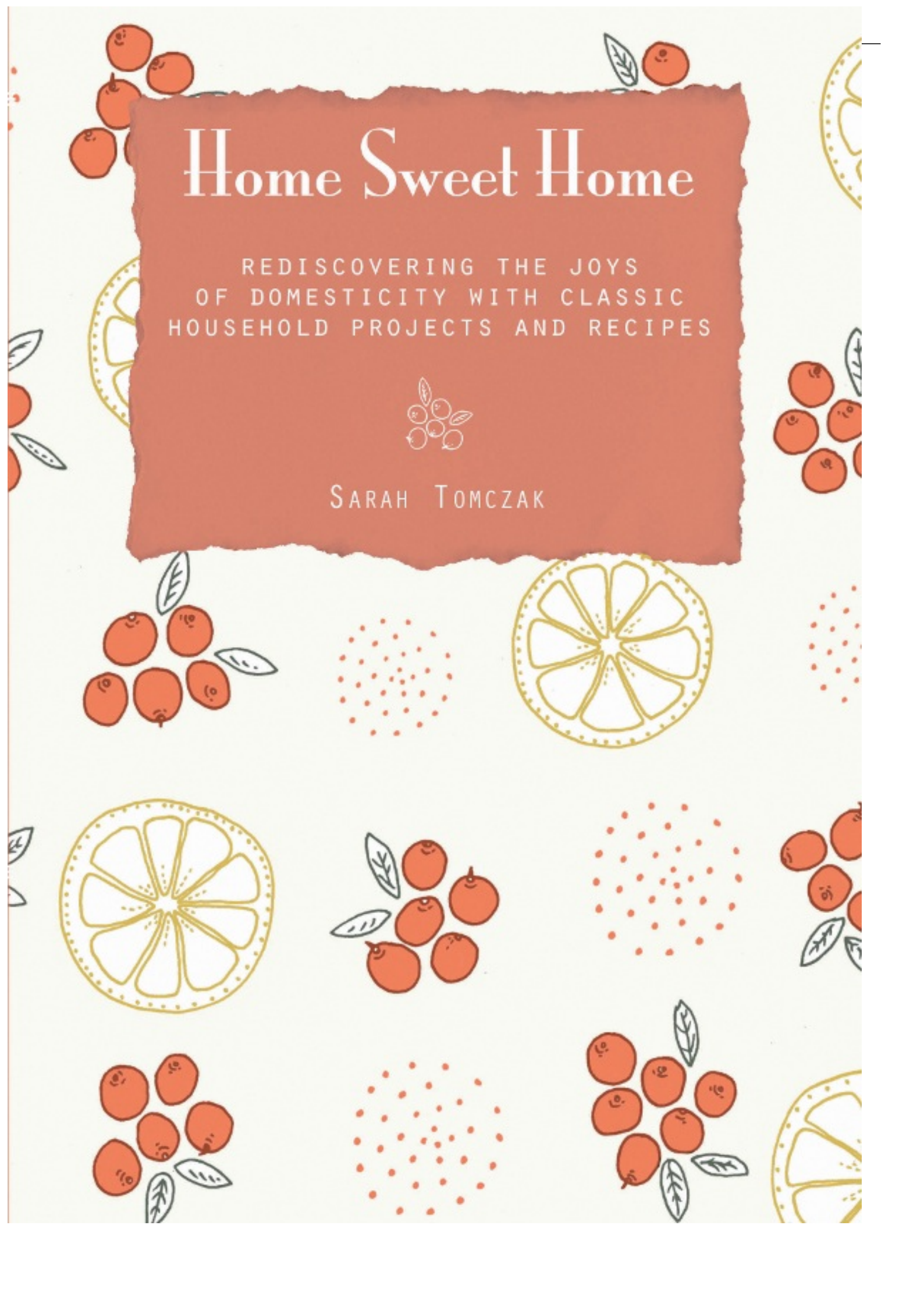


# Home Sweet Home

REDISCOVERING THE JOYS  
OF DOMESTICITY WITH CLASSIC  
HOUSEHOLD PROJECTS AND RECIPES



SARAH TOMCZAK



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- HOME SWEET HOME -

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**Sarah Tomczak is the author of four books, including the successful *How to Live Like a Lady*. She has been a journalist for over twelve years; her career includes stints in New York and London and she has written for everyone from *Us Weekly* to *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour* to *Conde Nast Brides*. She currently lives in London.**

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## - INTRODUCTION -

**In our modern age of rampant consumerism, many of us are losing touch with the traditional domestic activities that previous generations took for granted. We buy everything we need—and much that we don't—rather than making new or making do.**

**Especially in the kitchen, fewer people are taking the time to make or grow things themselves. But however convenient they might be, commercially-made products can never compare to the flavors and scents that you can create at home, or to the sense of accomplishment of rolling up your sleeves and making something from scratch. Mass-produced objects can never compete with the charm of items made with the love and care of your own hands, that are an expression of your individuality.**

**A generation or two ago, women knew how to keep an orderly and cost-effective home. Somehow they found time to raise children, keep an immaculate house, grow vegetables, make jam, do a spot of dressmaking, polish the silver, and bake bread, all without the aid of a fridge-freezer or microwave. Over the last fifty years, new gadgets, technology, and ingredients have become increasingly available to us and dramatically changed our home lives. Yet the increasing number of domestic appliances in the home has not actually given us any more spare time—in fact, we seem to have less today than ever before—and in many ways have removed a sense of personal touch from our homes.**

**In these pages you will find 100 simple, traditional projects and pieces of advice that will help you to rediscover the enjoyment to be had in your own home, whether baking, crafting, cooking, cleaning, or decorating. Taking a renewed interest, and indeed a measure of pride, in your home and making it beautiful does not mean a blind return to old-fashioned values—you should see it as a rediscovery of the domestic skills that can introduce pleasure, creativity, and a strong sense of satisfaction into our lives. It is a chance to pick up some of the best forgotten talents of generations past—with a few modern twists to match our twenty-first-century lifestyles.**

**Dip in and discover how to: bake scones; make strawberry jam; keep your knives sharp; dry and preserve fruits and herbs; remove a variety of different tough stains; restore wood furniture; mix a classic martini; press flowers; make your own bubble bath; and plenty of other ways to experience the pleasure of creating from scratch and make the most of your time spent at home.**

**I hope that you will find this an invaluable sourcebook of traditional projects that will bring a unique charm into your life and your home.**



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- TRADITIONAL STRAWBERRY JAM -

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12 CUPS (1.5 KG) STRAWBERRIES JUICE OF ONE LEMON  
5½ CUPS (1.25 KG) SUGAR

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**Makes approximately 6 jars**

**Prepare the strawberries by removing all tops and greenery, and chopping the large fruits into smaller chunks.**

**Put the strawberries and the lemon juice into a saucepan and simmer very gently for an hour.**

**Add the sugar and turn up the heat until the mixture sets—at around 220°F (105°C), if you have a cooking thermometer. Skim any scum off the top, then set aside until a skin starts to form.**

**Pour into sterilized jars, seal them and let cool. Then label them and store in a cool place.**



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## - BAKING BREAD -

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3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> CUPS (500 G) GRANARY, WHOLEWHEAT, OR WHITE BREAD FLOUR  
¼ OZ (7 G) SACHET FAST-ACTION DRIED YEAST  
1 TEASPOON SALT  
1¼ CUP (300 ML) HAND-HOT WATER  
2 TABLESPOONS OLIVE OIL  
1 TABLESPOON CLEAR HONEY

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**Mix the flour, yeast, and salt together in a large bowl with your hands.**

**Mix the hot water with the oil and honey, then stir into the dry ingredients.**

**Place the dough on a lightly floured surface and knead until it no longer feels sticky, sprinkling with a little more flour if needed.**

**Shape the dough as desired and place in a loaf tin, leaving room for expansion. Put the tin in a large plastic food bag and leave to rise for another hour, or until the dough no longer springs back when pressed.**

**Pre-heat the oven to 400°F (200°C). Make several slashes across the top of the loaf with a sharp knife, then bake for approximately 30 minutes, or until the loaf is risen and golden.**

**Remove from tin and place on a cooling rack, tapping the base to check if it is cooked: It should sound hollow. Leave to cool before slicing and serving.**



## - GROWING TOMATOES -

**If you're starting from seeds, fill a 3-inch (7.5-cm) pot with potting soil and light water. Scatter with a generous sprinkling of seeds and then add a thin layer of vermiculite—this is a natural mineral that insulates your seeds and helps them to grow; it is available at all good garden stores.**

**Place on a sunny windowsill to germinate—you should see your first seedlings in two weeks, and the plants should be strong enough to move into their own pots in eight weeks.**

**To transplant, hold each plant by its stem and leaves, gently digging into the soil to lift it out. Place each plant into its own 3-inch (7.5-cm) pot and water lightly. Once you can see roots coming through the drainage holes at the bottom, transplant into a 5-inch (12-cm) pot.**

**When the first branch of flowers appears, the tomato plants are ready to go into a larger pot, or growing bags. Break up the soil well before adding the plants, and scoop out enough soil to make room for the roots, ensuring that the ball of roots is fully covered by a layer of soil. Place a growing cane next to each plant, and as your plants grow, tie them to the cane at every 4 inches (10 cm).**

**To ensure you get the best tomatoes, once your plant has produced four flowering branches, snap out the growing stem from the top—and any shoots that grow in the leaf joints. You want one long, tall plant, as opposed to a bush, and this way the plant's energy will go into producing fruit.**

**Water your tomato plants every day, use fertilizer once a week, and keep in a sunny spot that's protected from the wind, ideally a greenhouse.**



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## - MAKING A LAVENDER BAG -

**Fragrantly scented sachets are a wonderful way to keep your wardrobes and drawers smelling fresh. They also make a lovely homemade gift.**

**Cut a rectangle from a piece of pretty fabric—about the size of a postcard.**

**Sew a 1/2-inch (1-cm) hem along one long edge of the rectangle. This will be the top of your lavender bag, so make sure any pattern in the fabric is oriented the right way.**

**Fold the rectangle in half, the right side of the fabric facing inward, so that the two short edges come together.**

**Starting from just beneath the hem, sew a 1/4-inch (1/2-cm) seam—to join the two short edges of the fabric. You should now have a fabric tube with the hemmed edge at the top.**

**Next, sew a 1/4-inch (1/2-cm) seam along the bottom edge of the tube, to complete the bag.**

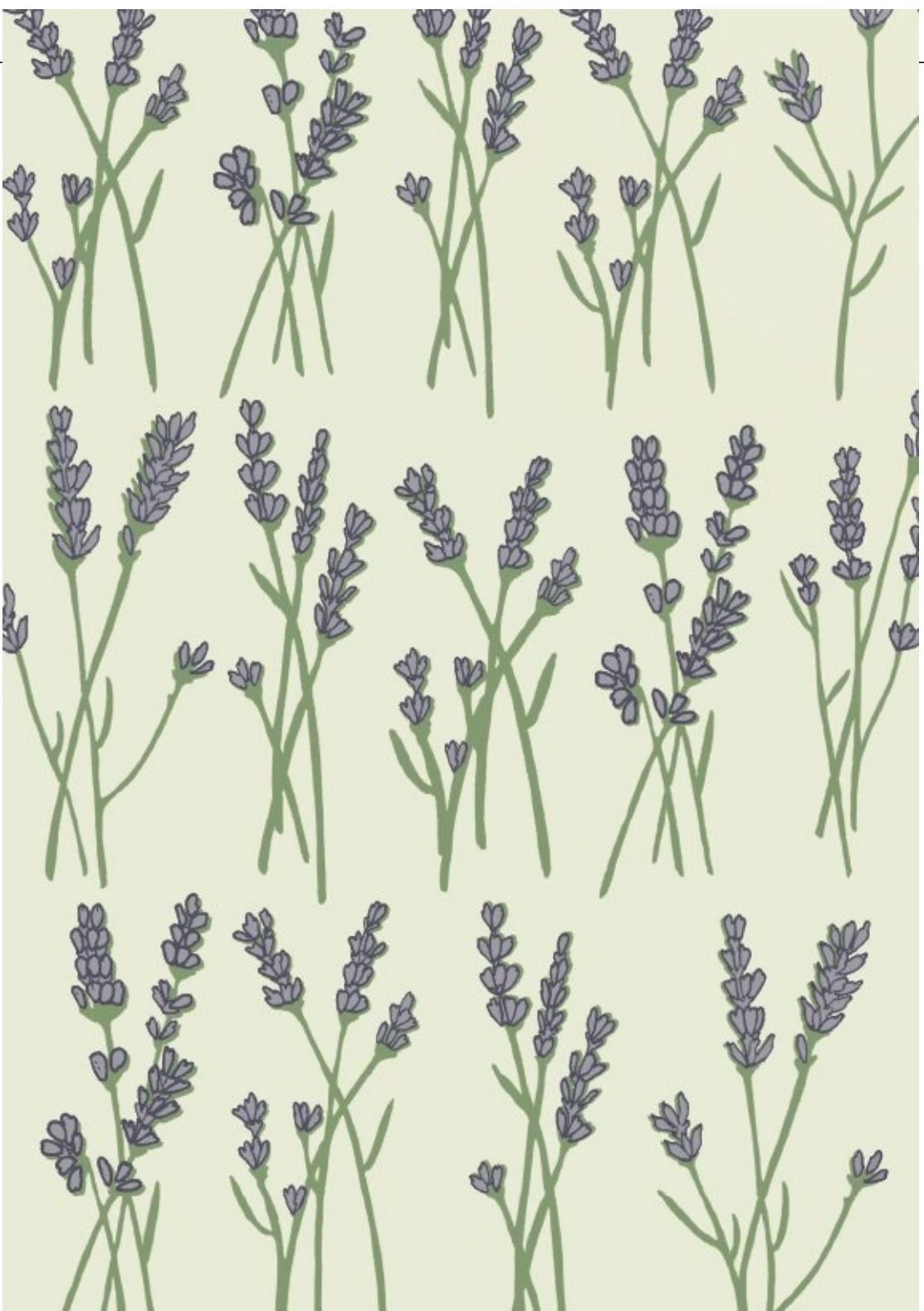
**Turn the fabric right side out, push out the corners fully, and press.**

**Thread a length of narrow ribbon through the hem at the top of the bag to make a drawstring. You can tie the ribbon to a safety pin to guide it through.**

**Fill the bag with a spoonful or two of dried lavender and pull the drawstring tight and close. Tie a double knot to keep it secure, and a bow to make it pretty.**

**Replace the lavender once every month or so.**





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## - USING AROMATHERAPY -

**Essential oils are a wonderful way to bring the healing benefits of aromatherapy into your life. They can be added to a hot bath, used to make pot pourri, burned in oil burners, or used as a massage oil.**

### LAVENDER

**Good for insomnia and to calm and soothe, add 4 to 8 drops to your bath, or put 4 drops on your pillow.**

### MAY CHANG

**Good for increasing energy levels, lifting your mood, and beating depression, put 4 to 6 drops in an oil burner, or 2 drops of may chang and frankincense oil in your bath for an energizing soak.**

### ROSEMARY

**Used to stimulate and invigorate, mix 10 drops with a base carrier oil and rub on your hands and feet to help you think clearly.**

## - BLENDING A MASSAGE OIL -

**To make a massage blend, first decide which scents soothe or invigorate you—do you prefer light and floral, zesty and fruity, or more woody and spicy fragrances?**

**Once you have made your choice, combine the essential oil(s) with a carrier oil such as sweet almond, grapeseed, or rosehip oil. Mix the carrier and essential oils together as per the ratio recommended on the bottle—this will vary from oil to oil. When storing your massage blend for future use, do so in a dark glass bottle away from direct heat or sunlight.**

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## - FAVORITE CHOCOLATE BROWNIES -

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2¼ CUPS (200 G) DARK CHOCOLATE  
½ CUP (100 G) UNSALTED BUTTER, SOFTENED  
1⅓ CUPS (250 G) GRANULATED SUGAR  
4 LARGE EGGS, BEATEN  
1 TEASPOON VANILLA EXTRACT  
⅔ CUP (60 G) ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR  
⅔ CUP (60 G) COCOA POWDER

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**Makes 16 brownies**

**Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C), grease a 8-inch (20-cm) baking pan, and line it with wax paper.**

**Break the dark chocolate into pieces and place in a bowl. Heat in a microwave on medium for 10 to 15 seconds, then check consistency. Repeat until the chocolate is smooth and fully melted. Set aside to cool slightly.**

**Put the butter and sugar into a bowl and beat with an electric mixer until light and fluffy, then gradually add the beaten eggs, mixing well after each.**

**Beat in vanilla extract, then pour in the cooled, melted chocolate and mix thoroughly. Sift the flour and cocoa powder into the mixture and gently fold in using a metal spoon. When fully combined, spoon the mixture into the prepared pan and spread evenly.**

**Bake in the oven for about 20 to 25 minutes until firm to the touch. It should be soft in the middle, but the top should be cracked. Let cool for at least 20 minutes in the pan. Then remove the brownie, place it on a cutting board, and cut into 2-inch (5-cm) squares.**

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## - PAINTING A ROOM -

**Take plenty of time choosing the right colors and finishes from the vast array of paints available these days: collect color cards, read the manufacturers' blurbs and ask advice from in-store experts.**

**Once the decision has been made, don your old clothes and clear the room in question or move all furniture into the center. Cover all flooring and remaining furniture with dustsheets.**

**Prepare all surfaces by filling gaps, lightly sandpapering lumps, bumps, and woodwork, and wiping away any dust.**

**Paint the ceiling first, working across in parallel bands, wiping away any wall splashes immediately. Two coats are normally required.**

**Next apply an undercoat to the woodwork if required; bare wood will need primer before the undercoat.**

**Once this is dry, start on the walls. Use a small brush to "cut in" around the edges of the woodwork and ceiling. If desired, you can use specialist masking tape for a straight finish on all edges. Then paint the main areas with a larger brush or roller working from top to bottom. Complete each wall before moving on to the next. Always allow each coat to fully dry before applying the next; at least two coats are usually required.**

**Finally, apply the top coat to the woodwork.**

**If you need to leave your paint tray or brushes for an hour or two, wrap them tightly in saran wrap so they don't dry out. Be sure to thoroughly wash out brushes at the end of each job.**

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## - TANGY LEMONADE -



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1¼ CUPS (240 G) SUGAR (ACCORDING TO TASTE)  
1 CUP (250 ML) HOT WATER  
1 CUP (250 ML) FRESHLY SQUEEZED LEMON JUICE (ABOUT 4-6 LEMONS)  
4 CUPS (1 LITER) COLD WATER  
ICE CUBES  
FRESH LEMON SLICES

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**Serves approximately 6**

**Dissolve the sugar in the hot water by heating it in a small saucepan over a low heat. The resulting mixture is known as sugar syrup.**

**Add the lemon juice and the sugar syrup to a jug.**

**Add the cold water until the mixture reaches the desired strength. Simply taste to try.**

**Put in the refrigerator for 30 to 40 minutes.**

**Serve with ice and a slice of lemon.**



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## **- ZESTY LEMON CURD -**

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1 CUP (225 G) BUTTER  
2 CUPS (450 G) SUGAR  
3 TABLESPOONS LEMON ZEST  
<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> CUP (150 ML) LEMON JUICE  
A PINCH OF SALT  
4 EGGS

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**Makes approximately 1 liter (4 cups)**

**Melt the butter in a heatproof bowl over a pan of simmering water.**

**Pour in the sugar, the lemon zest and juice, and the salt.**

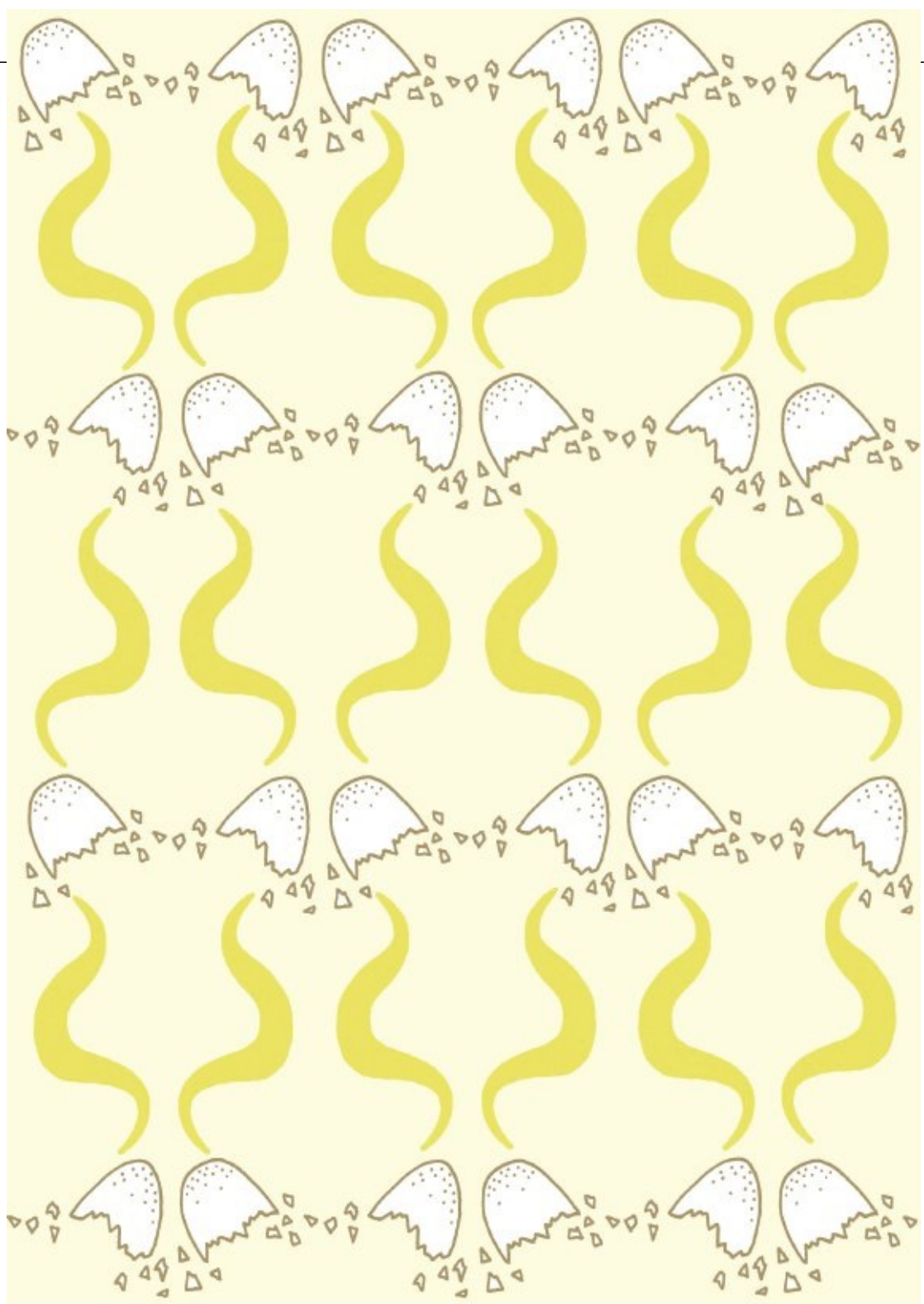
**Stir until the sugar has dissolved.**

**In a separate bowl, beat the eggs until frothy and stir in a good spoonful of the lemon mixture.**

**Return the mixture to the bowl over the simmering water and cook for 7 to 10 minutes, until thick.**

**Ladle into sterilized jars, cover and let cool.**

**Store in the refrigerator.**



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## - DECADENT CHOCOLATE TRUFFLES -

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1¼ CUPS (280 G) DARK CHOCOLATE—IDEALLY 70% COCOA  
1¼ CUPS (284 ML) HEAVY CREAM  
¼ CUP (50 G) UNSALTED BUTTER  
A PINCH OF SEA SALT

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**Makes approximately 50 truffles**

**Chop the chocolate into small pieces and place in a large bowl.**

**Put the cream and butter into a saucepan and heat gently, so that the butter melts and the cream simmers.**

**Remove the saucepan from the heat and pour over the chocolate pieces. Stir, so that the chocolate melts and you get a glossy smooth mixture. Add salt.**

**If you want to flavor your truffles, add your preferred flavoring now: Try 2 tablespoons of brandy, Grand Marnier, or coconut rum; the juice and zest of an orange; a tablespoon of crystallized ginger; or a teaspoon of fresh chili.**

**Leave the mixture to cool, then chill in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours.**

**To shape your truffles into balls, dip a dessert spoon or melon baller into a cup of boiling water and it will easily glide through your chocolate mixture.**

**To decorate your truffles, roll in toasted dried coconut or flaked almonds, or sprinkle with cocoa powder or crystallized ginger. To coat in chocolate, melt pieces of chocolate in a bowl over a saucepan of boiling water. Allow to cool slightly, then spoon over the top until well-coated. Leave to cool and harden.**

**The truffles will keep in an airtight container for three days, or freeze for a month.**



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