and medicine for many centuries.

It grows in Iran, but can also be found in Italy, Spain, France and Turkey. Arab countries and France have higher production of rose water, but the best rose water is distilled in Bulgaria.

The use of roses dates back before Roman times, but production of rose water by steam distillation was first used by the Arab physician Avicenna in the 10th century. Typically, rose water is made from the Damascena rose and its pink leaves. It is a byproduct of the steam distillation process in which oil from rose petals is released on the surface.

One kilogram of rose water is produced by one kilogram of rose petals. The oldest containers for carrying rose water are leather bags, later replaced by glass bottles or barrels. Rose water is becoming more popular due to its rich scent and ability to refresh the mind and body. Even Romans were using it to freshen the air in their homes and in the Middle Ages it was a popular tool for battling depression, when used while taking a bath or by splashing.

Probably the Persians were the first to use rose water in cooking. They invented marzipan which is made from ground almonds, sugar and the traditional fragrance of rose water. The Arabs also used it in making sweet drinks and desserts.

Due to its sweet and romantic fragrance, rose water is used in making many body creams. It has a refreshing effect to the skin due to its natural stimulating and toning action. Frequent usage helps to clean and tighten the pores of the face.

Rose water regulates and balances sebum production, making it suitable for both dry or oily skin. Its antibacterial qualities help in the fight against acne and all types of dermatitis. It also does not dry or irritate sensitive skin.

When buying rose water from drugstores one should be reading the labels, since certain types may contain numerous additives. Sometimes its composition is synthetic rose oil mixed with purified water, isopropanol, glycerin and often methylparaben.

### Rose water and its applications

Rose water is one of the best all-time traditional cleaners for the face and can be used in skin care in many different ways.

Natural rose water is used in treating acne and inflamed skin and it also has a moisturizing and nourishing effect suitable for facial masks and hair treatment. It can be added to bath water for relaxation or as a moisturizer afterwards.

The strength of Bulgarian rose water, its uses and essential qualities:

- has wonderful uplifting fragrance.
- Gently cleans and refreshes all skin types.
- has a hydrating and anti-inflammatory effect

- helps digestion

- anti-viral, antiseptic and disinfectant properties

- maintains the PH balance, stimulates regeneration processes and has a emollient effect in acne and sunburns.

- Can be used as an additive in refreshment drinks and it is a natural way of improving the specific taste of foods and beverages. Can be added to exotic desserts, drinks and cocktails. Great for extra flavor of ice cream and teas. In Morocco rose water is added to orange juice.

- the sweet scent of roses will turn cleaning into pleasant exercise.

- Can be uses as an universal, non-toxic, environment-friendly household cleaner.

- in pet care it is known as an anti-inflammatory remedy for eye and skin irritations. Can also be used as an environmentally friendly air freshener in the places where your pet sleeps.

- Can be added to the water of the steam iron.

## *Rosa Damascena*

Roses have been praised worldwide for centuries due to their healing qualities, the balancing nature of their scent and colors of their blossoms. They bring pleasure and romance, purity and joy. Roses symbolize passion, understanding and opulence. The scent of rose oil is the scent of love.

### *History and myths*

Nobody can tell whether the rose originates from China, India or Persia as it is very old – traces of roses were found in fossils more than 25 million years old. It has been a part of human life and legends of ancient times. The Virgin Mary was called with many names that included the word "rose".

For example, "Mystical Rose" and "Queen of the holy rose garden." Rose oil was one of the ingredients of the ointment(chrism). In ancient Greece, the rose was a symbol of the goddess Aphrodite. In ancient Rome, roses were associated with Venus and Adonis. In India the "Great Mother" goddess was known as the "Sacred Rose". In ancient China the red rose was called the "flower of the goddess." Among many saints St. Rose was one who had the natural fragrance of roses.

The birthplace of the cultivated Rose was probably Northern Persia, the Caspian or Farsistan - the Persian Gulf. Ancient Persians called Rose "giul" or "Flower" with a capital letter. It became a symbol of Persia (Iran) where roses decorated the shields of their warriors. Guests were sprinkled with rose water as a welcoming gesture, and this ritual exists to this day.

Rose water was seasoned with cinnamon and sugar and was added to many delicacies. Province Faristan paid annual taxes in the amount of 30 000 bottles of rosewater to Baghdad treasury. In the golden age of Baghdad mosque builders mixed rose water (and musk) in mortar and when the midday sun heated the walls an incredible fragrance was released. Meanwhile Persia exported rose water to China, Yemen, Egypt and Spain. In 1684 after he visited Persia, Kämpfer wrote about the production of rose oil. "Roses of Shiraz are amazing because during distillation they excrete a greasy substance, similar to oil, called rose oil. This substance is valued more than gold and there is no perfume in the world so sweet and lovely.

Roses spread from Persia through Mesopotamia to Palestine and via Asia Minor to Greece and Italy. There is no doubt that roses used in ancient times were cultivated. There were only a few varieties, but it seems the Romans cultivated the Red Provencal rose (*Rosa gallica*), also known as French rose. The word rose comes from the Greek word for red - "rodon". Roses in ancient times were dark red in color, hence the assumption that they grew from the blood of Adonis.

Egyptians used a lot of rose oil in their social and religious ceremonies and also for mummification. Traces of roses are found in Egyptian tombs. Cleopatra slept on a pillow filled with rose petals and bathed in rose water. Her amorous conquests were aided by aromatic essences. She seduced Mark Antony by soaking the sails of her ship with rose oil and covered her room with a thick carpet of rose flowers.

Romans also did not spare the colors of the rose. Horatius mentions the use of roses at banquets as decoration, spread on the floor and even in the wine of the wealthy Romans. Wreaths of roses were placed on brides and grooms and on images of Cupid, Venus and

Bacchus. Roses were scattered at the feasts of Flora and Hymen, in front of the winners and their chariots, and on the prow of their warships. Romans wore wreaths of roses during the feasts, as preventive measure against drinking(inebriation). Roses have been a weakness of the Emperor Nero, who would spend the equivalent of \$ 160,000 for rose oil, rose water and rose petals in one night, for his guests and for himself. At the funeral of his wife in 65 AD more perfume "than could be produced in one year" was used.

## ***Rose oil***

- Appearance: easily flowing liquid
- Color: yellow to yellow-green
- Smell: warm, floral, especially dense fine, slight and sizzling honey notes typical of the Bulgarian oil-bearing rose

Bulgarian rose oil is known worldwide as the most refined essential oil or "rose attar". It is obtained by water distillation from the colors of oil rose "Rosa Damascena Mill". Its complex structure of 275 micro elements determines its unrivaled qualities. Its main components are phenyl-ethyl alcohol, citronellol, geraniol and nerol. The remaining components in the oil are in very small quantities, but are equally important for its final quality.

Bulgarian rose oil is one of the most expensive and demanded perfume essential oil on the international market. In therapy, Bulgarian rose oil is used for the treatment of chronic cholecystitis, biliary tract disease and asthma.

The Kazanlak Rose (R. damascene var. trigintipetala) is a descendant of Rosa Damascena.

It is believed that the cultivation of roses for obtaining rose water and later rose oil originated in India and Egypt. It was brought to Persia and Tunisia in the 9th century by virtue of the relocation of the Turks and Arabs. Trade with rose oil in Europe began in the 16th century and the first data on rose-growing in our lands is from the 17th century - around Edirne, and within the boundaries of modern Bulgaria the first documentary evidence is from 1712 about the village Voinyagovo - Karlovo. It is known for sure that in the mid 19th century the so-called Rose Valley was formed in the area between Kazanlak, Karlovo and Strelcha.

Before Bulgaria's liberation from the Ottoman empire there were about 10,000 acres of rose plants in our country and rose oil production had reached 1000 kg. The largest areas were created and grown during the First World War - about 90,000 acres, then the area decreased to 30,000 acres.

The only language that has no word for rose is that of the Eskimos.

### ***Legend***

A legend of Persia tells about the origin of rose oil. Its discovery happened by accident by Princess Noor Jahan who loved to bathe in warm rose water. Once she noticed that in the channels through which warm rose water flew, oily patches could be seen. To her great surprise when collecting these oil patches, she realized that it was natural rose oil. She named the strong and lasting scented rose oil in honor of her husband Dzhihan Giri.

### *Therapeutic qualities*

Roses have been used in traditional medicine of the ancient Chinese, Indians, Persians, Arabs, etc. For centuries pure rose oil has been used for treatment, harmony, romance and enjoyment. Roses were grown in monastery gardens for their healing qualities and were an important part of the *Materia Medica*. It has been known as an aphrodisiac for centuries. The ancient tradition to scatter rose petals on the nuptial bed and their use in wedding ceremonies exist to this day. In the 16th century during the bubonic plague in France Nostradamus made "rose pills" that contain roses, carnation, iris, cypress...For the same purpose in Italy the alchemist Alexis of Piedmont prescribed a blend of 18 herbs and rose was one of them.

It is proven that rose oil has the following effects on the human body: antidepressant, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, antispasmodic, antiviral, aphrodisiac, analgesic, bactericidal, regenerative, cholagogue, cholaretic, cathartic, diuretic, menstrual stimulant, astringent, hepatic, laxative, mucolytic, stimulating labor, sedative, digestive, antispasmodic, tonic, anthelmintic.