

French Hand milled soap process

Recipes on other website

http://www.millennium-ark.net/News_Files/Soap/Hand_Milled_Soaps.html

You will need:

Natural Soap, Water, Emollient oils of your choice - cocoa butter, shea butter, hemp oil, etc. (optional), Fragrance or essential oils of your choice (optional), herbs or other additives of your choice (coconut milk, dried milk powder, honey, herbal teas, fresh mashed fruits or vegetables, flower petals) (optional), a crockpot, measuring cups and spoons OR a scale that can measure ounces to at least .1 decimal point, a heat-resistant mold of some sort. (Paper or plastic cups, plastic deli tub containers, or even the molds from the craft store will work. Preferably something that flexes a little to help in popping out the finished soap.)

This is not so much a recipe as it is a matter of keeping proportions correct. The good news when shredding and rebatching an already saponified soap is that the harsh chemical reaction part is over with. Adding your herbal infusions, fresh fruits and vegetables, and superfatting (extra oils that are not changed into soap, therefore providing moisturization while you wash) means that the nutrients and properties you are hoping to gain from your ingredients will be ravaged very minimally by the process of adding them to the bar. You can choose to rebatch a single bar or do ten at a time to create a whole custom soap loaf of your choice. Feel free to purchase either a plain, unscented soap or a scented soap, but be aware that the cooking process will drive off most of the fragrance as most scents burn off at temperatures above 110 or so degrees Fahrenheit. If your beginning soap already has herbal bits or flowers in it, be aware that the cooking will most likely fade any colors to shades of brown. Also be aware that, depending upon the Ph of the additives you choose, any other colorants already present in your base soap may change unpredictably, as some coloring agents are Ph-dependent.

With these considerations in mind, it is time to get started. Take a standard cheese grater and shred your soap. If you have the patience, you can get an even smoother finished product if you then spread the grated soap flakes out on a tray and leave them in a cool, dark, dry location for a few days to further dry them out. Mix them around a time or two to expose all surfaces of the soap shreds to the air. Once they are nice and crisp, run them through a food processor in short bursts to grind them to a grainy powder. This will dissolve in hot water very thoroughly.

Whether you decide to take the extra steps above or not, the next step is the same. Measure your soap. If using a scale, take note of the weight and round to the nearest whole ounce for the purpose of measurement. If using measuring cups, round to the nearest half cup. You are using ALL of the soap shreds, mind you, but for the purpose of measuring your additives you are simply rounding up to a simple amount. It is close enough, really. The nice thing about rebatching is that even if it doesn't come out exactly as you planned, with patience and curing it will still turn out to be totally usable soap. It is never a total waste, as long as you don't go overboard with additives. And even if you

do, simply shred some more soap along with the overdone soap and the extra soap will take up the slack. Really it is a waste-free process.

Dump your soap into a crock pot. Measure out 1/4 as much (by weight or volume) of water and add this to the soap. If you wish to make an herbal infusion of the water, you can either use pre-made tea bags or make your own by adding herbs to a cloth bag and dropping it in. You can also feel free to skip the water altogether and use fruit or vegetable juices instead. If using thick fruit nectars you may want to mix with some water to get a consistency thin enough to allow the soap to melt into it. Whatever liquid base you are using, the measurement is the same. Start out with 1/4 as much water as soap. If you have a soap that seems to absorb the moisture too much, you can always add a bit more as you go. You are looking for a consistency similar to applesauce. If you go much thinner than that, it will take forever to dry out enough to harden into bars, but eventually if you are patient enough it will still happen.

Cook the soap on low heat, covered, for a while. Go watch a movie, or find something to do for a few hours. Check on it every couple of hours until you can see that it is pretty much consistent. It is unlikely that it will become a completely consistent mass throughout, most likely it will be lumpy even when done, but all the soap shreds should be transparent and jello-like. When you get to this point, you are basically done. Turn off the [crock pot](#) and make sure your mold is ready. If you are making a whole soap loaf, try cutting the top off of a quart-sized milk or juice carton. Better yet, use two of the long, skinny half quart sized containers, the kind you get half and half in. These containers make loaves that create good, hand-sized bars of soap. Let the soap cool a bit - it should still be pretty hot because as it cools it will get too firm to work with, but you don't want it to still be simmering.

You will want to add your ingredients in the order of their heat tolerance, because each new additive (and the stirring) will keep cooling the batch down so that it is less harsh for the next thing. First thing to add is any extra emollient oils. If you have already used this brand of natural soap on it's own in the past, you will know if it is moisturizing enough for you. If you still feel at all dry and tight after washing with it, a bit of added oil will help that. For every 4 ounces of soap base in your pot, you can safely add up to 1/4 ounce of oil. If you add more than this, you risk separation. Hemp oil is great, as is [castor oil](#) or plain olive oil. Whatever you like. Next, if you are using mineral salts, clay powders, or dried herbs or flowers, this is the time to add them. Use about a Tablespoon of these additives per bar of soap, or about 1 Tablespoon per 4 ounces, or about 1 Tablespoon per half cup, if you are measuring that way.

After that you can add your fragrance or essential oils. Mix them in thoroughly, walk away and take a few deep breaths, then come back and smell again to determine if you have added enough. It is better to start out on the gentle side than to add too much and end up with a smell so strong it chases you away, or worse yet, irritates your skin. A good rule of thumb is to never use more than 1 ounce of fragrance for every pound of soap batter. You may need considerably less when using essential oils, and you should need

much less for rebatched soap anyway, since saponification will not be "eating" up the fragrance.

After the fragrance, it is time to add the most fragile ingredients. If you are using milk or yogurt products, dissolve any powders in a small amount of water and add them now. If using fresh fruit or vegetable puree, add them now. Now it is time to pour your batter into the mold. If it is too thick to pour, use a spoon to "glop" it in as well as you can. If it has REALLY become thick, smooch it into the mold with a spatula, then use a layer of waxed paper over the top to protect your hands from the heat as you press the soap into the mold as firmly as possible. The more firmly you press, the more smooth and uniform your finished soap will be. It will help to get rid of air bubbles in the bar and leave an overall smoother texture throughout. This not only looks nicer, it makes it less crumbly when it is time to cut it later.

If you are using milk products and/or fresh fruits and vegetables, it may be a good idea to refrigerate the soap immediately to cool it as quickly as possible. With milk products, the quicker it cools the less the milk will darken the soap. With fresh fruits and vegetables, some vitamins and nutrients are destroyed by heat so cooling it down will keep your "actives" as "active" as they can possibly be.

Once you have it in the molds, leave your soap in a cool, dark, dry place to firm up. Depending upon many factors, especially the amount of liquid you have used, this can take anywhere from 10 hours to 3 weeks. If it still fairly soft after a week or so, you can help the process along by popping it into the freezer and freezing solid. Turn the frozen soap out onto a waxed paper surface and let it thaw. Exposure to air on all sides will help it dry out and harden faster. If you have created a loaf, once it is firm enough you can dry it out faster by cutting it into bars and setting them out with a little air space between them for evaporation. Your soaps are ready to use as soon as they are nice and firm.

Once your soaps are finished drying out, store them in a cool, dry place out of sunlight. Sunlight will fade herbs and colors, and eventually will fade scents as well. You can package your soaps in paper or cardboard wrappers, use squares of fabric or cigar bands of paper, or just leave them naked. Whatever you do, DO NOT seal them in airtight plastic. Natural soaps need to breathe or the oils can eventually go rancid. Do not worry, they will not make a puddle on the shelf like melt and pour glycerine soap.

Now that I have give you the basics of rebatching, here are a few suggestions for particular types of soap for special skin needs. For skin that is dry, oils with a humectant (moisture-drawing) property are wonderful. Avocado, hemp, castor and olive oils are great for this, as are shea butter and cocoa butter. Rose essential oil is wonderful for dry skin as well, or try adding the contents of a few Vitamin E capsules. Dry skins benefit from leaving off the scrubby herbal bits (scrubbing too much makes skin dry out more) and avoiding the mineral clays and salts. Dry skins also benefit from milk products. Oily skins can benefit from a bit of natural mineral clay and mineral salts added to the bar. The minerals calm the skin, the salts increase lather and the clays draw out oil and impurities in the skin. Acne-prone skins benefit from the fruit acids in fresh fruit and vegetables. My

favorite is a few fresh strawberries pureed in fresh, raw carrot juice. Essential oils such as tea tree, lavender, geranium and patchouli are wonderful for acne-prone skin. Problems with eczema and psoriasis benefit from a good hit of Vitamin A, so pack your soap with as many bright orange things as you can. Raw, bright red African Red Palm oil is very helpful, as are the baby food jars of steamed carrot puree. If you have a juicer and have access to fresh borage leaves, the juice of borage added at the very last moment can be wonderful for eczema. Cypress essential oil is very helpful.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me. I am happy to talk soap all day long with you! Most of all, get in there and enjoy yourself. Even if you make mistakes, you can still end up with a wonderful soap much better than anything you can buy at the store. Have fun!