



## FEATURED INTERVIEW: Soapmaker Terry Bryant of *MoonEssence*

We're so lucky to have such amazing individuals choosing Eden Botanicals as their supplier that we've decided to showcase their talents via informational interviews which will appear in our newsletters. In this issue, we bring you Terry Bryant, Advanced Soapmaker and co-owner of MoonEssence, in Petaluma, CA:

My passion for natural soapmaking began in 1995 when I took a class on how to formulate natural products. I was taught the basics on how to make lip balm, soap and how to use essential oils – I was hooked. Fascinated by the chemistry aspect of it all, I volunteered at a local lab to learn more, and from there entered into the wonderful world of soapmaking.

For those who may not know, there are three levels of certification through the Soapmaker's Guild; Basic, Advanced and Master. I've worked through Basic and Advanced, and am currently in the process of getting my Master Soapmaker certification. Each step requires several tests of soapmaking ability whereby soap is created through cold, hot, and melt and pour processes at progressive levels of difficulty.

One of the most interesting things I have done to become certified includes making soap using the colonial method. This involves rendering tallow from beef fat and making lye from wood ash. This process definitely makes one appreciate what our ancestors went through to create basic necessities out of whatever materials they had on hand. I have used the colonial method to teach a group of volunteers working with the Osukuru village in Uganda, who in turn taught members of the community. The goal of this project was to spread the knowledge of soapmaking while simultaneously encouraging disease control and reducing the infant mortality rate. The tribe was able to learn every aspect of the soapmaking process, including creating their own tallow and lye. A chicken feather can actually be used as a natural pH strip to measure the alkalinity of homemade lye. If the feather dissolves upon insertion, the lye is deemed strong enough to complete the saponification process.

Our company, MoonEssence, is dedicated to providing premium, all natural/organic skin care. Our products are created using certified Organic, premium quality ingredients, including essential oils, and are FREE of Parabens, Mineral Oil, Petroleum derivatives, synthetics, and Sodium Lauryl Sulfate.

One of the challenges of using all natural materials is stabilizing the longevity of the aroma in soap. I've found it's always good to combine multiple notes. The top notes are more volatile and dissipate faster, middle notes have more longevity, and base notes the longest. Some oils – such as Clove Bud and Laurel Leaf, which contain Eugenol, can speed up the saponification process. This means your soap can get too firm, too fast. You may need to raise the temperature of your oils and lye water to prevent this from happening.

I typically don't use absolutes in my soaps, because they are too cost prohibitive. Although for hobbyists who make smaller batches of milled soap – the process of grating and re-melting soap – more expensive oils could work. When milling soap, the saponification process has already occurred so there is less heat and thus less loss of aroma. In short, you don't need to use as much essential oil to get similar results.

I use anywhere from 3-6.5 oz of pure essential oil for every 36 bars of soap made, with each bar in a batch weighing roughly 5 oz. When using essential oils, the scent will become locked inside and may not be perceived from the exterior of a dry bar. Upon wetting and lathering, the essential oils will be released and the smell will become more apparent. The aroma strength and longevity of essential oils is less than that of synthetic fragrances. However, the benefits far outweigh this drawback. Not only will essential oils drastically increase the therapeutic value of your soap but you will not be using potentially harmful chemicals on your skin, the largest and most absorptive organ in your body.

Our company also offers custom formulations as well as private labeling. I've created custom soaps for wineries such as Ceago, using their wine, olive oil & essential oil; soap for Point Reyes Blue Cheese using the whey from their factory, and for an olive oil company using the Sansa (ground up olive pits still full of oleic acid) to make their gardener's soap. I've also been commissioned to create gentle baby soaps from 100% castile, and a castile pet shampoo with essential oils for repelling fleas and ticks. My soaps have a pretty strong presence in the Northern California Whole Foods Markets as well.

The best way to pass on the soapmaking tradition is to teach. I offer a two-hour class that teaches you everything you need to know about soapmaking, including handouts on how to build your own formula according to personal desires and needs.

You will learn how different vegetable oils can create various types of foam and have their own cleansing abilities. We talk about the use of essential oils and other natural materials to incorporate into your soap to make it unique.

The cost of the class is \$50, with a \$12 materials fee. You get to take home two bars of soaps that you helped make, or, if you don't want to wait for the 4-week curing process, you can choose two bars of soap from my studio.

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