

Balms for the Body:

Making your own body care products

Recipes

Here are a few basic recipes you can try. Feel free to play around with ingredients and ratios to get what you want. If something doesn't come out exactly right it is usually still usable. The cream that separates will just have to be remixed, the salve that is too loose can be remelted and more wax added, and so on.

CAUTION- If you have any allergies or sensitive skin please keep that in mind when choosing ingredients. And always, always, always, do a patch test when you create a new mixture or use ingredients you have not tried before.

Creams & Balms

Basic Salve

3 oz herb infused oil
1 oz bees wax

Measure 3 oz oil in a heatproof, glass measuring cup (pyrex). Add wax until the oil reaches the 4 oz mark. Place cup into a small pot and add water until it is about halfway up the side of the cup. Heat on medium until water is barely simmering. When wax has melted completely take cup out, stir to mix well, and pour into your container. Allow the salve to cool completely before covering.

Yield – 4 oz

Basic Body Balm

3 oz liquid carrier oil (almond, safflower, jojoba, olive)
2oz coconut oil
2oz shea butter
1 oz beeswax

Measure 3 oz oil in a heatproof, glass measuring cup (pyrex). Add coconut oil until the oil reaches 5 oz mark and then shea butter to the 7 oz line and beeswax to the 8 oz line.

Place cup into a small pot and add water until it is about halfway up the side of the cup. Heat on medium until water is barely simmering. When wax has melted completely take cup out, stir to mix well, and pour into your container. Allow the balm to cool completely before covering.

Yield – 8 oz

Basic Cream

Creams can be tricky. You are trying to combine water and oil – two substances that do not want to mix. To make them mix, you add an emulsifier – in this case, bees wax. It may take some practice and some fiddling with the recipes to get a nice stable cream but it is worth the effort.

6 oz liquid carrier oil (almond, safflower, jojoba, olive)
3 oz solid oil (cocoa butter, coconut oil, shea butter)
1 oz beeswax
8 oz water (or herbal infusion, witch hazel, alcohol or mixture)
A pinch of borax – Optional

Measure 6 oz oil in a heatproof, glass measuring cup (pyrex). Add solid oil until it reaches the 9 oz mark and then beeswax to the 10 oz mark. Place cup into a small pot and add water until it is about halfway up the side of the cup. Heat on medium until water is barely simmering. When wax has melted completely take cup out, stir to mix well. Allow mixture to cool to body temperature. In the meantime, bring water or infusion to a boil. Take off the heat and allow water to also cool to body temperature.

When both mixtures have reached body temperature pour the water into a blender or mixing bowl- or if you are using a larger measuring cup you can mix right in that. Start the blender or mixer and slowly drizzle the oil mixture into the water. Continue to blend until you have a thick cream. This can take 5-10 minutes in a blender and up to 15 minutes with a hand mixer. If it separates a bit you can add a pinch of borax and blend in. Pour into your container leaving as little headspace as possible. Cap.

If you make this with just water or herbal infusion it will have a short-ish shelf life. You can store it in the refrigerator though the change in temperature may cause it to separate a bit but you can always remix. You can also double or halve or even quarter the recipe if you need to.

Yield – 18 oz

Basic Lip Balm

2 1/2 tsp coconut oil
2 1/2 tsp shea butter
3 1/2 tsp olive oil
1 tsp castor oil
2 1/2 tsp bees wax

Mix all the ingredients together in a heatproof, glass measuring cup (pyrex). Place cup into a small pot and add water until it is about halfway up the side of the cup. Heat on medium until water is barely simmering. When wax has melted completely take cup out, stir to mix well, and pour into your container. Allow the balm to cool completely before covering.

Yield - 2 oz

Natural Deodorants

Deodorant Cream

This recipe makes a small amount, about 2 1/2 ounces. You can certainly double or triple the recipe if you need more.

1 Tbs shea butter
1 Tbs coconut oil
1/2 tsp jojoba oil
1 tsp bees wax
1 Tbs cornstarch
1 Tbs baking soda
scant 2 tsp kaolin clay

Combine the oils and bees wax in a glass measuring cup and melt in a hot water bath. Allow to cool, mixing occasionally. Add the dry ingredients and mix well. Apply a small amount (about the size of a pea) and rub in well. Usually one application is fine but if you exercise or go swimming you may need to reapply.

I really like this cream recipe; it works very well. It does have a drawback though. If you are wearing something tight, form fitting under the arms, you can get transfer onto your clothes. For those occasions I use a deodorant spray. It does need to be reapplied several times during the day.

Alternatively, you can add the dry ingredients to your favorite body balm.

Deodorant Spray

2 oz witch hazel extract
4 drops each of rosemary, clary sage, basil, & lavender essential oil.

Combine in a spray bottle. Shake well before each application. Spray on or apply with a cotton ball. If you have a favorite essential oil you can substitute it for the lavender.

On really sticky days I also like to apply a body powder. I keep it in a wide mouth container and use a smooth powder puff to apply it.

Body Powder

1/2 cup kaolin clay
1/4 cup cornstarch or arrowroot powder
1/4 cup baking soda
1/4 cup dried lavender & thyme, ground as fine as possible
2-6 drops lavender essential oil (optional)
Mix all dry ingredients together. Add essential oils if using and mix well.

Facial Cleanser & Toner/Astringent

Facial Cleansing Grains

Finely ground herbs : lavender, roses, calendula, rosemary, thyme, etc.

Other exfoliators like ground oatmeal or cornmeal.

Clay if you need some oil absorption.

A binder – Honey is wonderful. You can also use molasses or maple syrup. All of those will be preservative. You can mix a big batch and over time the herbs will infuse into the honey. Make the mixture loose to start, the dry herbs will absorb some moisture from the honey. You can always add more honey if the mix becomes to stiff.

Other binders are yogurt, cream, eggs, mashed fruit, and so on. If you use these kinds of binders you will need to store your mix in the refrigerator and make only a small batch at a time. You can also add these to the honey mixture.

These mixtures can also be used as masks. Leave on the face for at least 15 minutes.

Queen of Hungary's Water

According to legend, this facial toner was first formulated in the late 14th century for the Queen of Hungary. Today there are many different formulas. Here is one that I like.

Equal parts of:

Chamomile

Rosemary

Lavender

Roses

Calendula

Combined they should total about 6 oz, enough to fit easily in a pint jar.

10-12 oz of apple cider vinegar, enough to cover the herbs well and fill the jar to the top. Let it sit for a few hours. If the herbs have absorbed some of the vinegar and it no longer comes to the top of the jar, add some to top it off.

Allow this to steep in a dark place for about 6 weeks, shaking the jar once a day. Strain into a large measuring cup, pressing on the plant material to get as much liquid out as possible. For every cup of vinegar add about 1/2 cup of rose flower water or witch hazel or a combination of the two. Rose water alone is best for dry skin and witch hazel for oilier skin. I do mostly rose water with a splash of the witch hazel.

This takes a while to make but it will last for a long time without refrigeration.

Yield - about 1 1/2 cups

Equipment

Basic Equipment

Glass measuring cup – 2 cup is a good size to start

Mixing bowls – stainless steel or heatproof glass

Heatproof silicone spatulas

Blender or mixer or immersion blender or whisk

Containers – you don't need to buy, you can save glass jars from peanut butter or honey or condiments.

Nice to Have

Scale, digital is great.

Coffee grinder for grinding herbs

Quart-size glass measuring cup

Tins in various sizes for lip balm or salves – these are easier to carry around than jars.

Resources

Books with lots of great information on ingredients and lots of recipes

“Earthly Bodies & Heavenly Hair” by Dina Falconi

“EcoBeauty” by Lauren Cox & Janice Cox

“Natural Beauty at Home” by Janice Cox

“Rosemary Gladstar’s Herbal Recipes for Vibrant Health” by Rosemary Gladstar

Local Herb Stores

Integral Yoga’s Apothecary

234 West 13th Street between 7th & 8th avenues

Flower Power

406 East 9th Street between 1st and 2nd avenues

Sacred Vibes

376 Argyle Rd. between Dorchester and Cortelyou Roads in Brooklyn

Online Sources

Mountain Rose Herbs

www.mountainroseherbs.com

Pacific Botanicals

www.pacificbotanicals.com

Jean’s Greens

www.jeansgreens.com

Floracopeia Essential Oils

www.floracopeia.com

Specialty Bottle

www.specialtybottle.com