

Little Bar of Luxury

Selecting a bath soap is not difficult when you know a little about ingredients, quality and natural scents.

by Susan Thomas Springer,
for *The Bulletin Special Projects*

When Danielle Nye was a little girl, she was intrigued by soap—the colors, the fragrances, the shapes.

She knew early on that she wanted to make soap.

Today, her products, such as grapefruit ginger organic bath bar, are sold nationwide.

That's the allure of soap. These bars go beyond the simple purpose of removing dirt and germs.

Besides cleanliness, they offer a little luxury, aromatherapy, and skin soothing qualities.

Choosing a bath soap shouldn't be difficult. However, there are so many types and levels of quality, how can you tell which is best?

Two local soap making experts provide some clarity to their chemistry.

Handcrafted soaps are popular today for their natural



Dani Natural Products (above), of Bend, is owned by Danielle and Sanders Nye. Photos by Lyle Cox.

ingredients, unique scents and qualities not found in mass-produced soaps. Handcrafted soaps are created through both art and science.

In its basic definition, soaps consist of natural animal fats or plant oils combined with some form of lye such as sodium hydroxide. It can be formed into bars, liquid or granular forms.

"I'm a firm believer in simple, the fewer ingredients

the better," said Nye, the owner, with her husband Sanders Nye, of Dani Natural Products based in Bend.

The business began with natural vegetable oil-based soaps and has grown due to customer requests for other products such as shower gel, lotions and a sugar scrub.

Nye has built her knowledge of soap through research, experimenting and a trip to France.

Dawn Mead, owner of La Petite Savonnerie based in Sisters, calls herself the "mad soap woman" for her 20-year fascination with soap.

The first book she read in the '70s about making soap taught the traditional method of rendering beef fat into soap. So Mead bought tallow from the butcher and tried it.

When more information about soap processes came out, she was happy to switch to using all vegetable oils such as palm kernel and olive oil.

Mead carefully calculates her natural ingredients to create a well-balanced soap, one which is emollient and has a good lather.

"People associate being clean with having lots of bubbles," said Mead, who is also a nurse, and adds that soap kills germs by itself without any additional "anti-bacterial" agents.

Mead searches for organic and local ingredients including goat milk, juniper, mint and lavender.

On the Label

When you read soap labels, you may see these terms:

Triple-Milled or French-Milled Soaps

These soaps are machine-rolled between stainless steel rollers and then pressed into soap molds. Triple-milled soaps are said to last longer. However, any soap benefits from not sitting in water.

Glycerin

Glycerin is a by-product of the soap-making process. Translucent soaps are called glycerin.

Super Fatted

These soaps simply contain more fats and can be good for dry skin.

Detergent

This is a synthetic product, often made with petroleum-based ingredients.

Visit lapetitesavonnerie.com and danibath.com for more information.



One popular soap is her olive oil-based castile soap because it is gentle and good for facial soap, for babies and others with sensitive skin.

Both soap makers enjoy creating scents for their soaps so they benefit body, mind and spirit. Nye offers scents such as a refreshing combination of basil lemongrass or delicate blue chamomile which "soothes the soul."

Mead offers scents such as earthy man and repose which includes patchouli, clove leaf and lime. Her most recent summer scent, called Saint Tropez, is popular for its ability to conjure the French Riviera with citrus and lavender in a blue and yellow swirled bar.

So read the label, inhale and lather. The ultimate test is what feels good on your skin.

Dawn Mead (left), the owner of La Petite Savonnerie in Sisters, admits to a 20-year fascination with soap.



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