

Home Soapmaking!

An easy way to make soap at home!

THE HISTORY OF SOAP

SOAP WAS NOT WIDELY USED in the classical world. The Greeks & Romans cleaned themselves by bathing in hot water & scraping their bodies with a sort of blunt instrument called a "strigil". Pliny mentions soap as: "An invention of the Gauls for giving a sheen to the hair". Later Romans recommended its medicinal use as a cure for elephantiasis & septic cuts but not for everyday washing.

UNTIL THE 1850'S THE WIDESPREAD USE OF SOAP WAS LIMITED by the soap tax which made it an expensive luxury item. The abolition of the tax in the English budget (1853) came at a time when hygiene & sanitation were being pursued by pioneers with Victorian energy, earnestness & fanaticism. Prime Minister Gladstone described the tax in his budget speech as "an article of taxation which is most injurious both to the comfort & health of the people".

SOAP IS COMPOSED OF LONG MOLECULES. One end of each is water soluble & the other is insoluble in water but soluble in oil & grease. The molecules form a thin layer between greasy dirt & water, & then pull the dirt into the water.

IN THE MIDDLE AGES HOUSEWIVES OFTEN MADE SOAP by boiling ashes from the fire with animal fats. Fine soaps were made from olive oil instead of fat & these were imported from such places as Castile in Spain.

SOAP MANUFACTURING: Soap is made by boiling caustic soda & fats together. Soap boilers traditionally made their soda by heating ashes & lime together.

er. The introduction of synthetic soda in the early 1800's altho' at first resisted by the soap boilers, made cheap mass produced soap available. One of the first men to utilize synthetic soda was Josias Gamble, who opened a new works in Lancashire, England in 1828.

TRANSPARENT SOAP was introduced in 1748 by Andrew Pears. It is made by dissolving ordinary soap in alcohol, & then distilling off the alcohol to leave a jelly which is left to dry in molds.

TOOLS & MATERIALS FOR HOME SOAPMAKING

This method will make 9 lbs. of good quality soap, but can be changed as long as the general principles are followed.

Enamel kettle (steel kettles may corrode)

Large wooden spoon

1/2-gallon glass or stone jar with cover

Shallow wooden boxes (1x2 ft.) with sides

Clean cotton cloth to cover bottoms of boxes & 1-2 in. up the sides

Materials to keep heat in the boxes while the soap cures (the wooden box can be placed in a cardboard box with dry leaves, cloth or dry straw between the wooden box & the cardboard box)

Thermometer of 0-150 degrees F. (0-65 degrees Centigrade)

6 lb. animal fats or vegetable oils

2 1/2 pints soft water

1/2 lb. high grade lye (sodium hydroxide or caustic soda).

*If you want a hard soap for use in hot water, use 6 lb. of tallow made from melting rendered sheep, cattle or horse fat.

*If you want a good laundry soap, use 3 lb. of tallow & 3 lb.

of lard or cooking grease from melted hog fat, skin & bones.

*If you want a fine toilet soap, use 3 lb. of tallow with 3 lb. of vegetable oil. The best vegetable oils are made from crushing dried coconut meat, palm nut kernels or the outer pulp of the palm nut. The last makes a harder soap than the coconut meat or kernels. Other oils that can be used are castor oil, olive oil, cottonseed oil, soybean oil.

If you do not have rainwater, you can make soft water by adding a pinch of lye to ordinary water. Allow to set for 3 or 4 days until the hard particles settle to the bottom (a pint of water weighs one pound).

IMPORTANT: LYE BURNS THE SKIN! Do not breathe the dust or spill the solution on you. Wash thoroughly with a large quantity of water, wherever it touches your skin.

THE PROCESS

The next step is to prepare the lye solution & melt & mix the fats & lye solution in a pan or crock.

Lye solution:

1. Pour 2 1/2 pints soft water into the glass jar.

2. Pour the lye slowly into the water. Feel jar so that heat does not become too hot. If it does, wait. Then pour in lye more slowly.

3. When all lye is in water, stir until it is completely dissolved & cover the jar.

4. Cool the solution to about 70 degrees F. (21 degrees C). Place in stream of water if air is too hot.

Melting & adding fats:

1. Melt the fats & stir them thoroughly until the wooden spoon leaves a track in the mixture or the fats reach the correct temperature for mixing with the lye solution (temps. shown below).

2. Add the lye solution by

pouring it slowly into the fat in a thin stream while stirring slowly, steadily & in one direction.

3. Keep stirring until all the lye solution has been mixed with the fat & the mixture has the thickness of honey.

CORRECT TEMPERATURES FOR MIXING FATS & LYE

1. Mix tallow at 130° F. (54° C.) with lye solution at 90° F. (32° C.), for hard soap.

2. Mix tallow combined with lard at 115° F. (46° C.) with lye solution at 80° F. (26° C.) for laundry soap.

3. Mix tallow combined with vegetable oils at 130-135° F. (54-57° C.) with lye solution at 85° F. (29° C.) for fine toilet soap.

4. In hot weather the temperatures should be about 10° F. less for the fats & 2-4° F. (1-2° C.) less for the lye.

5. Rancid fat will need about 10° more heat than "sweet" fat.

6. It is better to have the fats too hot than too cold, but the mixture should remain at the thickness of honey.

POURING THE SOAP

As soon as the proper thickness is reached the soap should be poured. The curing box should be made ready while the fats are being melted. Prepare the wooden box by lining it with cotton cloth, wrung dry after soaking in hot water. It is very important that the box be well-insulated, since the soap-making will need a long time & the heat must be kept in the box.

2. Pour the soap mixture gently into the curing box without splattering.

3. Place the curing box in a warm room where there are no drafts & it will not be jarred. It is important that the curing box is not moved or struck after the soap is poured, as the fats & other solutions will separate & ruin

the soap.

TESTING THE SOAP

1. At the end of 24 hours cut off a corner of the soap along its length.

2. If there's no grease on top or liquid on the bottom, turn the box over & remove the soap. Cut into bars with a wire or string.

3. If there is grease on top of the soap at the end of the 1st 24 hours after pouring, leave the



Pour without splattering. Leave in a warm room where it will not be jarred or moved for 24 hours.

into the curing box.

CURING & STORING

Cure the cut bars of soap at least 2 weeks before using to allow any free lye to finish curing the soap. Toilet soaps, however, need at least another 2 weeks for a total of 4 or more weeks of curing.

Do not allow curing soaps to freeze. Other points: A greasy soap shows a shortage of lye or not enough curing time. Hard crumbly soap may be caused by too much lye or too hard stirring. Hard brittle soap can be caused by too low a temperature before settling.

A good soap will shave off in a curl & have little or no taste. If it has too much lye it will bite the tongue. This is important, as a soap with too much lye will fade clothing, weaken cloth & injure the skin. (This formula was prepared & tested by the Agricultural Extension Service, Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa, U.S.A. Published as a pamphlet by the United Nations for rural development programmes.)



Spot Removing Tips!

From "I Hate to Housekeep Book" by Peg Bracken:

FOR SILVER OR GOLD JEWELLERY—polish it with toothpaste, using an old soft toothbrush.

DIRTY CUFFS & COLLARS: Don't scrub them with a brush. Just wet them, then dip into dry soap or detergent powder. Rub in & throw in the wash. Or soak them for 15 minutes in a basin of hot water to which you have added a couple of table-spoons of washing soda. Then throw them into the washer.

From "All Around the House Hints" by Heloise:

GREASE OR OIL STAINS FROM CLOTHING: Place the garment over a flat surface such as an ironing board & sprinkle talcum powder over the spot.

Work this in well with your fingers & let set a while. Then brush out with a stiff brush. Do this before laundering.

STAINS ON FINGERS: Use lemon juice.

DIAPER (NAPPY) RINSE: Some diaper rashes are caused by ammonia, an after-product of wet diapers. This can be neutralized by rinsing diapers in vinegar water after washing them.

SOCK ODOR: After thoroughly washing smelly socks, rinse socks in 1/2 cup vinegar to 1 gallon (4 litres) water.

PERSPIRATION ODOR from woollens: Add a little vinegar to the rinse water.

TO WHITEN WHITE SOCKS: Boil them in water to which lemon slices have been added.

From "Grandmother's Household Hints" by Lyon Adamson:

MILDEW: Expose all mildew-

ed material to the sun. Rub with lemons which have been cut in half & dipped in salt. Brush mildew off, sponge with thick suds of soap. Wipe rugs with 1/2-3/4 mixture of wood alcohol & water. Dry carefully.

PAPER STUCK ON FURNITURE: Moisten it with a little linseed or sweet oil & let the paper remain until it is easily removed by rubbing it with a finger.

SPOTS & RINGS ON FURNITURE: First, rub with liquid polishing wax. If that does not work, dampen cloth with camphorated oil or gum turpentine; rub dry & buff (the palm of one's hand works well) the surface.

TO CLEAN HAIRBRUSHES: Use soda dissolved in cold water.

From "Housekeeping Hints" by Heloise:

PREVENT MILDEW IN REFRIGERATOR: Wipe with pure vinegar. The acid kills the mildew fungus.

TO REMOVE CHEWING GUM from children's hair, rub in peanut butter.

COFFEE & TEA STAINS FROM CUPS: Try baking soda in water & let soak in plastic cups.

CRAYON MARKS FROM WOODWORK: Use kerosene on a soft cloth. Remember that kerosene is flammable; be careful. Paste wax will remove crayon from furniture if the wax is applied on a cloth & then wiped off. Repeat.

KNOTS OR "BALLS" ON SWEATERS: Take a piece of sandpaper & rub gently over the knots.

IF 2 DRINKING GLASSES ARE STUCK TOGETHER, one

inside the other, fill the inner glass with cold water & set the outer glass in hot water, & they will come apart easily.

LINT REMOVER: Masking tape is a fast method.

From "The Joy of Housekeeping":

BLOOD STAINS: Rinse immediately in cold water until most of stain is gone, then wash in warm soapy water. If the stain is an old one, add ammonia or salt to the water.

BALLPOINT PEN INK: If the garment is colorfast & washable, place a clean cloth underneath the stain & spray with hairspray.

From "Make Ends Meet With David Hamilton":

RUST: Mix a little oil with a little scouring powder. Rub this solution to the rusty parts of bicycle wheels or frames & leave for about 15 minutes. Wipe clean with a cloth & the rust will disappear.

BLOOD STAINS ON UNWASHABLE FABRICS: Use methylated spirits (alcohol).

GRASS STAINS: For natural fabrics dab lightly with a cloth soaked in methylated spirits. For synthetics, use a weak solution of methylated spirits.

PERSPIRATION STAINS ON NON-WASHABLE FABRICS: Place a pad under the stain & sponge with methylated spirits.

CHEWING GUM FROM CLOTHES: Rub with an ice cube. This hardens the gum, which may then be scraped off carefully with a fine-edged instrument such as a table knife. Still stained: Sponge with lighter fluid or egg-white, if the material is washable.

Have you spotted any good tips? —Send 'em in for the benefit of all!

Penny Pinchers Household Hints!

(Taken from the book "Make Ends Meet With David Hamilton")

FUEL

IT'S A FALSE ECONOMY TO SWITCH OFF FLOURESCENT LIGHTING every time you leave the room, as this kind of light uses only the equivalent of a 40-60 watt bulb. But each time the light is switched on it uses 3 times the amount of electricity. Therefore it is more economical to leave the light on until you finally retire for the night.

FEELING CHILLY? Don't turn up the heat. Add another layer of clothing instead. Remember that cotton next to the skin acts as an airtrap & is much warmer than starting out in wool, with no cotton layer next to the real you.

USE HOT WATER SPARINGLY. Don't turn on the hot water tap automatically. Cold does just as well for many things, including rinsing glassware.

WHEN COOKING, put the burner on full at first, then once the item starts boiling or cooking, adjust the burner to the level at which it will continue to boil or cook.

CLEANING

DON'T LEAVE CLOTHES TO SOAK FOR MORE THAN 20 MINUTES, for when the water gets cold the dirt will return to the fabric.

WINDOW CLEANER: Vinegar & water using an old newspaper formed into a pad saves money & leaves the windows sparkling.

DRAIN DEODORANT: A strong solution of salt & water poured down the sink outlet once a week is an effective cleanser & will remove any unpleasant odour.

OVEN CLEANER: No need



Happy Housekeeping for Jesus—Deborah-J, of Bepi & Hope, Europe.

to pay for an expensive oven cleaner. Make up a solution of bicarbonate of soda & wipe over all the inside surfaces of the oven. When cooking this will go brown, but a wash using warm soapy water will leave the whole oven sparkling clean in minutes.

SEWING

PILLOWCASES: If you use worn-out sheets to make pillowcases, you'll never have to buy new pillowcases. Even for people who can't sew very well, this is a very simple job.

TOWELS: There's often quite a lot of good towelling left on worn towels as it's usually the middle that wears out first. From the good parts, make facecloths (you can make about 6 from one towel that's only worn out in the middle), bibs for your toddler or towelling panties for them to play in.

PANTYHOSE (TIGHTS): Always buy the same colour & then when you have 2 pairs each with a laddered leg, you can cut off the laddered legs & wear 2 pairs at once, because each pair will have one remaining good leg. When both legs are finally lad-

dered, cut them off. Sew some coffee-coloured lace around each leg & you will then have a new light pair of briefs, ideal under summer dresses.

COOKING

IF YOU CUT MEAT UP SMALL before cooking, it will be done much sooner, saving fuel & time.

HEAT A LEMON BEFORE SQUEEZING, you'll get a lot more juice.

WHEN BOILING EGGS, if one cracks, add a drop of vinegar to the water & the egg won't ooze out.

WHEN BOILING WATER FOR TEA OR COFFEE don't fill the kettle right up if you're only making 1 or 2 cups, unless you have a Thermos flask handy to save the rest of the hot water. If you leave it in the kettle it causes furring which will make the kettle take longer to boil.

DON'T KEEP THE FRIDGE running at a higher number than you really need. It's so easy to forget that you can regulate the temperature. (Ed.: Keep it defrosted too & it will run more economically.)

DECORATING

OLD PAINT BRUSHES CAN BE RENOVATED quite easily. Boil them for 15 minutes in an old container of equal parts vinegar & water. They should come out as good as new.

WHEN DRILLING A HOLE IN THE WALL, stick a small piece of transparent sticky tape over the spot to be drilled to avoid the plaster chipping & cracking.

TO REMOVE THE ODOUR OF FRESH PAINT from a newly painted room, place a raw onion cut in half in the room & this soon absorbs the paint smell.