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How to make your own soap book

By Catherine, Facky StaffUpdated: Jun 24, 2020One of the best and most fun DIY projects is making homemade soap. Commercial soaps can cause skin problems, ranging from dryness to irritation. Creating your own soap allows you to play around and be more creative with special ingredients you love. For example, you can incorporate essential oils to provide an aromatherapy touch or add chia seeds and oatmeal to make it a great exfoliant.The best part of this project is that you can use tools that you already have in your kitchen, and a lot of the ingredients you might need are easily accessible. There is a frugal satisfaction that comes with making your own soap, as it is something that can give you a great sense of accomplishment. And then there's the most important benefit: these artisan soaps make great gifts to curious friends who want to know why you smell so good. To make soap, you only need three basic ingredients: lye, distilled water, and oil—olive oil, coconut oil or shea butter work. With shea butter and coconut oil, you need to melt them first. In the beginning, be precise and follow the ratios properly until you get a feel for it. Finally, if you want to incorporate colors, make sure they are good for use in soap. narcisa / Getty Images The smell from fragrance oils is wonderful, but they affect saponification—the chemical process behind making soap. Depending on which essential oil you use, saponification will either slow down or speed up, making the end-product a mess. Be sure of the fragrance you want to add and use a small amount to understand how it works for your recipe. Rouzes / Getty Images There are a few required tools that you need to assemble. Because you are dealing with lye, which burns through the skin, goggles and gloves are mandatory. Should it make contact with your skin, have some vinegar handy to neutralize it. Use a container that can tolerate heat for the lye, a spatula, a stick mixer, and your favorite silicone mold tray. Add the lye to the water and stir. The mixture will get hot and produce a pungent smoke. Stir until it becomes a clearer liquid that is slightly cloudy. Add the lye to the liquid oil and mix it until it achieves trace—a creamy liquid coating the mixer, and when it drips, it bounces a bit as it hits the liquid surface. MILANTÉ / Getty Images At this point, add the color first, gently stirring it in. Then add the fragrance. If you are dealing with an essential oil, measure it properly so you find that nice balance. If you're adding ingredients like rose leaves and mint, fold those in. You want to be quick, as the soap will thicken the longer it's out in open air. tdub303 / Getty Images Get your silicone mold ready and pour the mixture in, scraping the batter out with the spatula. You can put the mold in an old cardboard box, seal it as best as you can, and cover it with a towel to help with insulation for the next 24 hours. Remember to keep it in a dry spot and out of sunlight. DragonImages / Getty Images After a day, you can take a look at the first stage. The soap should be hard and molded nicely. If you had a mold tray with multiple compartments, just pop out each bar. At this point, its consistency is like cheddar cheese, so it will be easy to slice. While it looks hard, the soap isn't completely dry and needs additional time. The final step is to complete the saponification process by curing it for four to six weeks. Find a spot where they won't be disturbed, place each bar on wax paper and cover them with more wax paper to prevent dust from accumulating. Premyuda Yospim / Getty Images Lye is an alkali that comes in two forms: potassium hydroxide and sodium hydroxide. Potassium hydroxide makes soap more water-soluble, but sodium hydroxide is more common. Lye helps the water and oil mix homogeneously, so it's an essential soap ingredient. However, it eats through organic material, requiring that you protect yourself and keep it away from children. If you don't want to handle the chemical or don't have ready access to it, there is another alternative. Casiniro / Getty Images You can get a batch of melt-and-pour soap. These are premade starters with lye, so you don't have to handle the caustic material yourself. These starters are made from shea butter, olive oil, glycerin, or some other combination. All you need to do is cut the starters in cubes, melt them down in a stainless steel pot set on simmer, and add your colors and fragrances to the cooled mixture. This is the simplest way to create your own custom soap. familylifestyle / Getty Images If you like a little more lather in your soap, you can add castor oil to your recipe. By itself, it creates a brittle soap that's also a nice shampoo. The benefit is that the skin absorbs it easily and uses it to maintain a nice moisture balance. Castor oil is sticky, so you need to use the spatula to get all of it. Adding castor oil, however, speeds up the emulsification process, so plan accordingly. bdsnp / Getty Images You may be a practical kind of guy who simply grabs whichever bar of soap is in the shower stall every morning, but there are reasons not to use the same soap as a woman. For one thing, do you really want to smell like almonds, coconut, pomegranate or perfume? If you wear cologne, feminine soap fragrances may clash with it. Then there's the fact that men's and women's skin has different needs, so you may be getting too much or too little cleansing, moisturizing or exfoliating with a soap designed for the ladies. Also, you could be paying more than you have to by buying a body cleanser geared toward women.First up is fragrance.Call it shallow, but fragrance can be a big deal. You may not mind the way a woman smells, but you may be making yourself less attractive by using a woman's soap. Researchers found that women choose mates who are most different from them genetically, and they get their clues from a man's scent [source: Colenso]. Fragrances in soap and other skin-care products can alter your natural scent to such a degree that women may find you less desirable as a potential mate.Not only this, but do you really want to smell like cherry blossoms or wild vanilla? The fragrances in soaps tend to stick with you throughout the day, and when you perspire, these scents become more pronounced, in combination with those produced by your hormones. Men's natural odor has been said to smell like cheese, and the smell of women's soap may not make for the best aromatic blend.Glide to the next section to discover why a woman's soap may not be meeting your skin's needs.Men's and women's skin has different needs, and this is another reason the fellas may be better off not using the same soap as a woman. Men's skin tends to be thicker, oilier, duller and rougher than women's. Men also have more hair on their bodies, and this creates more space for bacteria to linger. If you're a guy and you're using soap made for ladies, you may not be getting rid of the dirt and sweat as thoroughly as you want.Women's soaps tend to have more moisturizing ingredients and milder cleansing properties than men's soaps. You may end up with some skin problems -- namely acne -- if you have oily skin and don't use the appropriate skin-care products. These days, hundreds of different soaps line the shelves, and this makes choosing the best soap for you more difficult than ever. Men's soaps are formulated to provide the proper moisturizing and cleansing power for male skin types, so find the men's section and start browsing.Next up, learn about your skin's sensitivity.As mentioned in the last section, men's and women's skin have different needs. Each type also has different sensitivities. Men's skin is thicker and tends to be less sensitive to detergents and abrasives. If you're a guy, you'll give yourself a better chance of achieving and maintaining healthy skin by using soap made for a man rather than for a woman.One more thing to keep in mind is that as men mature, they have a tendency to develop seborrheic eczema. One way to keep this condition at bay is by cleansing, exfoliating and moisturizing with the appropriate products, and what works for your wife or girlfriend's skin may not work so well for yours. It may take trial and error, or even professional help, to come up with the most suitable skin-care regimen.See what exfoliating has to do with soap and skin care in the next section.Men and Skin CancerMen are more prone to developing skin cancer because their skin produces less antioxidants than women's skin does. Also, guys tend to get more sun exposure than women. Although using skin-care products like soap or body wash with antioxidants hasn't been shown to help the body ward off skin cancer, you can help protect your skin by using daily moisturizer, lip balm and lotion containing sunscreen or sunblock.Since men's skin tends to be thicker and rougher than women's, soap with stronger exfoliating or scrubbing power is better suited for guys. As we learned earlier, men's skin also tends to be oilier than women's. Exfoliating soap or body cleanser can help keep that extra sebum from clogging pores. Otherwise, you could end up with acne on your back or other areas where sebaceous glands are running full throttle. When it comes to rough skin, you'll need to use a soap that can slough off the layers of dead skin responsible for the dull, scaly look and feel. Once you exfoliate, your skin will be softer, and your complexion should even improve. Products designed for women's thinner, more delicate skin may not do the job for guys because their skin is so much thicker and tougher.Move to the next section to get the rub on how using men's soap may also make better financial sense.If you browse the health and beauty aisles at your local grocery or drug store, you'll notice that the price of women's soap is slightly higher than men's. Women tend to pay more for everything from soap and other skin-care products to mortgages. One study found that goods advertised to women cost as much as 50 percent more than those marketed to men -- even when the products carry the same brand name [source: Dunleavy].Why pay more if you don't have to? Being aware of gender-based pricing can help you spend less money on soap and other skin-care products like body wash, facial cleanser, moisturizer, shaving cream and even razors. Arguably, there's no significant benefit in women's soap that justifies the increased prices, and if you're a guy, you're paying more for a soap that may not be the best for your skin type.Want to know more about men's soap? Check out the links on the next page.Colenso, Maria. "How are men's body cleansers different from women's body cleanser?" HowStuffWorks.com. Dec. 7, 2010. (Feb. 25, 2011) Maria. "Why do men smell different from women?" HowStuffWorks.com. Sep. 20, 2010. (Feb. 23, 2011) M.P. "Women in Red: Why it costs more to be a woman." MSN Money. Dec. 15, 2009. (Feb. 23, 2011) Robert. 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