

How to Make Melt'n'Pour Soap

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One of the easiest soaps to make, perfect for beginners, is what is known as melt and pour soaps.

They are made from a glycerine soap base that is gently melted and the other ingredients added before pouring into moulds to set.

To make melt'n'pour soap you will need:

Melt and pour soap base

Double boiler OR a large saucepan and a heatproof dish that fits in the top

Thermometer

Skewer for stirring

Moulds

Isopropyl alcohol (rubbing alcohol)

Soap colour - optional

Soap fragrance - optional



Step 1. Prepare your moulds. You can use whatever you like, I use silicone cake moulds because they're cheap, readily available in a lot of different shapes and most importantly, the finished soap is easy to pop out. If you are using silicone moulds, put them on a baking sheet to keep them stable. Spritz the inside of the moulds with the isopropyl alcohol.

Step 2. Cut the soap base into 2cm squares. This ensures it melts evenly and quickly, and doesn't turn into a giant, unmanageable glob.

Step 3. Put the soap base into the double boiler, turn the heat down so the pot is simmering and stir. Keep stirring until all the base has completely melted. Depending on how much base you have in the double boiler it can take a few minutes. Watch the temperature of the base, and keep it under 50 degrees F. If it goes over 50 degrees, it will still be good to use, but the finished soap won't be glossy and bright.

I use a skewer to stir so it gets between all the little cubes and keeps them moving.

Step 4. Once the base has completely melted, you can add the colour if you are using it. Remember, less is more. It is easier to add a drop to increase the intensity of the colour rather than over-colour and end up with something you don't like. Add the colour by the drop, and make sure to stir it in completely. Again, this can take a minute or two to get an even colour distribution. Just keep the double boiler or bowl over the hot water.

Step 5. Add the scent, again remembering that less is more and you can always increase the intensity of the fragrance. Stir well.

Step 6. I use a clean, dry soup ladle to fill the moulds. As soon as they are full, spritz with the rubbing alcohol. This eliminates the little bubbles that are sitting on top of the soap, giving it a nice, flat surface when it dries. Set the baking sheet aside until the soap is set. This won't take too long - about 2 hours, but you can leave it up to 24 hours if necessary.

Step 7. Once the soap has hardened or set, turn it out of the moulds. Trim off any excess drips with a sharp paring knife. Wrap the soap immediately. This prevents the "sweating" that is a common feature of glycerine based soaps.

Seven steps sound a lot and complicated, but they are all very quick and simple. It takes about half an hour from start to final spritz to make beautiful melt'n'pour soaps you'll love to use or give as gifts.

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