

How To Saponify Without The Ruinify

So you took a chemistry course and fell in love with the esterification of fats and glycerols. Or you finally took that holiday to New Zealand and were amazed by what one can do with livestock and the products thereof. Or you just think your ideas for scented soap are way better than The Body Shop's. Or, like me, you have a tendency to wake up some mornings with the raging desire to learn some random new thing. The next step, of course, was to figure out how the pretty, pretty bars in the fancy back-to-nature stores are made. It can't be that hard...after all, they look like they are roughly hewn from a huge block and wrapped in brown paper, with no machinery or technology needed other than a good, sharp knife and a bit of tape! Or maybe it is, since it is a craft that has been relegated to technology for good reason. The library probably did not offer much in the way of workman's manuals. They had step-by-step walkthroughs, but they mostly ran along the lines of: 'Step One: Pour A into B. Step Two: Heat till certain temperature. Be careful of whatever. Step Three: Pour into mould and let cool. Step Four: Take out of mould by loosening sides with knife. You're done!' which, while good for starters, became very frustrating very fast. The usual problem with those books, unlike good ones, is that they did not troubleshoot. Soap-making, or saponification, is a precise, fussy, process, and almost every step has to be done just right so the next can build upon it. A good instruction manual will not only tell you what to do at each step, but also how to do it just right so you can avoid total exasperation. Not to mention the waste of time, materials and effort that go into each batch you attempt. Of course, what is most important is that you 'get it' in the end, and a good book will ensure that you do so - with as much wastage as you need for practice, but as little as possible caused by the frustrating trial and error that could have been avoided by a simple note in the book, mentioning a trade 'secret' or shortcut. Of course, a major trade secret any good guidebook should mention is that of finances! Too often guide books get carried away with talking about the full or optimal setup, forgetting that many of us are hobbyists who certainly do not need (or want) professional grade equipment. We can get by with the bare minimum, even! A good guidebook, such as mentioned above, should mention where to get everything you need cheap, in bulk, at bargain prices, or at least the tricks to getting more out of what you have to buy, as well as who to watch out for. Not only that, it should talk about make-do substitutes for professional grade equipment, a list of what you absolutely need to have, along with an explanation of why it is needed. After all, soap-making was once the province of the washerwoman, who managed it in their kitchens with nothing more than their kitchen utensils! Of course, every book talks about the fun variations of scented soaps and foams. With a complete guide to soap-making in your hand, I am sure yours will be perfect!

About the Author

Four years ago, Estevan was retrenched from her job. While looking for a new job, she picked up the art of soapmaking online at <http://www.soap-maker.info>. That was the best decision she ever made in her life. Today, she owns a successful chain of stores selling handmade soaps.

Source: <http://americanahost.com>