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EC1117 Revised 1922 Soap Making

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Nebraska
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK
IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS
U. of N. Agr. College & U.S. Dept. of Agr-Cooperating
W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln

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1117

SOAP MAKING

An economical housekeeper will perhaps find that she saved fats which are not suitable for food. Such fats should not be wasted. It can be utilized in soap making. By using "modern lye" soap making is not the laborious task as was the preparation of soft soap in colonial days.

Soap making is a real art, yet one which can easily be acquired. Once you have made your own soap you will readily appreciate the saving you can effect and the real pleasure there is in making various kinds of soap.

A good soap is one that is free from alkali and from any coloring which could hide impurities in the soap. Clean fat is light yellow or white and if the soap is made from clean fat it will naturally be a very light color.

Ingredients

Lye
One very essential ingredient in all soap making is pure uniform lye.

Water
Best results are obtained by using soft water whenever possible.

Fat
Both animal and vegetable fats may be used in soap making. In fact the best results are obtained in homemade soap making by mixing the fats. This simplifies the task of saving fats for the housekeeper as all fats that can further in cooking may be used in soap making.

Care must be taken in collecting fats. Burnt or dirty grease is not of use in that state; but if not burnt badly, it can be clarified by melting, straining, then frying a few small pieces of potato in it. Clarify the fat as it accumulates and keep it in clean tin cans, well covered, until a sufficient quantity is on hand. Both fats and oils must be washed free from salt. Rancid greases may be purified by boiling with a solution of one part of vinegar and five parts of water. Allow it to cool, then skim off the cleaned grease. If rancid greases are to be employed, one of the boiling processes will give better results.

After the correct proportions are once weighed out and the boiling started, do not add more grease or lye to secure the soap test (which is given below) but just keep on boiling if you have to boil it for hours.

Perfumes
Scents such as oil of citronella, Burgamont or Sassafras may be added so as to perfume the soap thus destroying the odor of the fat used.

Utensils

For cooking small batches of soap, enameled or granite ware is suitable and for larger batches an iron kettle may be used. When the stir method is used, crockery is suitable. Strong lye solutions will attack copper, zinc, and tin to 2121m
a certain extent. Never use aluminum utensils. A large granite or wooden spoon is best for stirring.

Holding

The soap may be molded in the pan in which it is made but it is better to pour it into a mold. Wooden or paste board boxes lined with damp cloths make very good molds. A more elaborate one may be made in the form of a tray from galvanized tin. This sheet will need to be 24 inches by 36 inches or 54 inches by 30 inches, 2 inches being allowed for the depth, and rolled edge. The edge may be rolled over wire.

Whatever is used for a mold, it should be lined with damp cloths. As the soap hardens, the entire mass of soap may be easily lifted from the mold by pulling on the cloth.

Cutting

The soap can be more easily cut if removed from the mold. It is most easily cut into bars by means of a fine wire or a string. Mark the large cake off into the desired size divisions, then place the wire around the cake and pull it thru. This makes a more evenly trimmed bar than can be made with a knife.

Curing

It is beneficial to cover the soap with a blanket or old carpets when first poured so as to retain the heat. Soap is ruined by freezing while green. Salt may be added before cooling if the weather is cold to hasten the curing process. Salt also helps to separate the water employed during the boiling.

Manufacturers do not allow their soap to be used until about four weeks old. This allows it to dry out better so it will not wash away so rapidly. This applies to homemade soap as well as to commercial soap. It would even be better to have it six months old before using. The older soap is the better.

Lard soaps and soaps made by the boiling process require longer ageing before they become hard and ready for use.

Helpful Hints

Excess of lye forms a hard crumbly soap. Hard, vigorous stirring will cause separation of the lye and fat in the cold process. Stir slowly and evenly. Greasy soap shows lack of lye. If grease comes to the top of the soap, it may be slowly heated by placing on an oven door and then stirred until it thickens and looks like honey.

If the boiling process has been used and the soap when cut shows a darker color at the bottom, it shows that more water is needed in the blending process. If the soap separates leaving a dark liquid in the bottom of the mold, more water is also needed for blending.
Crackling Soap - Boil Method

Ingredients:

- 4¼ pounds of cracklings
- 1 can lye
- 3 quarts water
- 2 T. citronilla
- 1 cup ammonia
- ½ cup borax

Dissolve in three quarts boiling water in a large granite dishpan. Add cracklings and boil until good soap test is obtained. Time varies from one to three hours. (Frequently one hour is sufficient to give a soap test, but it should be boiled at least one and one-half hours.)

Soap Test

Put a small amount of the boiling mixture in a glass, add an equal amount of hot water. Stir. If the mass becomes like strained honey, and if the dip threads off in hairs, we say that soap has come.

It is a good plan to let a little of this mixture harden in a sauce dish. Touch the tip of the tongue to the hardened mixture. If a sharp bity taste is there, it indicates the presence of free lye. Make other tests at succeeding intervals until in the hardened sample no taste of free lye is present.

The soap is now ready to blend. Remove from the fire and add luke warm water gradually, stirring all the time. From six to eight quarts of water will be needed to blend soap. When the whole mass becomes like strained honey with all the dark lye water at the bottom and the fatty substance on the surface combined and blended together, the soap is done. Add ammonia, borax, and citronilla, just before pouring in the mold. For molding see page 2.

Crackling Soap - Stir Method

To each gallon of cracklings add one tablespoon lye. Cover with water and let cook on the stove for about two hours. Add a large amount of water and let stand. A layer of fat will harden on the surface. The water serves to separate the fat from the settlings. Remove the fat and proceed as with any stir soap as -

Dissolve one can Lewis lye in 2½ pints cold water in a crock or a granite vessel. Set aside until it has cooled to a temperature of 80°. Melt 5½ pounds of fat and set aside until the temperature is not over 120°. Now slowly pour the dissolved lye into the grease. Stir until lye and grease are thoroly combined and the mixture drips from the stirrer like strained honey. Stir slowly but not too long as there is danger that the lye may separate. From five to fifteen minutes is enough according to the grease and the weather. Pour into a mold, cover with blanket or carpet, set in a warm place for a day or two, empty and cut up as desired.

Crackling Soap - Stand Method

One can lye to four and a half pound cracklings. Place in an earthen jar or iron kettle and cover with water. Stir each day while standing - three
weeks. At the end of this period place on the stove and heat. Boil about two hours. Stir in about three gallons of water (luke warm) and mold.

Soap from Cracklings, rinds and fat with cooking

One can lye and 3 pounds cracklings, fat, and rinds. Mix together in a large stone jar or kettle. Next day add a large amount of water and stir (possibly three gallon). Let stand for three weeks adding water as needed and stir each day. At the end of the three weeks, heat up soap and mold.

Or, one pound can lye dissolved in 2½ pints cold water, 6 pounds fat melted, ¼ cup ammonia, 1½ tablespoons borax, 2 tablespoons citronilla. When lye mixture has cooled to 70 degrees F., add it to melted fat. Stir until as thick as honey. Add ammonia, borax and citronilla, pour into wooden or pasteboard boxes lined with oiled or waxed paper, set away to harden.

Crackling Soap, - Salting out Process

| 8 gal. water | 30 pounds cracklings |
| 23 pounds fat | 4 cans lye |
| 4 cans of lye | 4 gallons water |

Boil two hours or until all grease and lye has dissolved. Then put in four handfuls of salt to each can of lye and boil fifteen minutes. Then take off kettle and skim off the fat and pour off lye water. Then put on kettle again, take one pail of water, 2 cans of lye and soap you skimmed off and boil one hour. Add 8 handfuls of salt and boil fifteen minutes after putting in the salt. Take off fire, skim off again and put in mold.

Lard Soap - Cold Process

| 1 can lye | 6 pounds fat |
| 2½ pints cold water | ½ cup ammonia |
| 1½ tablespoons borax |

Dissolve the lye in the water in a stone jar, then cool to 70 degrees F. Next melt the fat and bring temperature to 100 degrees F. Add the lye solution to the grease in a small steady stream with slow, even stirring. Add ammonia and borax. Continue stirring the mixture until the product is of a rather thick syrupy consistency when it is poured into the mold. Cover the mold with a blanket or carpet and set in a warm room for several days.

Tallow Soap - Cold Process

| 1 can lye | 6 pounds fat |
| 2½ pints cold water | ½ cup ammonia |
| 1½ tablespoons borax |

Follow method given in the above recipe except the temperature of the lye solution should be 90 degrees F. and the fat 130 degrees F. Substitution of one pound of tallow with lard will improve a tallow soap.

(Prepared by Florence J. Atwood - Approved by the Department of Home Economics.)