ANTI-WRINKLE TREATMENTS for PERFECT SKIN. By Pierre Jean Cousin. Storey Books, N. Adams, MA. 2001. 25 color photos, 128 pp. Softcover $16.95. The tinted pages and crisp photography make this an attractive, as well as useful book. Cousin’s emphasis is on facial masks, with two-dozen recipes for skin types described. He also gives directions for making simple skin toners and a few lotions. The ingredients are all natural—mostly foods with the addition of hydrosols (Handy charts display the uses of essential oils and carrier oils, as well as the water portion from essential oil distillation). A helpful extension of information not typically covered in beauty books are treatments for skin problems, such as psoriasis and rosacea.

HEALING HOME SPA: Soothe Your Symptoms, Ease Your Pain, & Age-Proof Your Body with Pleasure Remedies. By Valerie Gennari Cooksley. Prentice Hall Press, Paramus, NJ. 2003. 528 pp. Softcover $19.95. This hefty reference offers plenty of beyond-spa problems such as PMS and bronchitis. Actually, the title is somewhat misleading. Although there are ideas on how to do expensive spa techniques at home, this is more a text on physical healing, along the lines of Cooksley’s excellent Aromatherapy: A Lifetime Guide to Healing with Essential Oils [see AHA 12-4]—just reprinted as Aromatherapy: Soothing Remedies to Restore, Rejuvenate, and Heal—in which she explains the healing benefits of aromatherapy backed by studies. The less technical Spa book also covers breath work, diet, herbs, flower essences, hydrotherapy, massage, yoga, and music therapy, making it a good introduction to complementary treatments. The author is an oncology RN who graduated from the Institutes of Aromatherapy and Bastyr University, and co-founded The Institute of Integrative Aromatherapy.

THE EMPEROR of SCENT: A True Story of Perfume and Obsession. By Chandler Burr. Random House Trade, New York, NY. 2004. 352 pp. Paperback $13.95. This engaging detective story follows University College of London biophysicist Dr. Luca Turin’s struggle to present his theory that the nose deciphers smell by using vibrations of smell molecules rather than their shape. In the journal Nature, Turin, a likable and brilliant, but eccentric, scientist has an unusually sensitive nose that can distinguish the components of most any scent. He has been compared to the hero of Patrick Süskind’s novel Perfume, except his story is true. He is an obsessive collector of rare fragrances who has access to the secretive, big-seven fragrance corporations. He wrote Parfums: Le Guide in 1992. Burr describes his own difficulties as a journalist during the four-year project and does a remarkable job explaining the man behind the idea. He takes readers into the perfume industry and the scientific publishing world. He wrote A Separate Creation (1996) and contributes to The New York Times.

ESSENCE and ALCHEMY: A Book of Perfume. By Mandy Aftel. North Point Press, New York, NY. 2002. 256 pp. Softcover $14.00. An appealing writing style and colorful anecdotes drew me into this treatise on the history and making of perfume. It is one of those books that reads like a novel as it explores the romantic, bathing, and spiritual aspects of perfumes. Who would not find fascination in the manipulation of fragrance from the palace perfumers of ancient Egypt to alchemists searching for Divine Essence, or contemporary pheromone researchers trying “to snare the sex drive?” Aftel, an advocate of the almost lost art of natural perfumes, explains how people have taken what seems an instinctive pleasure in rubbing scents on their skin for centuries. She briefly discusses making perfume—with essential oils instead of synthetics—using a perfumer’s techniques and emphasizing experimentation to develop an “olfactory consciousness.” A few sample formulas get the reader started; however, do not expect a how-to book as much as a description of the very soul of perfuming. The book won the Sense of Smell Institute’s Richard B. Solomon Award.

INCENSE: Rituals, Mystery, Lore. By Gina Hyams. Chronicle Books, San Francisco, CA. 2004. 96 pp. Hardcover $16.95. This is a guide to aromatherapy by means of incense. A stylish volume graced with nice photography, it is sure to appeal to the gift market. It engages the reader with the rich history of incense use from Japan, India, the Pacific, to the Americas. Hyams regards the use of scent as an everyday luxury that is becoming a trendsetter. She emphasizes the use of top-quality incenses made with essential oils and discusses their ingredients. They are used to enhance such things as spirituality, meditation, romance, emotional well-being, and to increase energy, focus, or relaxation.

THE ESSENCE of INCENSE: Bringing Fragrance into the Home. By Diana Rosen. Storey Book, N. Adams, MA. 2002. 125 color photos, 125 pp. Softcover $14.95. Eye-catching photography and layouts give this book sensual appeal. With an engaging writing style, Rosen views incense as a tool that helps you detach from life’s demands by allowing fragrance to establish a sense of spiritual peace and tranquility. Relaxing exercises are suggested to carry the mood. Incense is used to evoke different atmospheres in a room. Creative suggestions go beyond burning incense to placing dried sage leaves underneath your doormat so the scent is emitted when entering your home. However, I could do without the synthetic cherry, watermelon, and lilac scents. Rosen’s books include The Book of Green Tea [see AHA 16:3]. She edits Tea Talk, a newsletter about tea.
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