Circling Taiwan Swirl Soap (with Activated Charcoal)

Oils & Butters:
- 15 oz (425 g) olive oil
- 7 oz (198 g) coconut oil
- 3 oz (85 g) rice bran oil
- 2 oz (57 g) castor oil
- 3 oz (85 g) sweet almond oil
- 3 oz (85 g) babassu oil
- 3 oz (85 g) sunflower oil

Lye Solution:
- 11 oz (312 g) distilled water
- 5.06 oz (143 g) sodium hydroxide (lye) (5% superfat)

Extras:
- 1/4 tsp activated charcoal + 1.5 tsp chlorella powder (to color black portion)
- 1/2 tsp indigo + 3 tsp Cambrian blue clay (for gray-blue portion)
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) eucalyptus essential oil (optional scent)
- 2 tbsp (30 ml) peppermint essential oil (optional scent)

Notes:
- This is a 3.25 lb recipe. (36 oz oil + 11 oz water + approx 5 oz lye = 52 oz)
- I used around a 3 pound mold and poured it thicker (taller) than my normal sized batches I use it for.
- Yield = 6 bars

Prepare the Mold, Dividers & Work Area

You can buy ready made dividers for molds (like these) or you can make some from cardboard like I did. I made mine by measuring my mold’s length and cutting three pieces that would fit snugly within.

This project gets messy! Line a large work area with freezer or parchment paper for easier cleanup later and make sure to wear your gloves at all times. If you utilize a helper, have gloves and proper safety gear for them as well.

Instructions to Make Soap

If you’ve never made soap before, be sure to thoroughly research the process and precautions before proceeding.

You can find more information in my Soap Making 101 post (HERE) or check out my Natural Soap Making eBook & package (HERE).

Step 1: In a small bowl, combine the activated charcoal and chlorella with a few teaspoons of your soap making oils (I used sweet almond) until a smooth mixture forms. In a separate small bowl, combine the blue clay and indigo powder with a tablespoon or two of distilled water until a smooth mixture forms. Set aside until you get to Step 6.

Step 2: Wearing safety goggles, gloves and long sleeves, weigh out the water and lye. Carefully sprinkle the lye into the water and stir well until the lye is fully dissolved. It will heat up quickly and give off strong fumes that you should avoid breathing in directly. I like to do this step in my kitchen sink (next to an open window), in order to contain any spills or splashes. It’s important to have a fresh air source, work outside, under a kitchen exhaust fan and/or wear a mask. Set the solution aside in a safe place, out of the reach of children and pets, and let cool for about 45 minutes. The temperature should drop to around 100 to 110°F (38 to 43°C) during that time. (Drop a few ice cubes in, if you need to cool it more before proceeding with the recipe.)

Step 3: Weigh the coconut and babassu oil into a small saucepan or double boiler. Melt gently over low heat, keeping a close eye on it. Weigh the other oils into your soap making pot or container and then pour the melted oils into there too. The melted oils should bring the temperature up to around 90 to 100°F (32 to 38°C), though you may need to heat them a bit more, depending on your room temperature. Don’t get too hung up on trying to make the temperatures match, but for this recipe you don’t want to mix too hot.

If you’re adding the essential oils, now is a good time to do so, so you won’t have to think about it later in the mad rush of color mixing and pouring. Hand stir them into your warmed oils.

Step 4: Now, you’re ready to mix! Working carefully and still with gloves, goggles and long sleeves on, pour the lye solution into the oils. Stir by hand for around 30 seconds then begin mixing with an immersion (stick) blender. Do not use a hand mixer – you want a stick blender that looks like THIS.

Step 5: Blend for around 20 to 30 seconds, then hand stir some more. With this soap, you want to emulsify it and then barely reach a light trace, so be easy on how much you use the stick blender. (“Trace” means that your soap batter has gotten thick enough so that when you drizzle some of it across the surface of itself, it leaves an imprint or “tracing” before sinking back in.)

Step 6: Once you've reached a light trace, divide your soap batter into 3 containers or pitchers.

- Pitcher 1 - pour in half of the soap batter and keep it plain and uncolored.
- Divide the other half of the soap batter evenly between Pitcher 2 and Pitcher 3.
- In Pitcher 2 -stir in the indigo/blue clay mixture.
- In Pitcher 3 – stir in the activated charcoal/chlorella/oil mixture.
- If you need to give a quick whirl with the stick blender to make sure the colors are blended well, you can, just be careful how long you run it for. It should only take a few seconds.

Instructions for Pouring & Cutting

Here's where it will really help to watch these videos:

https://youtu.be/Vly8DMO4FYI

https://youtu.be/CYMQgR_1VQM

You want to pour double thick, because you will be cutting your bar vertically, as well as horizontally.

So, in the first section, pour some of your plain soap (Pitcher 1), but not all the way to the top. Pour just a partial layer, then put that pitcher down and grab up Pitcher 2 (indigo/blue clay).

Pour a partial layer in the second section with Pitcher 2 (indigo/blue clay) then grab back up Pitcher 1 (plain soap) to pour a partial layer in the third section.

In the final section, pour some from Pitcher 3 (charcoal/chlorella).

Go back and repeat the process again, to finish filling the layers.

Once poured, pull out your dividers and set them aside on freezer or parchment paper. Use a chopstick to make a zig-zag motion and then a swirl.

Check out the video, so you can see the exact motions that need to be made. I watched that part over a few times before attempting.

I wanted my soap to go through gel phase, so covered it with the mold top, then a blanket, then tucked it a close, yet safe distance, from my wood stove for the night.

After a day or two, unmold and cut the loaf into approximately 2 1/4” bars, then cut those bars again horizontally.

To get the image shown in the very top photo on this post, I did a second horizontal slice within a finished bar, just to see what was inside. I was delighted to find an even more pronounced lotus flower when I put the two bars together!

Let your soap cure in the open air for at least 4 weeks before using or gifting.