



# Let there be **Light**

Time for aching thoughts to fall away and stress to recede. Find that scent that transforms mundane into magical. Create your very own tableaux of healing and relaxation.

**AFTER READING THE AFORE-**mentioned, you'll probably tell yourself that you'll chanced upon yet another spa advertisement or a therapist wearing a dose of sui generis body fragrance could be beckoning. One thing's for sure - it is neither about spas nor spiritual healers. In fact, we're homing in on what some may regard as a quotidian household item - candles.

For all its functional quality, a source of light and heat since the days of ancient Egyptians, the candle has revealed itself, especially in the last few decades, as an aroma-therapeutic palliative, a pincushion, a weatherproofing accessory, and even an ear-waxing contraption. But wait. Aren't some candles made more equal than others?

## **WHY PREMIUM CANDLES?**

To answer that, Judy Millar-Wong, owner of **Flaming Queen**, a store dedicated to the art of scented candles, resoundingly sets the facts right. She said it would be pertinent to distinguish a candle that you normally find in a drugstore or supermarket from one that's of premium quality like her flagship product from France - the Rigaud brand that has garnered apostles like Elton John, Prince of Wales, Julia Roberts and the late Frank Sinatra. More than just being reputable, this particular line of scented candles is a wellspring of some of the best natural extracts ever. Its concentration of essential oils is unequivocally higher than that of most other candles in the market; its wax has



proven to be soft and slack, allowing an optimal diffusion of fragrance.

In many respects, the distinction between mass-marketed and premium candles does run deeper, even to the extent of underscoring a health-related chasm. For instance, normal candles may use fragrances containing synthetic oils, which can be detrimental to one's health because of the toxins released into the air during the burning process. Furthermore, they are usually made of low-grade, non-biodegradable paraffin, a petroleum-based ingredient that produces not just a sooty and oily but lung-damaging smoke. To avoid catching a whiff of this death wish, it would behoove one to use only scented candles made of beeswax, vegetable oil or soy combined with 100 percent essential oils.

### EVOCATIVE SURRENDER

Apart from superior ingredients composition, the products available in Flaming Queen have an additional ace up their sleeves. Customers can choose from a wide selection of scents ranging from Cyprés (a woody natural note blending cedar and cypress, bringing to mind long walks in the forest) to Chèvrefeuille (a floral and pastoral bouquet, mingling honeysuckle and wild flowers).

For the most part, smells have the power to evoke the past, transporting one through the recesses of memories. Nowhere is this more evident than the testimonial provided by one of Judy's customers from New York City. She was elated to find a

brand like Rigaud in Singapore, having used the Cyprés candles at her wedding reception back home. The moment she caught a waft of it inside the shop, she was filled with an ambrosial remembrance of that special day. In the same way, another overseas customer has expressed his obsession with the Lavande Sauvage candles, recalling many an afternoon of his childhood spent on the Lavender fields in Provence.

"It's important to have product depth in the store because each of us is drawn to different scents, sometimes even at different times of the day," said Judy.

Scent is just one endearing attribute; herbal medicinal therapy is another. Physical and psychological healing can be derived from aromatherapy candles simply by inhaling streams of essential oils that embalm the air. This alternative approach for treating the mind, body and spirit has certainly won over many who made the leap of faith to try it. Maybe only in the uncharted realm does the promise of booming success lie.

### SWEET SCENT OF SUCCESS

And business for candle marketers is certainly booming based on figures released by the National Candle Association. In the United States, retail sales of candles excluding accessories are estimated at approximately US\$2 billion annually! No wonder someone like Ronnie Lim, owner of Mendocino, has remained steadfast in the belief that candle ownership can only grow more intense in the coming years.

"Since we started the candle business about nine years ago, we have witnessed the changing lifestyles of well-heeled and more Westernised Singaporeans who inadvertently influence demand for candles locally. We think the spill over effects on the mass market are just beginning," he said.

To quell the surging appetite of his customers, Ronnie is constantly sourcing for unique candles from all parts of the world. Currently, Mendocino offers two types – scented and unscented. According to him, the aromatic Votivo candles have quite a strong following not just in the US but also in Singapore, while the unscented, no-need-to-be-lit and astoundingly larger Mendocino candles do appeal to house-proud owners and interior designers for the fact that they can double up as exquisite showpieces like coffee tables (coupled with a glass top) as well as art works and sculptures with thematic shades of the Anatolian civilisation as well as Brancusi-inspired motifs.

Ultimately, whether candles are used for home décor, aromatherapy, or simply to create a sensual mood, they will continue to serve an unfettered purpose – lighting up our lives in more ways than one. ■



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