

Home made Soap & Crocheted Flannel

All instructions and ingredients for soap making were taken from instructions at
www.thesoapkitchen.co.uk



For the Soap

YOU'LL NEED.....

Two good sized stainless steel or enamelled saucepans

One heat-proof glass measuring jug

Accurate kitchen scales

Utensils for stirring etc. i.e. Wooden or stainless steel spoons, a balloon whisk or rubber/wooden spatular, or similar

Cooking thermometer

A mould to pour the liquid soap into whilst it sets. A wooden or cardboard tray or box lined with grease-proof paper or siliconised baking sheet is great. (I used a silicone muffin tin)

Eye and hand protection (safety glasses and rubber gloves)

A blanket or large towel

INGREDIENTS

12 oz (340g) of cold, clean water

125g of sodium hydroxide (caustic soda) beads or pearls

1lb (454g) olive oil (preferably low grade but Extra Virgin is fine)

10oz (284g) coconut oil (hard variety)

6oz (170g) palm oil (hard variety)

Essential oil/s 20ml in this recipe size (avoid fragrance oils until you're more experienced)

Important note. You will need to be careful about handling your soap until it has cured for 4 weeks. Caustic Soda will burn your skin and the curing period is to allow it to dissolve completely while your soap hardens. You cannot speed up or skip this stage. Until the four weeks curing period is up you must wear gloves when handling your soap.

To Make Your Soap

Measure out 12 oz (340g) of cold clean water into the jug

Weigh (accurately) 125g of sodium hydroxide

Carefully add the sodium hydroxide to the water, pouring slowly and stirring with a spoon or spatula. Be careful not to breathe the vapour that is initially given off, so hold your breath and stir until all the sodium hydroxide has dissolved and there are no lumps stuck to the bottom of the jug. The solution will heat up to nearly 200°C and will need to be left to cool. Place a thermometer into the solution and leave to one side. Meanwhile, measure out exactly 10oz (284g) of coconut oil and 6oz (170g) of palm oil into one of the saucepans (the smaller if there is one) and gently melt it on the stove. Don't overheat it, just melt it. When there are tiny pieces of solid oil still left to melt, turn off the heat and leave until completely liquid.

Whilst the solid oils are melting, measure out 1lb (454g) of olive oil into the other saucepan (this will be the soap-making pan).

Once melted, pour the combined coconut and palm oils into the olive oil and place the other thermometer in the pan.

NOTE: What you now need to do is keep watch on the temperatures of both the oils and the sodium hydroxide solution (lye). If you haven't two thermometers you'll need to move one between pans ensuring it is washed between each pan. The lye starts off hotter than the oils and has more cooling to do. Once both oils and lye are at near similar temperatures they can be combined. Don't let everything get too cool. As a guide a minimum of around 80°C and a maximum of around 130°C are ideal limits of temperature. As long as oils and lye are both at similar temperatures between these limits your soap should turn out just fine.

When at the correct temperatures, slowly and carefully pour the lye into the oils, stirring (preferably with a hand (balloon) whisk) all the time. Once all the lye is poured, put the jug aside and concentrate on stirring your solution. You should stir throughout the mixture fairly briskly. You will notice the solution start to turn more opaque and as the minutes pass it will start to thicken. The stage in the process you have to wait for is known as the 'Trace'.

This is when you can drizzle the mixture from the whisk (or spoon/spatula) onto the surface of the solution and it leaves a trace before sinking back into the rest.

To pour the soap too early will probably end up in the mixture separating, which will ruin your efforts. Once the mixture traces simply pour it into your lined mould. To reach a trace may take just 5 minutes or as much as 60 minutes depending mainly on the grade of oils you use. Other factors that vary the time are... the temperature of your mixture AND the room temperature and air moisture content. Remember, don't pour the mixture until it traces.

Once poured, the mould needs to be covered and insulated to keep in the heat. Towels or a blanket work perfectly well. Don't let the towel or blanket touch the surface of the soap, put something over it first. Then leave aside for around 24 hours for it to set solid.

After around 24 hours, remove the soap slab or block from the mould. It should be hard enough to cut into whatever shapes you have in mind, although it still has some hardening to do. Whether you choose to cut it now or later it needs to continue 'curing' for somewhere between 2 and 4 weeks to be absolutely ready. During this time it gets progressively harder and loses some of the water that was put into it in the making.

NOTES: If you're using this recipe as a base for a soap you're adding your own colours and fragrances to, take a note that in your early attempts at natural soap-making it is far easier to fragrance a soap using pure essential oil/s. Avoid most fragrance oils as they are almost all alcohol based (something like dipropylene glycol) and virtually all forms of alcohol will cause 'seizing' in a soap mixture. This is when the mixture starts to set solid very rapidly, before you have a chance to pour it, ruining all your efforts. Also, bear in mind that many 'pretty' additions to a soap such as dried flower heads etc. will very possibly turn brown and discolour the soap if added to the mixture whilst it is a liquid. This is because of the high water content and caustic nature at that stage. Additions that work well are dried pulses, spices and dried herbs. Some spices achieve good colour as well. Turmeric (yellow) and paprika (salmon-like) are two examples. Petals etc. (like dried lavender) can be successfully 'pressed' onto the surface of the soap after pouring, before covering and insulating, although keep your gloves on when doing this as the mixture is still caustic at that stage. Generally food-safe colours are not suitable for natural soap-making (some yellows are fine). There are colours that work well and are simple to use (see list at top) procedure as follows...

If you want to enrich your soap with specific oils for their properties (i.e. hemp seed or wheat germ etc.) use approx 1 tbsp (15ml) at trace. Honey, also approx 1 tbsp (15ml) at trace. Exfoliants, i.e. oatmeal or similar, up to 1/4 cup (60ml). at or before trace. Take care to ensure your soap is thick enough to 'support' any exfoliant additions before pouring or they may sink or float (depends what they are).

This all looks quite daunting but if you make sure you have everything you need ready before you start, it's really fun. I will definitely be making more soap in the future. I really enjoyed it.

Warning – Home made soap must be for personal use only. Soap to be sold must be certified through official routes.



My soap looks white in the picture but it's a kind of dull beige really. I brushed over the outside with mica powders to get the raspberry ripple finish. They will obviously wash off after the first use. I also put goats milk powder in my soap as it is soothing for the skin. This has made the colour paler than it would otherwise be. You will not get a pure white soap unless you add a chemical "whitener" which seemed like a contradiction in terms to me as I wanted it to be as natural as possible. I used lavender oil to scent my soap.

To Make the Flannel



YOU'LL NEED:

A Size 4 Crochet Hook

A ball of Cotton Yarn (I used Sirdar but any brand will do as long as it is Cotton)

INSTRUCTIONS:

Decide how big you want your flannel to be and make a chain the correct length. (Mine was 60). I am fairly new to crochet so I used a very simple double crochet stitch and continued until I had made a square. I then crocheted another chain for the loop and added a crochet flower. Job done.

I think it makes a nice addition to the bathroom or a thoughtful gift...

Definitely a good project for a beginner as it's not as big as a scarf but will give you the idea and teach you how to make a square.

For online crochet instructions check out http://www.free-crochet.com/content/content.html?content_id=55

They have detailed instructions and video guides to help you do almost any stitch you can think of. Free patterns too!

Hope you feel inspired to try this project.

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