Soap Making for the Beginner, Part II

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| 3/2/2012 9:56:37 AM

Tags: soap (/search?tags=soap), diy (/search?tags=diy), Sarah Hart Boone (/search?tags=Sarah+Hart+Boone), homestead crafts (/search?tags=homestead+crafts), herbs (/search?tags=herbs), Sarah Hart Boone (/search?tags=Sarah+Hart+Boone),

Last week you gathered your materials and supplies. This week you can finally make your soap!

First, I'd like to remind you about safety. This is a project that uses a very dangerous material. Lye is sold in the drain cleaner department with lots of other nasty chemicals because it heats up to a very high temperature when it gets wet and literally burns through the stuff clogging your pipes. You do not want to get it on your body or in your mouth or eyes. You should plan on wearing gloves and eye protection when you are around the lye and make sure it is not anywhere where a child or pet can get near it. Store the unused lye in a safe spot with other dangerous household chemicals. You will only be using a few tablespoons of lye for this recipe. While caution needs to be exercised you will not have a giant cauldron of boiling lye to work with. This is another reason why this is a good batch for the beginner.

Step 1

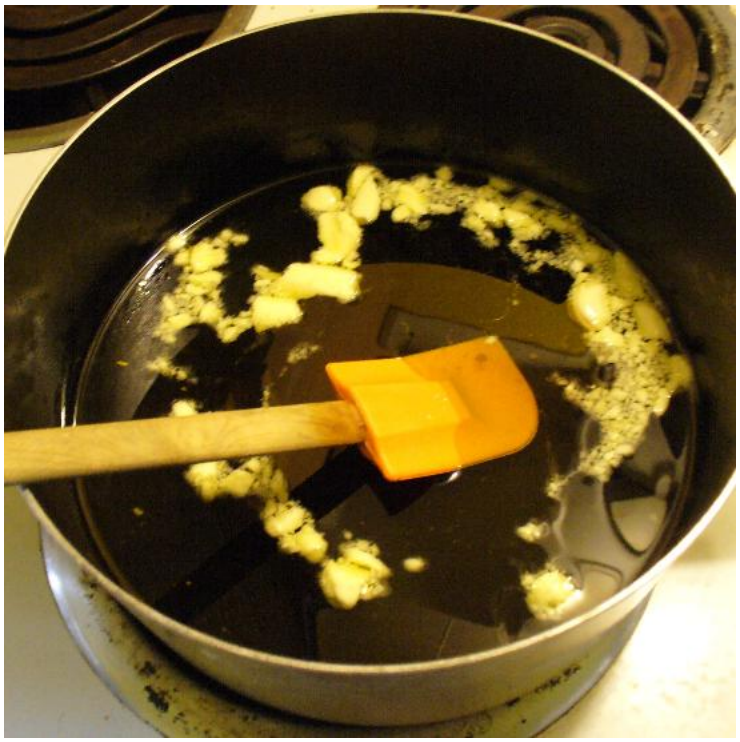
Measure the oils. Use a small lightweight bowl to measure each oil and add it to the cooking pot. (This should be a no-stick or stainless steel pot.) Measure and pour each oil separately. If you are not sure how high your scale goes, divide the olive oil into two. Each time you put the empty bowl on the scale make sure to clear the scale so that it starts at zero before you add anything. Wipe the bowl clean between oils. Measure 13 ounces of corn oil, 23 ounces of olive oil, and 2 sticks of cocoa butter (2 ounces total.) Slice up the cocoa butter first for quicker melting. Put the pan containing the oil on the stove to wait for the next step.

Step 2

Following the safety guidelines, take one empty glass jar and put it on the scale and carefully weigh out 4.8 ounces of lye. You should have newspaper under the scale that you can gather up and throw away when you are done, in case any grains pop out of the jar. In another glass jar pour in 12 liquid ounces of water. Let the water sit until it is room temperature. When it is ready, pour the lye into the water and stir it in using a rubber spatula. Never pour the water into the lye. The lye goes into the water. Protect yourself from the fumes. This is the most dangerous part of the soap

making process, when the lye water will quickly heat up to a very high temperature. Stir until the lye is dissolved and plan to revisit the lye water periodically to make sure everything is dissolved. Put it somewhere safe to cool down. If lye gets on you, quickly wash it off. It will sting slightly if it gets on your skin but can blind you if it gets in your eyes.

Step 3



Heat the oil on the stove pot. As soon as it is melted, or nearly melted, take it off the heat. Oil takes a long time to cool so you do not want to let it get too hot. Now you will have to wait for everything to cool down so that you can combine it. When the oil and lye are around 110-120 degrees they can be combined. If you are using one thermometer to measure the lye and the oil make sure that it is clean and dry when you switch between the lye water and the oil.

Step 4

While you wait for everything to cool, prepare for the next step. If you are going to use herbs or scent have them right there, measured out and ready to go. Your mold should be lined and waiting. Remember to stir the lye water every once in a while to make sure everything is dissolved. Have your immersion (stick) blender plugged in and ready to go.

Step 5

When the lye and oil are both between 110-120 degrees it is time to mix them. Put on your protective gear if you took it off. Put the oil pan in an empty sink and pour in the lye water. Stir with the stick blender. It will start out being totally liquid. This is when it is most inclined to spatter, so be careful. As you continue stirring it will thicken. Stop the hand stirrer every few minutes and let it cool as they are designed for short bursts, not 5-10 minutes of continuous usage. Keep stirring with the blender until the soap traces.

Tracing is a soap term for when the soap is thick enough that you can drizzle some back into the mix and it will sit on the surface for a few seconds before sinking in. It is sort of like making a sauce. When the soap is traced it will no longer be watery and will be more the consistency of a cake mix. Once it traces you need to act quickly. Add your scent and mix it in, then add your optional herbs and give them a quick stir. Pour the soap mixture into your mold. Use a spatula to get every last bit. Now cover the mold with the lid and throw some blankets or towels on top to keep it insulated. Do not disturb the mold for a day. This is very hard, but you need to do it. It will continue to react and turn into soap overnight and you want it to stay warm and undisturbed.

Step 6

It is time to unveil your soap! Uncover it and examine it. You will be able to tell right away if it worked or not. If it is hard as a rock and chalky then somehow there was an error and there was too much lye. If there is loose water and pockets of wet spots it did not work out. If it looks like soap, but very soft soap, it is probably a success. Take it out of the mold and turn it out onto wax paper or plastic wrap or a cutting board and slice it up. Do not use newsprint as the dye will ruin your soap. Do not use aluminum foil as it will damage the soap. I slice my soap freehand as it is for personal use but you can use a ruler. Make it a bit big as it will shrink while it cures. I get 14 large, irregular bars from my shoebox mold. You might choose to make smaller bars, or whatever you want. When they are sliced put the bars out of reach someplace where they can dry out. You can use the soap right away, but it will be very soft. If you wait a few days or a few weeks the excess water will evaporate and they will be nice and hard. You can find labels online or print out bands of paper to wrap around the soap, wrap in tissue or package however you choose.

Congratulations! You are now a soap maker.

Next Steps

To give people the most accessible introduction to soap making I tried to come up with a recipe consisting of soap oils you can buy easily at the grocery store. My hope is that you will try out soap making with these easily-sources materials then move onto other recipes. The best home made soap typically uses saturated (hard at room temperature) oils like coconut, palm and palm kernel oils. These oils are more difficult to obtain but you can order them in bulk from Columbus Foods or other online suppliers. If you want to see how I came up with the recipe, visit the (http://www.thesage.com/calcs/lyecalc2.php)Majestic Mountain Sage (http://www.thesage.com/calcs/lyecalc2.php)site and type our recipe into their lye calculator. You will see that it provides you with a range of water and lye amounts. I pick the middle range for both. Once you obtain other oils there is nothing stopping you from creating your own recipe and obtaining lye and water specifics from the lye calculator. A shoebox need about 38 ounces of oil so aim for a combination of oils in that range. The Natural Soap Book (http://www.amazon.com/Natural-Soap-Book-Making-Vegetable-Based/dp/0882668889) by Susan Miller Cavitch taught me everything I know about soap making and then some. She has extensively researched everything from the composition of each oil to ways to naturally color your soap. Happy Soap making!

Continue to Part III: Soap Making for the Beginner - Giving Lard a Try (https://www.motherearthnews.com/diy/soapmaking-for-the-beginner-part-iii-giving-lard-a-try)**.**

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www.EasyWoodwork.org5/27/2018 9:36:33 PM
I used the plans at WWW.EASYWOODWORK.ORG to build my own – I highly recommend you visit that website and check their plans out too. They are detailed and super easy to read and understand unlike several others I found online. The amount of plans there is mind-boggling… there's like 16,000 plans or something like that for tons of different projects. Definitely enough to keep me busy with projects for many more years to come haha. Go to WWW.EASYWOODWORK.ORG if you want some additional plans :)

Grant Oakes3/22/2012 3:03:28 PM
It was a commercial soap, Dove for sensitive skin. That is why I am trying to get away from it but any natural soap I have tried it so harsh on my skin. The last one I tested was about 8 to 8.5 PH. so that is why I would like to try and make something with a lower PH. I do a lot of traveling on a motorcycle so a bar soap that I could use for everything would be nice.

Kathleen Turpen3/21/2012 4:57:05 PM
Grant, it is hard to control the PH in the end, but there is a term that is bandied about called Superfatting. I believe it wil help control the PH-- but what I wonder about is that ph7 you are asking about, is that from commercial soap? If so, then homemade will be better and not as harsh. If you want more control, then do a couple of these kind of recipes, and start looking into making liquid soaps.

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