

GET INSPIRED

Early settlers were not able to bring enough soap to last very long when they sailed to America. The same was true of the settlers that first arrived in Troup County, Georgia. There were no stores from which to purchase soap so they made their own soap from items they had on their farmsteads. They used the rendered fat from animals butchered in the spring along with lye made from wood ashes to create a soft soap. The lye was created by placing wood ashes on top of straw and sticks into a bottomless barrel and slowly pouring water over the ashes until a brownish liquid oozed out of the bottom and into a pot. Next, the animal fat and waste cooking grease was mixed with water and put over a fire until all the fats had melted. Once they were cool and the fats had solidified and floated to the top the lye was added.

The lye and the solidified fats were put over a fire to boil until a soft, jelly-like soap was formed.



Soap making was one of the most difficult jobs on a homestead and required hours of dangerous and hot labor.

Mrs. Child stated in *The American Frugal Housewife* (1828), that you could test the strength of lye by seeing if the lye was strong enough to float a potato or egg. Soap making was always one of the most difficult jobs on the homestead so some books recommended buying it from a soap boiler, instead of trying to make it at home. Soapmakers in towns and cities would add salt, which was hard to come by in those days, to this mixture which would make it solidify into bars of soap. They also often scented their soaps with oils before selling.

MATERIALS:

¼ cup of oil
¼ cup of baking soda
Glass jar
Medium sized cooking pot

INSTRUCTIONS:

Add oil and baking soda to the pot on low heat and stir.
When the solution thickens, remove from heat and let it cool.
Add 1 tablespoon of this mixture with 2 cups of hot water in the jar.
Shake until you see suds.

Now you have your very own homemade soap! You can also add a small amount of lavender or other scented oil to add a fresh scent as the soapmakers would do.

*Real lye soap can be dangerous to make, this recipe will resemble pioneer soap.