

Smells to better describe [medieval](#) RPGs

<u>Type of smell</u>	<u>Common sources (and their aromas)</u>
Fragrant	rosewater (soft), clothes sachets (lavender), nutmeg (spicy), beeswax candles (honey), incense (sour) & myrrh (resin), posies (dried flowers)
Woody/ resinous	open fires/braziers/torches/chimneys, grilled meat , tangy (smokehouse), vellum (old leather), cardamom (sweet), dill (sharp), fern (moss), pine forest (mouldy), tar (sweet musk), tobacco (earthy bittersweet), cedar (sweet), sandalwood (spicy), birch, patchouli, oak, hemp
Fruity (non-citrus)	apples (sharp) , pears (soft), black plums, strawberries, apricots, peaches, dates, rum (smoky)
Acrid (chemical)	Old books (musty), hot iron (rock dust), fresh urine (ammonia) , iron (blood), brimstone/swamps / tidal flats (rotten eggs), ozone (chlorine), cat urine (bitter)
Minty	Mint sauce/vinegar/tooth scrub (mint), barber's mouthwash (peppermint), spirits/sorcery (tingling)
Sweet	baked bread , basil (spicy), fresh hops/hay/hemp/rushes , vanilla (bourbon), freshly-ploughed field, moist dirt, fresh manure , pumpkin (burnt sugar)
Sharp	mouldy hay (sour), fresh lemons (tart), orange (sweet), vinegar, poultice (onions)
Pungent	cinnamon (bittersweet), cloves (spicy), thyme (lemony/woody), mature cheese, ripe onions, mildew, cut grass, animals (wet dog), animals (musk), stale sweat (sour), sea air (briny tang), putrid meat (gangrenous), stagnant water, excrement, rotten fish, acrid/burnt fat (tallow candles) , vomit
Decayed	old/wet leaves (compost), rotten wood, scorched hair, burnt flesh, decomposed meat, death (corpse)

Strength: stench > stink > reek > odour > aroma > smell > scent > whiff > hint > trace

Quality: decomposed, putrid, rotten, rancid, mouldy, musty, stale, burnt, grilled, baked, damp, moist, fresh, ripe, foetid

Syntax = [type] [strength] of [quality] [aroma] [source], e.g. Fragrant scent of fresh roses (from a bowl of rosewater)

Particularly smelly places

- Tannery: **foul stench** of rancid urine as skins were scoured (decaying flesh), limed (soaked in urine) and scraped (unhaired) to become rawhides which were bated (kneaded in dung) and tanned (pickled) to become leather
- Slaughterhouse (butchers): **pungent stench** of blood, offal (animal entrails) & rotting meat
- Fish market: **sharp stink** of rotting fish laden with the sour reek of stale sweat
- Meat market: **pungent aroma** of decaying meat intermixed with the sour reek of stale sweat
- Livestock market (poultry/sheep/cattle)/horse fair: **steamy reek** of droppings/dung, fresh piss & sour sweat
- Herb market: **wonderful blend** of pungent, sweet & fruity aromas
- Spice stall: **fragrant, woody & sweet aromas** of cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, pepper, ginger, cumin & coriander
- Bakery: **heady aroma** of warm yeast, baked bread, sweet cinnamon & sour sweat
- Cook-shop/kitchen: **mouth-watering aroma** of smoky fires, stewed cabbage, baked pies & grilled meats
- Livery stables: **pungent mix** of ripe dung, damp hay, horse hoof, sweaty leather & fresh oats
- [Blacksmith: acrid smoke from the blazing forge heavy with the bitter taste of coal dust & hot iron](#)
- Workshops: **pungent and resinous blend** of stale sweat, old smoke & trade smell (stone dust/wood shavings)
- Inn: **acrid reek** of tallow candles, sour sweat, fresh rushes, stale beer & straw mattress
- Tavern: **sweet stink** of mouldy straw, musty urine, stale beer, sour sweat & vomit?
- Streets, lanes: **ripe stench** of excrement & urine as gutters are a fetid stream of turbid water
- Privy/latrine/garderobe/cesspit: **pungent stench** of foetid excrement & sour urine
- Midden: **pungent reek** of decomposing vegetables, putrid meat & other kitchen scraps
- Slums: **depressing reek** of sour sweat, stale urine, rotten wood & acrid stink of rush lights (soaked in tallow)
- Apothecary: **unique aroma** of acrid compounds and fragrant herbs with sharp overtones
- Library: **unique whiff** of mouldy dust, musty books & beeswax candles
- Offices/scriptorium: **soft aroma** of old leather (vellum), beeswax & incense dominated by the acrid reek of ink
- Theatre: **exciting blend** of fragrant perfumes, spicy pomanders, beeswax candles & the sour stink of stale sweat
- Church/hospital: **fragrant scent** fresh rushes, beeswax candles, dusty stonework & a whiff of incense
- Hotel/manor: **fragrant blend** of fresh rushes, sandalwood, beeswax candles & dried flowers
- Castles: **odd blend** of fresh rushes, sweet scent of beeswax candles & damp, musty stonework
- Catacombs/dungeon: **musty odour** of mould and damp earth followed by a faint scent of decay
- Moat/docks: **foetid reek** of stagnant water laden with the pungent odour of rotten eggs from swampy mudflats
- Cottage: **musty scent** of damp earth, smoked beams & mouldy thatch
- Forest: **rich aroma** of rotting leaves, old ferns, white moss, golden musk, tree bark & moist mushrooms
- Meadow: **sweet scent** of ripe meadow grass fused with the fragrance of a dozen wild flowers
- Seaport: **pungent blend** of rotten fish and wet timbers with the briny tang of sea air & sweet musk of fresh tar
- Battlefield: **terrible stink** of sour sweat, fresh blood, stale urine, rotting meat laced with the decayed stench of death