

HOME-MADE SOAP

COUNTRY women in New Zealand have always made their own household soap, to a large extent. In a farm house—especially, of course, on a sheep station—a lot of fat soon accumulates, far more than can be used in ordinary cooking; and our thrifty home-makers use it to make soap, of which both the farmer and his wife need such quantities, for everything must be kept scrupulously clean. Country Links of the Daisy Chain have sent me many good and tried recipes; and as many people are now taking up farm life for the first time, I think it is sensible to publish some of these on our page of *The Listener*.

Not Toilet Soap

Although some people have been successful in making toilet soap as well as household, I do not recommend our women in general to attempt this, but to confine their efforts to ordinary soap. This needs to be good and pure and of a quality that will not hurt the hands and dry the skin. In books written by the early settlers of New Zealand, we read quite pitiful little references (made by the gently-born Englishwomen who had to wash clothes with harsh, home-made soap) to painful hands and forearms. We have much better materials for soap making than they had, and can make it really well, so that it is quite all right for children as well as grown-ups to wash their hands with it after outdoor work. But I do recommend you to use good "bought" soap for your face, and in your bath. Such soap passes through so many refining processes, is impregnated with specially refined oils, such as palm oil, and olive oil, besides glycerine and other ingredients for "feeding" the skin—a subject upon which

specialists have spent years of study; that we cannot possibly make anything like it at home.

Fat for Soap-making must be quite clean and free from salt. To prepare it, boil it up with a little water, and leave to get cold. The fat will set firmly on top of the water; it must be lifted off, and the underneath part scraped or cut off, leaving only the clean fat. Some people like to clarify their fat twice or three times, in this way; and many recipes say "clarify the fat twice."

Soap is Cooked when it is just about the consistency of honey, and coats the back of a wooden spoon when held up, after stirring. It should set when it drips off the spoon. While it is cooling, stir it gently, but regularly, from time to time.

Setting the Soap

Some people "set" their soap in kerosene-tins cut lengthwise, and with the edges turned over outwards. Others just take any convenient wooden box or small case from the grocer or fruiterer, line it with a wet cloth, and pour the soap in. It is then quite easy to cut down into bars, when set, but still soft. The bars should be stacked up on a dry shelf to harden.

Soap Without Boiling

This is a very useful and easy recipe for a good pure household soap. It comes from a Wellington resident, and needs no boiling—a great recommendation. Six pounds of clean fat; 1 lb. of caustic soda; ½ breakfast cup of ammonia; ¼ lb. borax; 4½ pints of water. Have the fat melted and warm. Dissolve the borax in ½ pint of hot water, and the caustic soda in the remaining 4 pints of cold water. Put the ammonia and dissolved borax into the caustic soda. Let cool; then stir it into the warm melted fat. Stir well, till quite thick. It will take about 15 to 20 minutes. This stirring is very important, and needs care and patience, for the success of the soap depends upon the perfect blending of the mixture. Finally, leave it to set; cut it

up while still warm, and leave it to harden and dry. It can be pleasantly scented with citronella bought from the chemist, or may be left plain.

Upper Hutt Recipe

This recipe comes from a very devoted home-maker—one who excels in both vegetable and flower gardens, as well as in preserving, pickling, and cooking. To 7½ lbs. clarified fat, use 1 lb. caustic soda dissolved in 1½ quarts water; ½ lb. borax, and a squeeze of the blue bag. Melt the fat. In another vessel put the caustic and cold water. You will find that it becomes hot as it dissolves. Stir with the copper stick. Leave it standing, to cool to blood heat, but keep it out of the way of children, for a caustic burn is a very bad thing. Then add it to the fat which is now liquid, having been melted over heat; add also the other ingredients. Stir till almost setting, then pour it into a box lined with a wet cloth. Cover well while setting. Cut up about twelve hours later, as it gets very brittle.

With Resin

This is another tried recipe. The Link who sent it makes the soap in a kerosene tin which she stands in the copper, partly filled with water, forming a kind of double-saucepan, or water-jacket. This prevents any chance of the soap boiling over, which it is apt to do very suddenly, while your attention is diverted for a moment and then you have the bother of cleaning it all up. Some recipes emphasise keeping back a measured pint of the cold water, handy, ready to dash into the tin when you see the soap rising up. Many people have no copper these days, and so boil their soap in a kerosene tin or any similar vessel on the gas or electric stove, or the kitchen range.

The Recipe.—Six pounds of clean fat; 1 lb. caustic soda; 1 lb. resin; ¼ lb. powdered borax; 10 pints of water; and some citronella. Melt the fat, add the caustic soda, and resin, and water, putting all into a clean kerosene tin. Put some water in the copper and stand the tin in it. Bring contents of the tin to the boil, and keep boiling about an hour, till it is done. Add the borax just before taking off. Stir in the citronella, and leave till cold and set. Cut up in bars, and store 3 or 4 weeks before using.

Te Kuiti Recipe

I got this recipe from a farmer's wife when I visited Te Kuiti to give a talk to

Coconut Ice Without Cooking

HALF quantities may be used.

One pound of sifted icing sugar; ¼ lb. melted butter; 2 egg whites; ½ lb. desiccated coconut; and ½ teaspoon vanilla essence. Mix sugar, coconut, egg-whites, and vanilla together. Stir in the hot (but not boiling) butter, and mix well. Line a cake tin with grease-proof paper, and spread in one-third of the mixture—colour half the remainder pink, and spread upon the first layer. Mix a teaspoon of cocoa with the remainder, and spread upon the pink layer. Stand in a cool place to set.

a large and representative gathering of women. She had to make a long and difficult trip to attend the meeting, and brought samples of her good soap to give me. On her farm, they kill their own sheep, and so have a lot of mutton fat which must not be wasted. Sixteen pounds of pure mutton fat; 3 lbs. caustic soda; 4½ gallons of water; 2½ lbs. resin and 1 lb. borax. The quantities may be halved or quartered, and it is best to use the copper. Put it all in together, and cook till it will coat the back of a wooden spoon, and when it drips off the spoon, it will set. To make it into sand-soap, add some very fine sand, or better still, sand-pumice. Sieve it finely, and pour the soap into kerosene tins cut lengthways, with the edges turned outwards. Stir occasionally while setting, to make sure that the sand is evenly distributed. Leave it to set overnight, and next morning, cut it before it sets too hard.

Fitzroy Soap

Six pounds of clarified fat; ¼ lb. borax powder; 12 pints of cold water; 1 lb. caustic soda; and 14 oz. resin. Put 11 pints only of the water in a kerosene tin with the other ingredients on the stove, and bring to the boil. Let it rise nearly to the top of the tin, then dash in the remaining pint of water. Have it very handy, as it rises very quickly. When it comes to the boil again, remove

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