

# Bay Oil: The Essential Oil for Men

Since its discovery in the 20th century, bay rum has been used as a tonic to treat muscle problems. It was found later on that the essential oil of bay, also known as bay oil or bay rum oil, contained antimicrobial compounds and other beneficial properties. Discover more about this spicy plant oil by reading the information below.

## What Is Bay Oil?

Bay essential oil is obtained from the bay tree, an evergreen tree that originated in the West Indies, but is now harvested mostly in Morocco and Spain. The bay oil (*Pimenta racemosa*) is often confused with the bay laurel essential oil (*Laurus nobilis*). While these two plant oils share similar qualities, they come from two different plants.<sup>1</sup>

The bay tree is also different from the bayberry shrub, from which early American settlers produced candies. The bay tree belongs to the plant family that produces allspice berries, also called pimento and Jamaica pepper.<sup>2</sup> It grows up to 30 feet and possesses long-pointed leaves, with small yellow or white flowers and black berries. The oil is extracted from the fresh leaves of the bay tree through steam distillation. The product is a yellow liquid with a strong spicy fragrance, which resembles that of clove oil.

## Uses of Bay Oil

Like bay rum, West Indies bay oil is frequently used in cosmetics and perfumery, specifically in men's personal care products. It also works as a skin toner and can help against razor burns and breakouts on skin.<sup>3</sup> Unlike other plant oils, like rose or geranium oils (which are more "feminine"), its spicy and masculine aroma makes it a good choice for men.

Bay oil is also considered an analgesic in aromatherapy, relieving muscle and joint pain and neuralgia. It may also be used as a massage oil or added to bath water to induce a relaxing effect. It is added to hair products like shampoos and for hair loss treatment. You may also use it to treat dandruff and oily or flaky scalp, and to give your hair a vibrant shine.<sup>4</sup>

Historically, bay rum oil served as an insect repellent, and is particularly effective at moth abatement.<sup>5</sup> It is often added to fumigants, vaporizers, sprays, and other insecticides.

## Composition of Bay Oil

The essential oil of bay owes its analgesic properties to three chemical constituents: eugenol, chavicol (estragole), and myrcene. Because of the presence of eugenol, the oil can cause irritations and should be used under the guidance of an aromatherapy practitioner.

## Benefits of Bay Oil

One of the main benefits of bay oil is its ability to ease pain brought by neuralgia,<sup>6</sup> which is severe pain that occurs due to a damaged nerve. It can also stimulate blood vessel contraction, and relieve pressure on the nerves. This can considerably alleviate pain.

Bay oil can also reduce pain from joint and muscle problems (including sprains and arthritis), and coughs and colds, viral infections, and flu. It also functions as a decongestant and can be used to treat respiratory problems when inhaled.<sup>7</sup>

The prevention of hair loss is another promoted benefit of the oil from the West Indies bay tree. As an astringent, the oil triggers contractions in muscles and tissues. It fortifies the hold of scalp on hair roots, as well as strengthens gums and stops the sagging of skin and muscles. Hemorrhages can also be prevented when using bay oil, which can cause blood vessels to contract.

Bay oil, along with thyme oil, also showed antifungal activity. In a 2008 study, out of 26 plant species tested, thyme and bay oils were the most effective against *Phytophthora cactorum* and *Cryponectria parasitica*.<sup>8</sup>

Further research<sup>9</sup> has demonstrated the antibacterial effects of bay essential oil, along with 9 other essential oils – cinnamon, grapefruit, lemongrass, thyme, clary sage, wintergreen, clove, allspice, and camphor. These oils were tested on [methicillin-resistant \*Staphylococcus aureus\* \(MRSA\)](#) and methicillin-sensitive *Staphylococcus aureus* (MSSA). Researchers found that these oils were more efficient in eliminating the bacterial strains than vancomycin, the primary drug used for MRSA and MSSA treatment.

West Indies bay oil, as well as bay laurel oil, exhibited bacteria-fighting properties against other pathogenic species, such as *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, and *Listeria*.<sup>10</sup>

## How to Make Bay Oil

Bay essential oil is obtained when you steam-distill the fresh leaves of the bay tree. The leaves are gathered from a tree aged at least 5 year old. Salt or seawater is often added in the still. About 0.5 -1.5 percent of the weight by volume can be extracted into Bay Oil .

## How Does Bay Oil Work?

Bay oil is primarily used topically. It can be used as a massage oil, or added to burners and vaporizers. Its effects, however, may vary depending on the amount you use. Higher amounts of bay oil may produce a sedating effect, while smaller amounts can serve as a stimulant.<sup>11</sup>

Here are several ways you can enjoy the benefits of bay essential oil:<sup>12</sup>

- **Improve sleep** by mixing 10 drops of bay oil, 2 to 3 drops of sweet orange oil, 1 drop of clove essential oil, and almond oil as a carrier oil.
- **Relieve depressive symptoms** by blending 2 drops of bay oil, 4 drops of black pepper oil, 4 drops of bergamot oil, and 1 tablespoon of jojoba oil.

- **Treat flu symptoms** by adding a mixture of 2 drops of bay oil and 4 drops of myrtle oil in a diffuser.
- **Treat dandruff** by adding 2 drops of bay oil to your shampoo.

It is also crucial to remember that bay oil, as well as bay rum and the fruit of the Bay tree, possesses toxic properties and should not be ingested.<sup>13</sup>

## Is Bay Oil Safe?

Undiluted essential oils can cause skin irritations, and bay essential oil is no different. Prior to use, it must first be mixed with a carrier oil, such as almond oil, [coconut oil](#), or olive oil. Bay oil blends well with several essential oils, including eucalyptus, lavender, geranium, rosemary, thyme, and orange oils.

Also, essential oils must first be tested to determine if you're allergic or not. Doing a skin test before use is an ideal option. You may also apply a drop of the diluted bay oil on a small portion of your skin, and observe for any adverse effects.

Due to the compound eugenol, it is advisable to use very minute amounts of bay oil. It was found that the oil is not irritating to human skin at 10 percent, but it is still recommended to use topically a maximum concentration of 3 percent.<sup>14</sup>

## Side Effects of Bay Oil

Although bay oil works as an antiseptic and decongestant for respiratory ailments, the oil's eugenol content can irritate mucous membranes and skin. It should be used sparingly or upon the advice of a physician or professional aromatherapist.

The chemical's presence also suggests that the oil may be hepatotoxic and may halt blood clotting. It should not be used by people suffering from kidney and liver diseases and cancer, or those using anticoagulants. It is strictly advised not to apply the oil onto sensitive or damaged skin, as it can cause further harm.

Pregnant or nursing women should avoid the use of bay oil even after its dilution to prevent any sensitizations. Children and infants should also be kept away from bay oil due to their delicate nature.

For more information on bay essential oil or any other plant oils, I would advise you to consult your doctor or a qualified aromatherapist.