

Natural Soap News™

Published twice yearly by the Natural Soap Directory™

Issue Winter 2009

In This Issue

2009 Soap Making Book Review.....	1
Shelf Life of Oils.....	2
Test Stored Oils for Rancidity and Contamination.....	1-2
The Organic Palm Oil Craze	2
Natural Soap Directory Expansion.....	1
Featured Soap Supply Companies....	2
NSN Publication Info.....	2

2009 Soap Making Book Review

Three noteworthy books on soap making were published in 2009. One is noteworthy because it is possibly the very best, most completely accurate and informative book ever published about beginning soap making. The second is fascinatingly artistic and the third is a devastating nightmare that may prove dangerous and worthy of a lawsuit.

Basic Soap Making: All the Skills and Tools You Need to Get Started, Letcavage and Buck, ISBN 978-0-8117-3573-5, is the cold process soap book for which all soap makers have waited! This book is the most complete, comprehensive, accurate instruction manual on beginning soap making and is in brilliant pictogram format. The book contains literally hundreds of photographs and includes images of all steps and phases of cold process soap making, such as cutting, trimming, rebatching scraps, and packaging. Hands down, this is the most complete and most easily understandable beginning soap making book ever published. Even experienced professional soap makers should keep this amazing book within easy access to dazzle inquiring customers with photos of the art of handmade cold process soap making.

Soapylove, Chialtas, ISBN 978-1-60061-170-4, is a gorgeously artistic instruction book for melt-and-pour soap making. This book includes such ingenious and clever melt-and-pour projects that it will have the most devoted cold process soap maker itching to run out for some melt-and-pour soap base. Soapylove is a beautiful addition to any soap making library.

Soap Making: Self-Sufficiency, Ade, ISBN 978-1-60239-790-3, is useless as an instructional reference due to a lack of visual illustrations. The written information about soap making is inaccurate; this book overflows with misinformation. The abundant grammatical errors make it both difficult and painful to read. Many of the page numbers sited in the index are off by one or two pages. On page 58, the author dangerously instructs new soap makers to "add water to the sodium hydroxide crystals." As a matter of safety, new soap makers are always taught to carefully add the lye to the water and never the other way around. Never pour water onto lye, as this book instructs, because pouring water onto lye can dissolve the top layer of lye beads and form a crust to seal the dry lye on the bottom and keep it separated from the water on top. As the exothermic reaction progresses, heat will build beneath the crust until the gasses violently expand in an eruption of hot caustic lye solution, which is forebodingly known as the "volcano effect." Clearly, this book is dangerous, inaccurate, and quite possibly the worst soap making book ever published.

Soap Fact

Handmade soap differs greatly from commercial soap because handmade soap contains glycerin donated to the soap by natural whole oils. Page 12 of the abovementioned Soap Making: Self-Sufficiency incorrectly states that "the glycerin produced during the [commercial] saponification process is separated out." Actually, according to the AOCS (American Oil Chemists' Society), commercial soap companies do not siphon off the glycerin and remove it from the soap, they simply do not use whole oils. Instead, they make soap from a base of fatty acids, which are the lipid tails without the glycerol heads that would become free glycerin. So, simply stated, commercial soap companies do not remove the glycerin from their soaps; they never had any in the first place!



Image source: <http://www.sdnhm.org/exhibits/epidemic/justforkids/experiment/images/soap.gif>

Natural Soap Directory™ Expansion

Great news for the soap makers who subscribe to the Natural Soap Directory™: The NSD now consists of 32 soap-related Internet directory domain names, instead of the previous 18. This means the Natural Soap Directory™ has the potential to draw almost twice the traffic to subscribing soap makers' websites. For the complete list of 32 names, visit <http://www.natural-soap-directory.com/soap-list.html>.

Test Stored Oils for Rancidity and Contamination

As soap sales may slow due to the economic recession, base oils may be stored for longer periods of time. For professional soap makers, losing oils to rancidity means a loss of inventory and revenue but selling rancid soap to a customer may ruin a soap maker's reputation forever.

Most home soap makers do not have the tools or ability to chemically test their oils for freshness before each use. Therefore, it is very important for soap makers to know each type of oil's expected shelf life and how to investigate possible decomposition or contamination.

Decomposition occurs due to exposure to heat and light, which cause oxidation of oil over time. To slow the decomposition and oxidation of oil, store the oil in an airtight container and keep the container in a cool dark area that has minimal changes in ambient temperature.
(Continued on page 2.)

Test Stored Oils for Rancidity and Contamination (cont.)

To combat decomposition and oxidation, some oil suppliers, such as Natural Oils International, sell "winterized" oils that have been cooled and had any crystals that may promote rancidity removed. Upon request, Natural Oils International will also add a preservative to the oil without an extra charge.

Stored oils are also prone to contamination. Contaminants may be physical or biological. Hair, fur, lint, dust, dirt, broken glass, and splinters from a wooden spoon are all physical contaminants. Biological contaminants may be bacterial or fungal.



When preparing to make soap with oil that has been stored, first examine the container for possible leaks and to see if the oil is the same consistency and color throughout the depth of the container. As decomposition occurs, the oil on the bottom of the container may become cloudy in appearance or darker, while the oil on top may appear lighter. A slight change in color may indicate the natural decomposition and oxidation of the oil. Odor and cloudiness may indicate the presence of virulent bacteria or unsafe levels of non-virulent bacteria.

After preliminarily examining the oil in the container, remove a small sample (about a tablespoon) and examine it in bright light. If examining a saturated fat, melt the sample for a few seconds in a microwave. Touch the oil sample and rub it between your fingers. Feel for a grittiness or sliminess of the oil. Sniff the sample to detect odor. Taste the sample. If the oil freshness is questionable, consider making a smaller test batch of soap (4 or 5 ounces) and examine the finished soap.

Each soap maker must determine the threshold for when oil will not be used to make soap. After all, customers are not going to eat the soap but they are not likely to return to purchase more if it is rancid and has a foul odor. Each soap maker must determine the fine line between having to lose revenue and dispose of contaminated oil or face the risk of a customer bathing with bacteria-rich soap.

Shelf Life of Oils

Oils that may be stored for up to one year: Avocado, castor, coconut, olive, palm, shea butter, and wheat germ. Store for three months or less: Evening primrose, flaxseed, hemp, and soybean. For a complete list of oils and their shelf lives, visit <http://www.naturaloils.com/stable.html>

Certified Lye
www.Certified-Lye.com

Elements Bath and Body Supply
www.ElementsBathandBody.com

Gracefruit.com
www.Gracefruit.com

Soap Makers' Luncheons
www.PallasAtheneSoap.com/luncheon.html

Soapies Supplies
www.Soapies-Supplies.com

The Organic Palm Oil Craze

Of late, many soap makers have commented on consumer's demand for soap containing organic palm oil and organic palm kernel oil. This change in favor of organic oils is likely due to the green movement and a heightened environmental awareness. World palm oil production has more than doubled in the past five years, mainly due to an increased demand for inexpensive biofuel sources and due to the food industry's recent ban on hydrogenated oils. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/palm_oil) Mainly produced in third world countries, palm oil is easily converted into a cost effective biofuel. Being a saturated fat, palm oil is also a cholesterol-free natural alternative to less healthful hydrogenated cooking oils.

Unfortunately, "palm oil production has been documented as a cause of substantial and often irreversible damage to the natural environment. Its impacts include deforestation, habitat loss of critically endangered species, and an increase in greenhouse gas emissions."

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/environmental_impact_of_palm_oil) The rainforests and tropical hardwood forests of Borneo, Indonesia, and Malaysia are frequently burned and cleared to make way for palm oil plantations. Reportedly, natural forests are destroyed, wildlife is displaced, and plantation workers slaughter endangered species, specifically orangutans that feed on young palms. However, certified organic palm oil promises to be produced in a more responsible manner.

Many base oil suppliers, including Cibaria Soap Supply (<http://www.cibariasapsupply.com/shop/index.php/organic-palm-kernel-oil-7-lbs.html>) carry organic palm and organic palm kernel oil for an affordable price. As consumers are educated in the social and environmental benefits of organic palm oil over non-organic palm oil, so then should soap makers also understand these benefits far outweigh the added cost of the organic oils. It behooves the handcrafted soap industry for soap makers to do their part to manufacture environmentally responsible soaps by making an investment in organic palm oils to help the environment and to increase sales.

Soap Fact

If your handmade soap contains palm oil, you are forbidden from claiming it is "Made in the USA" on the label and all advertising material, including websites and email. According to strict FTC (Federal Trade Commission) policy, all significant parts of a product must be grown or originate and be processed in the United States or US territories in order to use the "Made in the USA" claim. Palm oil is not grown or processed anywhere in the USA.

Submit an Article!

Mail your article to the address below or email it to soap@natural-soap-directory.com.

Natural
Soap
Directory

"Natural Soap News™" is published twice yearly by the Natural Soap Directory™, PO Box 133, Spring Valley, CA 91976-0133, USA.