
Soapmaking

by Mistress Elina

It is believed that happenstance brought about the origins of soap [Image] during the time of the early Greeks. The elements seem to have come together on Mt. Sopa, where it is recorded that there was an alter at which animals were sacrificed and then burned. The wood ash from the fire served as lye. The fat from the animal, rendered by the fire, made a suitable lard. After a good rain the washerwoman noticed that the water in the mountain's stream was somewhat better than normal. The process has been refined a little bit, but the elements are the same Lye, Lard and Water.

Most recipes for soap are for large batches of 64 or 100 bars or more. Since you probably don't buy lard by the 55 gallon drum, nor own a caldron that seats six this may be a little impractical. This recipe is for about two bars, just enough to experiment with.

Materials

You will need a glass or ceramic mixing bowl of a medium size and a wood spoon (o.k., stainless steel will do in a pinch.) Under no circumstances should aluminum be used -- for anything in this process. Lye dissolves aluminum! You also need a measuring cup. That's it for the hardware.

Lard can be found in most grocery stores right next to the gallon can of Crisco. It comes in one pound packages that look like a pound of butter in a green and white box. Get the lard, not the Crisco; the one pound box will make two batches. Lye is pretty easy too. It will be found probably in the same store, next to the Drano. You need pure lye, such as in Red Devil. Since you can't buy one or two ounces from the cans, buy the whole thing. It's cheap and you will have more than enough to last the better part of the

decade. You will also need water, but most people can get that locally.

Now for the fun part. You need a mold (not a fungus.) It can be as simple as a pyrex Custard dish or a hand carved creation with your own makers mark in relief. Please do not line the mold in aluminum foil. Usually no lining is needed. The soap contracts as it cools and pulls away from the mold.

Directions

1. Measure 4oz of luke warm tap water. Keep this in a Pyrex measuring cup or put it in something that will not mind sudden heat. Carefully add two tablespoons of lye. Stir. Let sit to cool.
2. Heat about half the pound of lard until liquid. Pour into your bowl.
3. Let these two items cool down before they are mixed. They should be about body temperature. Please don't put your finger in the lye to test it, feeling the outside of the dish should be sufficient.
4. When they have cooled slowly add the lye to the lard and stir. Mix these up well. Stir constantly until step 5.
5. When they have reached the consistency of sour cream add any colors or perfumes, spices or whatnot, (see below) then pour into mold.
6. Cover your mess with a towel or pot holder or something and let sit. Uncover in 24 hours, more or less.
7. Unmold on the second or third day and let sit for three or four weeks for best results.

Other fun things to do with soap

Butter Soap - Great for the skin. Instead of lard use butter.

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Rose Soap - Use rose water, not tap and throw in a handful of dried petals in step 5.

Clove Soap - Toss in two tsp of ground clove.

Cinnamon Soap - Only tsp this time.

Castile Soap - Replace 3/4th the lard with 6oz of Olive Oil.

Orange Soap - Two or three tsp of Orange Peel, grated.

Ginger Soap - Two tsp ground ginger.

Notes:

Almost any pungent spice will make an effective addition to soaps.

Strong dye liquors may also be used.

To make soap float, whip air into it with an egg beater when it is the consistency of Sour Cream and pour in mold as usual.