

# SPREADING THE LIGHT

*SUE CADE meets the candlemakers of Ottery St Mary getting fragrantly creative with recycled wax*

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WHAT'S more relaxing than a room filled with delicately fragranced candles emanating a subtle glow? Even better when the candles carry green credentials.

The first I heard of the Recycled Candle Company was when their new shop in Ottery St Mary opened to a fanfare of excitement. Soon after, I was enveloped in a sensory cloud of loveliness when I went to meet designers and candlemakers, Richard Hills-Ingyon and Sargon Latchin.

Richard started making candles at a young age. His childhood was spent at the Sid Valley Country Hotel owned by his parents. Busy with the hotel, his mother gave her offspring a candle-making kit as a rainy-day activity. Richard was immediately hooked. "For some reason I just got it, enjoying the satisfaction of melting, mixing and creating a candle."

His future career was almost abruptly halted after he got carried away and melted the moulds, leaving wax dripping over countertops, cabinets and carpets. "My dad was not happy," he says. But Richard persevered, collecting ever more professional moulds and equipment. A degree in drama led to a stint treading the boards, with performances for Sidmouth Rep and at Edinburgh, but ultimately, he could not resist the call of the candles. "Being a candle maker seemed a more secure career than acting!"

Richard's candle making process is tried and tested, based on experience gleaned over 19 years rather than a scientific method. "I use any type of wax candle. Everything is dissolved in a huge melt then filtered to remove bits of wick, soot, matchsticks and sustainers – the metal bits you find at the bottom of tealights." When the silt settles, Richard removes different layers; the cleanest is for visible products in jars, whilst clean but slightly discoloured is perfect for coloured candlesticks and bases of pillar



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candles. Majorly discoloured wax – around ten percent of the recycled wax – is used for firelighters. Richard came up with the idea for these in his hotel room when attending a trade show. They incorporate natural materials like flowers, pine cones and moss, and look too beautiful to burn.

It was when Sargon became involved that the Recycled Candle Company really started to take off. The pair met in London when Sargon was studying for his Masters in architecture, with Richard making the models for Sargon's finals. As well as being Richard's partner in the business Sargon is an architect and designer in his own right. He exudes the exotic; half Iraqi, half Scottish, London-born and brought up in Dubai with five creative siblings, and his flair for design was just what the business needed. As we talk, Sargon pours wax into moulds with a steady hand – this ability to multi-task is impressive!

The breakthrough for the business was persuading big hotels to hand over their old candles for recycling, made far easier when Richard realised every hotel had a 'green team' desperate to tick a box. Everything snowballed. Old candles arrived not just from hotels but churches including Southwark Cathedral and St Martin's in the Field. A launch at the *Country Living* Christmas Fair found Richard making 1,500 candles in a single week.

#### HOW TO... GET THE BEST FROM FRAGRANCES IN YOUR HOME

Our senses get used to smells. If you have a candle with a lid, blow it out and pop the lid back on. This keeps the fragrance contained so when you open it again, you will smell it anew and as strongly as the first time.

Mixing fragrances is down to personal taste, but the more similar fragrances are then the more likely it is that they will work together. Sargon suggests picking particular fragrances for different areas of the home. You could try Bitter Orange and Ylang in the bedroom, and White Jasmine and Mint in the kitchen.

Richard's tip to remember is to trim the wick to around half a centimetre before lighting it. This is something that many people forget but it really helps the burn of the candle – possibly more than anything else.

The Recycled Candle Company's Christmas trees all have the same fragrance, Winter Spice, so you can mix and match colours and keep continuity of smell.

#### BECOME A CANDLE MAKER

Workshops are run at the shop in Ottery St Mary where you can learn to make candles during a four-hour course. Richard explains the background and discuss the different types of wax and recycling wax and Sargon discusses different fragrances, how he writes the brief for a new fragrance and the process of creating one.

You'll make a 30cl glass candle with a choice of glass (clear or frosted) and fragrance; a Christmas tree or pillar candle; a firelighter. *Courses cost £40 and can be booked through the website.*



Richard Hills-Ingyon and Sargon Latchin

Over 30 retail outlets now sell the candles, including Powderham Castle. A shop seemed the next logical move and Richard and Sargon found themselves in Ottery. "We saw the shop, immediately knew it was the right thing to do and just went for it," Sargon says. The front of the shop boasts tempting displays of candles and the magic of melting takes place at the back.

A UK-based French perfumer designs their fragrances - Sargon says they are fortunate to be one of a very few small businesses the company deigns to work with. On the website, every fragrance has a quote attached to it. I love an F Scott Fitzgerald quote paired with Bitter Orange and Ylang, a scent Sargon says he feels captures the essence of "an older sister's glamorous best friend." The perfectly formed Christmas trees, available in traditional green, festive red or snowy white, are all scented with Winter Spice. Sargon takes great satisfaction from the quote he paired with the trees: Bah Humbug.

I was encouraged to sniff a new fragrance based on Turner's watercolours. It sounds fanciful, but when Sargon wafts a candle under my nose I am transported to the seashore. "I wanted a 'wet' floral," Sargon explains. "We thought about things that smell watery; celery, mint, turpentine and petrichor – the earthy scent of stone when it's wet."

Richard and Sargon are passionate about recycling and the venture is a wonderful thing. Reducing wax sitting in landfill and creating exquisite products that make a home smell like a Turner watercolour. What's not to like? ♦

[therecycledcandlecompany.co.uk](http://therecycledcandlecompany.co.uk)



Pouring the hot wax requires a steady hand