THE VILLAGE SCHOOL

Soap Making for Beginners with Dook

Toolkit

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Introduction

Dook is a small, artisanal soap maker in Edinburgh, Scotland. They make salt soap in small batches from a workshop by the coast using organic ingredients, essential oils and natural colours.

Each batch is mixed and poured by hand resulting in distinctive, high-quality hand and body soap.

Sustainability and plastic reduction is central to their manufacturing and retail approach.

The main oils used in the soap are organic and from sustainable sources.

Plastic is kept to a minimum during manufacture and all our packaging and shipping materials are made exclusively of recycled and recyclable materials.

1. Tools and Equipment:

PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT:

Apron

Protective gloves (rubber kitchen gloves)

Protective goggles or a face shield

Newspaper or a waterproof table cloth for your kitchen table or work surface

MAKING EQUIPMENT:

1 x Large plastic mixing bowl

3 x 1 litre plastic jugs

2 x Silicone spatulas

Small ramekins or glass containers for essential oils

500ml capacity pyrex or heatproof glass jug

Hand blender

Silicone loaf soap mould

Digital weighing scales

Optional – a glass thermometer

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Ingedient List

TO MAKE 1.3KG SOAP – OR 10-12 BARS

INGREDIENTS	CHECKBOX
194g Water	
138g Sodium Hydroxide	
600g Olive Oil	
250g Coconut Oil	
100g Shea Butter	
Essential Oils – your preferred combination up a maximum of 30g (I use 22g Tangerine, 3g Vetiver, 5g Lemon)	
Colours – your preferred combination up to a maximum of 10g (I use 2g Turmeric and 2g charcoal)	
Rock salt, dried petals or herbs for the top (optional) (I use black Hawaiian salt)	

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Method

Set up your soaping space: Cover the table with newspaper or a wipeable table cloth, open a window to ensure good ventilation.

— Keep children and/or pets occupied elsewhere.
— Put on your apron, gloves, and eye protection.

Weigh out all of your ingredients

Start by making the 'lye' solution. Set your weighing scale to grams. Select your pyrex or heatproof jug. Weigh out the water, then weigh out the sodium hydroxide. Carefully and slowly add the sodium hydroxide to the water.

You'll notice that it bubbles and releases a gas. Make sure you stand back and don't inhale the gas. Using a heatproof spatula gently stir the solution until the sodium hydroxide is fully dissolved.

Caution – this solution will be very hot (over 93°C or 200°F) and is extremely caustic and corrosive. Set lye safely to one side and allow to cool.

Now weigh out your shea and coconut oils into your large plastic mixing bowl. Put the mixing bowl in the microwave and heat for a couple of minutes until the oils are just melted. (If you don't have a microwave you can melt these in a pan on the hob, just make sure you heat them gently until just melted). Next weigh out and add the olive oil to the bowl.

Select your preferred essential oils and weigh them out carefully. I use Tangerine (a middle note), Lemon (a top note) and a little Vetivert (a bottom note). Combine these in a glass beaker, or ramekin. Don't use plastic containers as the oils can degrade the material.

Take your three 1litre plastic jugs. Weigh out the colours into the 2 of the jugs. I use turmeric and charcoal. You can add a little more or less depending on the intensity of colour you'd like to create.

Now you have all of your ingredients weighed out, it's best practice to check them off your ingredients list. Then you can be sure you've not left anything out.

Check on the lye. If the jug is just warm to the touch, it's ready to use. If it's hot, leave it a little longer to cool. If you have a thermometer, you want the lye to be 27°C - 38°C (80-100°F) before you use it.

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Mixing

Once everything is weighed out and the lye and the oils are between 27°C - 38°C (80-100°F) you're ready to go.

First mix the essential oils into the large bowl containing the main oils.

Now, add the lye solution into the oils and mix with the hand blender. Make sure the blender is fully submerged in the mixture and pulse and stir a few times. The oils will change from translucent to opaque as the soap emulsifies. Continue to mix until the solution is uniform and a small amount of soap drizzled across the mixture's surface leaves a faint pattern - this is called 'trace'.

Once the soap has reached 'trace' consistency, pour approximately 1/6 of it into the jug with the turmeric powder, 1/6 into the jug with the charcoal and 1/6 into the remaining 1l jug. This should leave approximately half of the total mixture in the large bowl. It's fine to do this part of the process by eye as you need to work briskly here.

Using the hand-blender, combine the turmeric and then charcoal into the soap batter, they will dramatically change colour and begin to thicken. Mix well to ensure there are no lumps, but don't let these coloured mixtures thicken too much, you want to be able to pour them into the mould with ease.

Pouring

To create a striped bottom layer and plain top you can try the following:
pour a little of each of the three colours into the mould, one after the other from the same point on the mould, repeat until the 3 small jugs are empty.

Once all of the three-coloured bottom layer is in the mould, carefully and slowly pour the main colour over the top to create an upper layer. Use a spatula to regulate the flow so it doesn't sink into the lower layer too much.

Leave the soap in the mould for 20mins or so before checking to see if it's thickening. Once it's thick you can shape the top with a teaspoon. I like to create a wave shape, by pulling the soap from one side to the other. Once you have it in a shape you like, decorate with salt crystals, dried herbs or petals.

Cover your mould and put in a safe place to set, out of reach of children or pets.

Leave undisturbed for 24hrs.

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Cleaning up

Clean off all excess soap mixture into newspaper or an old yoghurt pot and put into the bin. Stack up equipment and leave somewhere safe overnight for the soap to set before cleaning.

Once the soap residue on your equipment has set, you can soak them in the sink and wash them by hand. Alternatively, you can wash in an empty dishwasher at a high heat.

Unmoulding and cutting

Once you have waited 24 hours your soap should be set. Your soap is ready to come out of the mould when you can peel the mould away from the side of the soap easily.

If it appears sticky or still soft, leave for a few more hours, or another day.

You don't want to get it out when it's too soft as it will be messy and difficult to slice.

Once out, use a large knife to cut your loaf of soap into bars. It should make 10-12 bars.

Curing

All soaps need to be left on a shelf to air cure before you use them or give them as gifts.

You can use your soap immediately, but it still has a high-water content and will go sloppy and slimy on your soap dish.

Leave your soap to cure for 2 – 3 weeks before using it and you'll be happy you did. You'll have a mild, long-lasting bar, that smells amazing, cleans really well and makes your skin feel great!

Tips, tricks and troubleshooting:

- Be extremely cautious with the lye. It is a very caustic and corrosive solution. If it gets onto your skin wash thoroughly. If it gets into your eyes wash thoroughly and call for medical help. Wipe up any spills immediately as it can damage wood, fabrics and metal.

- When choosing scents, take your pick from the world of aromatherapy essential oils. Blend your favourite scents together perhaps choosing a top, middle and bottom note. Watch out for spice oils (e.g. clove, cinnamon) these can cause your soap to seize-up and be impossible to pour.

- When choosing colours, be mindful of the scents. A blue coloured soap might be strange if it's fragranced with a citrussy smell... Plan and consider what it might look and smell like.

- When mixing, make sure you don't over mix. Once the lye is added to the oils the mixture is thickening all the time. Over mixing with the hand blender can mean that it gets thick very quickly and is difficult to get into a mould.

- If your mixture has become too thick. Don't panic. Use a spoon to get it into the mould as quickly as you can. Tamp the mould down to get out any air bubbles. This technique is called 'spoon-plop' and can result is some really beautiful looking soap.

- If you want the colours in your soap to really stand out, put your full mould into the oven with the light on (no heat on) and leave it overnight. This will insulate your mould and keep the soap at a higher temperature for longer and make the colours pop.

- Remember, the same ingredients can come out differently in the hands of different soap makers, tiny temperature changes or couple of extra whizzes with the hand blender can make a real difference. Embrace the alchemy! It's all part of the magic of making your own soap.

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Recommendations

My favourite suppliers and brands for equipment and ingredients.

EQUIPMENT SUPPLIERS:

Most of the equipment that you need for soap making is readily available from cookware shops or even your local supermarket.

Remember – if you use a piece of equipment for soap making, don't use it again for food preparation.

For soap moulds try:

fizzywhiz.com/product/soap-loaf-silicone-mould/

lionshome.co.uk/accessories-silicone-moulds/loaf/

thesoapkitchen.co.uk/

The internal dimensions of the mould I use in the course are: L 26cm x W 7cm x H 8cm.

For protective goggles:

diy.com/departments/tools-equipment/safety-workwear/goggles-glasses/DIY638873.cat

For jugs

I use thick plastic jug sets which I bought from B&Q for £2 and more expensive Norpro pouring jugs which are available on Amazon and elsewhere.

Thermometer:

https://www.thesoapkitchen.co.uk/soapmaking-thermometers

INGREDIENTS SUPPLIERS:

These websites supply oils and Sodium Hydroxide:

https://www.thesoapkitchen.co.uk

https://soapmakers-store.com/

https://justasoap.co.uk/

My favourite oil suppliers:

Buy shea butter from here and you'll be supporting women's cooperatives in Northern Ghana:

naissance.com

makersingredients.com/

Recommendations (Cont.)

RECOMMENDED READING:

The Soapmaker's Companion
Susan Miller Cavitch
A classic, with over forty recipes and detailed, well written instructions.

Pure Soapmaking
Anne-Marie Faiola
Brilliant soap making guide with lots of interesting ingredient combinations and helpful step-by-step photos.

The Natural and Hand Made Soap Book
Sarah Harper
Lovely natural soap recipes, plus other recipes for home cleaning.

Scientific Soapmaking
Scientific Soapmaking
Kevin M. Dunn
The chemistry behind soap making.

BRILLIANT WEBSITES FOR IDEAS AND RECIPES:

lovelygreens.com/
soapqueen.com/
thesprucecrafts.com/
soapchallengeclub.com/

SOAP CALCULATORS:

soapcalc.net/

MY FAVOURITE SOAPY INSTAGRAM FEEDS:

@shopmilked
@marsau_botanicals
@soapfanatics
@ciment.paris
@mee_hue
@sogeumsoap
@seemsoap
@soapchallengeclub
@hanahzo
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