

IntegriSENTIAL Rose Oil

Bulgaria was the home of **Rose oil** for many years, supplying the world's perfume industry from Geneva to New York including Grasse. Two hundred years after the invention of rose distillation in Kazanlak, the Bulgarian rose oil reached a climax just before the First World War. The historical ups and downs during the 20th century caused the production of Bulgarian roses to decrease and by the 1980's its reputation was virtually unheard of. In the middle of the 1990's however, there was a turn around in trends and a complete renaissance of the Bulgarian rose: high quality productions with new plantations and new distilleries. Today Bulgaria has become once again a major player in rose production.

We were a part of this renewal from a very early stage: Bulgaria was set up in 1996. 250 acres of roses were planted and an old factory was renovated. This book is a tribute to all the Bulgarians who have contributed to the success in their country. It is the discovery of a true story about the rose campaign in Bulgaria. The result of a strong bond between a flower, a region, know-how and the labor of many people, determined to bring the unique perfume of rose oil alive.

Roses in the valley



Near Kazanlak, at the foot of the Balkan range, Rose Valley extends over 80 km. Fields of Damask roses have been grown here for over 300 years.

The fields in June

From the end of May to mid-June, every morning fifteen thousand pickers work the fields as soon as dawn breaks. They pick every budding flower with their fingers before midday.



The rose with thirty petals



Originating in Persia, the Damask Rose, with thirty petals, is the richest in essential oil. It is ideally picked just before it blooms when the dew protects its perfume from evaporation.

Three hours for one bag of flowers

At the end of the row of roses, the last few flowers needed before closing the bag, after three hours work. In this fifty acres field near Shipka, at the height of the campaign, three hundred pickers are needed every morning to pick each flower.



Five thousand flowers



Five thousand flowers make up one bag and experienced pickers can fill three bags in a morning ; the same labor every morning for the 25 days of the campaign.

White Rose



There are a few rows of the Rosa alba, a white Damask rose with a very intense perfume, which is no longer used because it yields half the oil of the others.

Mother and daughter

The end of the day for mother and daughter before returning to their Tzigany village. Many Tzyganies live in the valley and others come from the north to pick roses before cherry and grape season.



The dance of the carts



Horse and carts , a red lucky charm on its forehead.
These horse and carts come and go accross the field collecting the bags and taking them to the weighing tent.

The weighing, at the heart of life in the field



Under sticks and a tarpaulin sheet, the scales and a fire on cold mornings. The meeting place for the pickers, transporters and also the managers of the fields and distillery.

The moment of the count

A bag weighs on average 15kgs. Each picker receives one ticket per bag and they are paid twice a week.



The captive oil



Ready for transportation to the distillery, the bags are closed so that none of their concealed treasure can escape: 4 to 5 grams of oil...



Arrival at the factory

Nine o'clock. The first bags arrive at the factory in Zimnitsa. They are distributed between the stills for the oil and extractors for the concrete.

Rose gold

Thirty bags of flowers are needed to fill each still. In only a few minutes the factory is full of the scent of roses. More than fifty tons of flowers are dealt with every day.



Copper and stainless steel



In the factory the stills are made of copper and the extractors are made of stainless steel. Distillation goes on for three weeks, night and day.

Turning flower into oil



Two hours in the steam of the still to separate the oil from the flowers. This is the first stage of the distillation process which ends in the secrecy of the florentine vessel room.

Six million flowers in a bottle

Collecting the oil everyday in the copper florentine is a veritable ceremony. In the glass vase, the perfume of 5 to 6 million roses !



The flowers of pride



From the origins of the roses' essential oil to its golden era, from decadence to renaissance, the Kazanlak rose is part of Bulgarian heritage. Each year its perfume in the fields embodies the pride of a long tradition and willingness to perpetuate its history.