



## Creative Outlet Soap Maker



### Ideas-Creative-Outlet-Soap-Maker

Jennifer Thompson, a Des Moines, Iowa–based librarian also makes luxurious handmade soaps. **How did you get started?**

One day at the library, I received a call from a woman looking for a soap recipe. I thought, “Why would someone make soap when you can just buy it in stores?” After I did some research, I became intrigued and ordered a book for myself on the topic.

**Why did you decide to start a business?**

After almost a year of making soaps, I sold some at a craft show, and people really liked them. From there I developed a Web site and sold to various stores and at a farmers’ market in Des Moines. I love that I can work full-time as an assistant library director but I’m still able to create and sell soaps on the side.

**How long does it take to make a batch?**

About three hours. Most of it involves waiting for the oils and lye water to cool down. After that, the soap takes about a month to cure. I mix everything in my kitchen, or “microsoapery,” as I call it. You should have seen my first batch—it was a disaster! I decided to create a purple huckleberry soap, of all things; little did I know that purple is the hardest color to make. It turned out a really ugly shade of gray, so I chopped it up and used it for the laundry. The next day I made a much more successful batch.

**What’s the benefit of homemade soaps?**

They’re a lot gentler on the skin because they retain natural glycerin, which draws in moisture. So I don’t have to use lotion, even in the winter. Soap making helps me see details, colors and textures in everyday things that I wouldn’t have noticed before. And I love the creativity. There’s nothing better than mixing a batch and seeing how it turns out.

#### FROM TOP

Red Currant, White Tea & Ginger, and Mango Tea Handmade Soaps, \$5 each, [tworiverssoaps.com](http://tworiverssoaps.com).

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### LOOFAH FOOT SOAP

Create divine stocking stuffers in just a few hours with this favorite recipe from Jennifer Thompson.

#### You will need:

2 lbs. of Clear Melt and Pour Soap Base, cut into pieces (\$5, [brambleberry.com](http://brambleberry.com))  
 A 6” loofah sponge (\$2, [loofahbytheinch.com](http://loofahbytheinch.com))  
 A 3” round diameter PVC pipe with end cap (or an empty, clean Pringles or Crystal Light canister)  
 2 oz. fragrance or essential oils (optional)  
 Liquid Soap Colorant (optional) like Labcolors Basic 12 (starting at \$5, [brambleberry.com](http://brambleberry.com))  
 Pyrex pitcher  
 Knife  
 Spoon  
 Kitchen scale

Glass cups

1. For the mold, place the PVC pipe on a work surface, end cap down. Put the loofah into the mold, trimming or adding small pieces as needed.
2. Put the soap base in a Pyrex pitcher in the microwave and melt it at 1-2 minute intervals. Stir and continue heating until it's completely melted. (You could also melt the soap base in a double boiler.)
3. Add your fragrance or essential oil and stir. Add in your colorant, if using. Stir. (Try blending a lavender essential oil and Royal Purple colorant, or lemon essential oil with Canary colorant.)
5. Carefully pour the melted soap into the mold and set aside to cool, about 3 hours.
6. Remove soap from the mold by placing it into the freezer for 30 seconds, which will cause the soap to contract slightly and pop out.
7. Slice the soap into 1-inch pieces using a serrated bread knife. Wrap in plastic wrap and secure the back with clear packing tape, or place the soap in a cellophane bag.

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### DIY SOAP SOURCES

For more at-home soap making advice, Jennifer recommends these books:

[\*The Natural Soap Book: Making Herbal and Vegetable-Based Soaps\*](#) by Susan Miller Cavitch (Storey Publishing, \$15)

[\*The Everything Soapmaking Book: Recipes and Techniques for Creating Colorful and Fragrant Soaps\*](#) by Alicia Grosso (Adams Media, \$15)

[\*How to Make Luxurious Handcrafted Soaps for Family, Friends, and Yourself\*](#) by Anne L. Watson (Shepard Publications, \$13)