How to Make Homemade Soap

1. Soap Making 101
   * 1

Dissolve 12 oz. lye in 32 oz. softened water in a plastic or glass bowl. If at all possible, do this outside or under an exhaust fan.

* + 2

Add the lye to the water, not vice versa. Pour the lye slowly and in a steady stream, and stir constantly with a plastic spoon.

* + 3

Set the mixture aside to cool. The mixture will heat up considerably due to the lye reacting with fats in the oils. This is called saponification.

* + 4

Melt 24 oz. coconut oil and 38 oz. solid vegetable shortening in a stainless steel pot.

* + 5

Add 25 oz. olive oil (not virgin) and any fragrance oils you want to use.

* + 6

Allow the oils to cool.

* + 7

Grease the soap mold with Crisco.

* + 8

When both the oil and lye mixtures have cooled to room temperature, slowly combine them, adding the lye to the oils.

* + 9

Stir slowly and constantly. If you see bubbles, stir more slowly.

* + 10

Drizzle the soap into the pot once in a while. When it keeps its shape momentarily before sinking into the rest of the mix (tracing), it's time to add whatever extras you want.

* + 11

Stir your botanicals, grains and coloring into a cup of soap taken from the mix.

* + 12

Combine that back into the original mixture.

* + 13

Pour the soap into the mold.

* + 14

Wrap the mold in a towel and leave it undisturbed for 18 hours. The soap mixture will heat up and then cool down. Avoid uncovering it until it's cooled.

* + 15

Allow the soap to sit in the uncovered mold for another 12 hours.

* + 16

Loosen the sides by wiggling the mold a little.

* + 17

Turn the mold over onto a clean counter.

* + 18

Cut the soap into bars with a knife. Some people use a miter box to make square corners.

* + 19

Allow the bars to cure for three to four weeks before using. Smaller bars cure faster than larger ones.