

The Fast Guide To Making Bath Bombs (Fizzies)

This manual is full of “no nonsense” information on how to make your own bath bombs. It is not simply a recipe book - you can find recipes anywhere on the internet, no need to publish any more.

This guide helps you with the *process* of making bath bombs from start to finish. It gives you detailed instructions on the basics, including:

- where to get ingredients
- how to judge the right amount of water
- helping solve common problems (cracking, “growing,” crumbling)
- what to use for molds
- how to get liquid color to distribute evenly
- a starting list of creative additives so that you can build your own recipes

The Fast Guide contains no photos - it’s all text and hands-on instructions. Roll up your sleeves, because it’s time to get to work!

Website: <http://www.excellentlivingguide.com/category/bath-bombs/>

Email: info@excellentlivingguide.com

Thanks!

Thanks...

...to all the people and websites who have inspired the Fast Guide, including:

Megan of Not Martha:
www.notmartha.org

Soap Nuts Library
www.soapnuts.com

Anne-Marie of Teach Soap and Bramble Berry:
www.teachsoap.com

Brenda Sharpe:
www.ncf.carleton.ca/~aj471/BathBombs.html

Old Fashioned Living:
<http://www.oldfashionedliving.com/>

My bath bombing list members, for giving me such great comments and ideas.

And thank you for reading. I hope to hear from you so that I can continue to help bath bombers achieve perfect bath bombs!

1) Introduction

Author's Note

December 15, 2010

Hi, bath bombers! I hope you're ready to get going, because you've gotten your hands on the best instructions on how to make your own bath bombs, on or offline.

Okay, okay, I can't exactly prove that... I guess what I mean is, together with my list members, I'm going to try and *make* it the best!

This guide won't contain everything there is to know about making bath bombs. I don't know everything, and you don't need to know it to get started. I've just written down "the basics" so that you can get cracking as fast as possible.

Am I qualified to write it? Well, I worked for a national bath and body company for years (and no, it's not Lush - they're international.) From watching and talking to the chemistry staff, I absorbed their methods, and invented some recipes and techniques that even they don't know about!

I've become quite the experienced bath bomb maker; in fact, I like to make bath bombs more than I like to take baths. I'm always trying to give them away to my friends, especially the more experimental ones. "Try this, you'll like it... really..."

You'd think that I'd have become absolutely sick of making bombs, being around them at work all day, but I didn't think of it like that. At home, in my own private lab (aka the kitchen), making bath bombs is a way to express my own creativity with scent, color, additives, and even hidden "prizes" in the middle!

I can do whatever I want, go as crazy as I want - and get exactly the kind of bath bombs that I want.

You can do the same with this little book, which has all my best informa-

tion on bath bomb making. It contains the essential things to know: the basic recipe, answers to the most common questions, help for common problems, and some other cool stuff that goes beyond the basics.

I hope that it will be of great help to you. This is really my best stuff here, so please let me know if you like it or have any suggestions for improvement - especially if I'm wrong. Since I publish it myself, I am free to make changes when I get new facts or discover something new.

Happy bath bombing!
Katherine

Oh, and also:

I may be experienced, but just like the Encyclopedia Britannica, I can be wrong! I have tried to do my research, but there have been times where I couldn't get reliable information.

I try to tell you when I report anything "questionable" - whether it's some of my own conclusions, popular speculation, or "old soapmakers' tales" - so that you'll know what to take with a grain of Dead Sea salt (har har.)

So, what are these bath bomb thingies, anyway?

Bath bombs are a wonderful and addictive product for the art of "fine bathing."

They're becoming quite popular all throughout hotels, spas, and resorts, and bath and body stores. Many people mistake them for "little balls of soap" and wonder what it is that you do with them...

From the name, it's pretty clear that bath bombs are something you add to the bath, just like bath salts or bath oils. But here's what makes them cool: they're called "bombs" or "fizzies" for a reason! They actually fizz when you drop them in your bathwater, and it makes your bath feel effervescent.

The bubbles don't last for more than a few minutes, but your bath is now a luxurious colored, scented, moisturizing soak that you can relax in and enjoy!

Fizzing bath tablets have been around for a while, but bath bombs were made popular by Lush, and now mall bath and body chains sometimes carry them. They are expensive -- \$4 - \$7 each -- which is why it's so appealing to try to make them yourself.

I look at bath bombs as being my "Starbucks substitute"... instead of that calorie-filled caramel latte on the way back from the gym, I used to treat myself to a muscle-relaxing 30 minutes with a bath bomb and mystery novel. (Bath taking has become somewhat less of a priority ever since I had a kid, though.)

In the pages ahead, you will learn to make them too. Let's move on to what you'll need. Start the next chapter to learn about the equipment and supplies, and where to find them.

2) Equipment & Grocery List

Required Equipment

- » Large, wide mixing bowl, the bigger the better
- » Spray bottle or cup
- » Your hands
- » Something to mold your bombs. Small and spherical things work best, but you can use ice cube trays or other stuff around the house, like shot glasses or measuring cups. In a pinch, you can pretend you're making the hardest snowballs ever and just use your hands.

Required Ingredients

- » Baking soda
- » Citric acid, aka "Sour Salt" at the grocery store (Kosher or spice section)
- » Water

Other stuff you'll probably want

- » Fragrance or essential oil - if you're not sure what you want, just go for lavender, rosemary, or sage essential oils, which can be found at Whole Foods, Henry's, or other health food store.
- » You can probably use vanilla extract for scent, though I haven't tried it.
- » Corn starch or oatmeal flour in easy-access containers (open the box before you start!)
- » Apron or old shirt
- » Dust mask or bandana
- » Surgical (latex) gloves
- » Moisturizing oil - almond, grapeseed, massage, olive oils all work well.
- » Food coloring, the kind you get at the grocery store

Before you start...

Make sure you have all the equipment and ingredients. It's not a lot, so it should be easy to get everything together. If you're not sure where to find some of the stuff, I have a page on [Where To Get Supplies](#).

Read through the instructions, especially if you're a beginner. This will save you from any surprises while your hands are buried in your bath bomb bowl.

3) What To Use For Molds

Strong shapes and sizes.

There is a reason that most bath bombs are round. Spheres are the strongest 3D shape, if I remember correctly from geometry. It seems to be true in my experience, anyway. Anything that I've tried to make with hard edges is not as strong, and cubes have been the worst by far. The corners break right off!

So, the closer to spherical you can get, the better.

In addition, the smaller your fizzy - no matter what the shape - the stronger it will be. Small bombs are easier to shape, though if you get too small, the mold will be hard to handle. I used to make 1" "bath bomblets" and still found it kind of hard to get them out of the tiny stainless molds!

Plastic Ornaments

Most people use these snap-together acrylic ornaments. Oriental Trading Com-

pany only has one size (if any, these days) - the "Jumbo" 3 1/4". You can get other sizes from 60mm to 100 mm (!) at Factory Direct Craft:

<http://factorydirectcraft.com/>

Ornaments are good because they're cheap, they're disposable, and they're

not a huge investment when you're just getting started. The problem is that if you make a lot of bombs, they break on you, and you're left having to improvise. Still, they're my #1 recommendation for beginners who have to buy something.

When I looked on the OTC site, I noticed that they also have heart and flower shaped ornaments. I think this would be really cute - anyone tried this?

Improvisation

You probably have a lot of stuff around your house that you can use for molds!

Here's a partial list that either I, or people I know, have used:

For small bombs:

- » Ice cube trays. Tricky, but do-able. The corners will usually break off, but it's better than nothing!
- » Melon baller. This is one of the few ways you can get small round bath bombs! It works fairly well according to people from my mailing list.
- » DO NOT USE those weird things that look like tongs, but have cups on the end. You can't put enough pressure on them to get firmly-molded bombs, and eventually the hinge rusts because citric acid grit gets in it and won't come out.
- » Plastic capsules from \$.25 toy machines in grocery stores
- » Silly putty containers

For medium to large bombs:

- » Shot glass. Done it, and this would be cool for a gin & tonic scented bomb.
- » Measuring cups, especially the round kind. This is an old standby that mostly everyone I've talked to has used at one point. They're usually on hand, perfect for testing your mix.
- » Kid's sand or bath toys. I seem to remember having a wide array of starfish and shark-shaped sand toys that would be perfect. They aren't the strongest shapes in the world, but I bet they would be really cool!
- » Your hands. Pretend like it's a snowball. You have to be pretty strong, though, so I don't know how well this really works. I just go for measuring cups.

» Cut open a ball. Tennis, softball, or golf player? Sacrifice a ball for the cause...

» Plastic easter eggs - another old standby. Beware, though! They seem to have gotten flimsier over the years, and some of them contain nasty prongs on the inside.

What the “Professionals” Use

Actually, we used ornaments for the longest time. We’d get them shipped to us by the crate because we went through them so fast. If they didn’t crack, they’d just get gross and sticky from the oils, and we’d have to toss them.

We moved on to a press, but here’s the thing: the press doesn’t make better bombs! It’s hard to judge how hard they are because you can’t really feel what’s going on, and it takes almost 3x as long to make a bomb! We used it to save the forearms of our lab techs - with the amount of bombs we sold, we’d either have had to hire sailors to make them for us, or hire way more lab assistants for bath bomb duty.

I use more durable alternative to the flimsy ornaments. I stumbled upon some round molds made from imported high-grade stainless steel when I was looking for something “high class” for photos (the ornaments look cheap and don’t photograph well.)

They are awesome, and they come in more sizes than OTC’s: they make bombs with diameters from just over 2” to a whopping 4” (the Jumbo.) In fact, I liked my molds so much that I became a reseller, so you can get them from me.

You can see some good photos of the molds on my website at:

<http://www.excellentlivingguide.com/stainless-bath-bomb-molds/>

Now, we’re moving on to the most important chapter in the whole book. Unfortunately, it’s the chapter that most people are likely to skip, especially if they are having problems with their existing bath bombs. Don’t skip it!

4) The Basic Foundational Recipe

This Basic Foundational Recipe is boring, but I'm going to make you do it for a few reasons.

One is to show you how simple bath bombs really are. If you've looked online for recipes and instructions already, you'll usually see corn starch and/or witch hazel, oils, white clay, emulsifiers, and other additives.

While some of those ingredients may result in more desirable bath bombs because they do good stuff for your skin and improve the water texture, I'll tell you the "secret" truth of bath bombs:

You only need 3 ingredients to make perfect bath bombs that are so structurally sound you need a mallet to break them!

The Secret Recipe (ooooo, aaaaah!)

- » 2 parts baking soda
- » 1 part citric acid
- » a small amount of water

That's it. That's all you really need to make bath bombs. These three ingredients make the hardest, fizziest bombs that I have ever used - even I am amazed at how hard I have to work to break them!

Sure, bath bombs made only with these three ingredients are boring. No scent, color, or fun ingredients.

But mastering the BFR is very important -- I didn't stress this enough in the previous versions of the Fast Guide, so I'm doing it now.

If you're having trouble with your existing bath bomb recipe / technique, read this chapter, and put together small batches of the BFR until you can do it reliably. If you wrote me email asking for help about your bath bombs, I'd say:

"Go back to the Fast Guide and perfect the BFR first."

This “recipe” is the foundation for all bath fizzies, no matter how many other exotic ingredients they have in them.

You don't need corn starch, white clay, etc to make your bombs stick together. You don't need to use witch hazel instead of water - water works great, and it comes right out of the tap.

Overview Of Process

Here's what you're going to do:

- » Mix the dry ingredients.
- » Add wet ingredients, spritz in a little water until it starts to clump together.
- » Press mixture into your molds, and unmold your bombs.
- » Let dry on a surface for 1-2 days.

More Detailed Instructions

Put on your dustmask or bandana, snap on your surgical gloves, and get your spray bottle handy. The gloves aren't necessary, but you're going to mix and mold with your hands, and it can be a little drying. I highly recommend the mask or bandana -- inhaling baking soda particles hurts!

2:1 Basic Bath Bomb Mix

Mix 2 parts of baking soda and 1 part citric acid in your bowl until you think they're combined.

I usually start with 2 cups of baking soda, 1 cup of citric acid.

In addition, mix a smaller batch (say 2/3 cup of baking soda, 1/3 cup of citric acid) in a separate bowl. That's your "emergency mix" for when you add too much water. You can add as much as you like of the emergency mix, because it is just more of the same. It won't alter the fizz power of your bath bombs at all.

Start adding the water by spritzing tiny amounts of water in at a time,

mixing all the while, until you get the “right feel” and the stuff starts to clump together.

Don't add the water too fast. The mixture seems to get wetter over time (I think it truly does, and I explain this on my science speculation page.)

The Right Feel

What is the “right feel”? I can do my best to describe it, but you really have to experience it for yourself. The “right feel” is when your mixture is like a thick, soft, slightly damp powder that clumps together in your hand. It's easier to say what it isn't:

Too Wet:

- » doughy or like play-doh, sticks to your fingers
- » wet or overly damp
- » if you hear a loud hissing, crackling sound (faint hissing is inevitable)

Too Dry:

- » hard and pebbly
- » slips through your fingers like sand
- » when it clumps together for a few seconds, then crumbles apart (though this is almost there)

If you add too much water, just soak it up by adding your prepared “emergency mix.” It has the proper ratio of 2 parts baking soda / 1 part citric acid, so it won't screw up the balance. Adding citric acid or baking soda on their own will result in less fizz power, though they will work in an emergency.

When your bath bombs are mold-ready, it will be easy to mold and unmold them. You will have to be somewhat firm when you pack them into the molds, but you won't have to squeeze the life out of them to get them to stay together.

They will compress with little effort, so that the edges of your mold touch,

or almost touch, and they will seem to drop right out of the mold (if it's round) when you unmold it. They shouldn't stick to the edges, unless you have an ingredient that contains mucilage (like oat flour - that can be problematic.)

The "right feel" period doesn't last that long, so you can't leave your mixture sitting around before you mold your bombs. The water will evaporate, and your bombs will crack. If you stir the bomb mixture long enough, you'll see it transform almost in an instant.

One moment, it will be clumping perfectly; the next, it'll crack like dry clay before your eyes.

So, now that you've read through the process, let's take a look at a more interesting recipe. This one will be something that you'd actually like to put in your bath, because it will contain scent, color, and oils.

5) General Colored and Scented Bath Bomb Recipe

Now, you'll need your food coloring, scent, and oil. Remember, it's perfectly OK to leave any of these things out - all you need is the baking soda, citric acid, and water to make functional bath bombs. Everything else is up to you.

The most common bath bomb recipe

Here is the common generic recipe for bath bombs, like what you'll find on the internet:

- » 2 parts baking soda
- » 1 part citric acid
- » 1 part corn starch (*remember, this is absolutely optional - you don't need it at all.*)
- » 1 - 3 tsp. Massage, almond, grapeseed, or olive oil
- » 5 - 20 drops of liquid food coloring
- » 1/2 - 1 tsp skin-safe fragrance or essential oil
- » Water

First, prepare your "emergency mix" to soak up excess water. You can use corn starch for this too, but weird things start happening if you have too much corn starch.

Mix the dry stuff in the bowl, same as in the BFR. Then, add the massage oil and fragrance oil. If you're not sure what to use, go with lavender essential oil. It's inexpensive and safe to use for sensitive skin.

These non-water-based ingredients don't fizz. Mix them in before you add the water.

Adding liquid coloring

If you want to tint your bombs, most people start with liquid food coloring. You have to add the liquid food coloring first, before you spritz in the plain water. The dye is water-based and may be all you need to get the "right feel," depending on how many drops you use.

There are color limits to using liquid food coloring. You can only add so

much before your mixture gets too wet, and you can't make certain colors very well, especially purple or vibrant pink.

For now, just go with it until you get to the next section on Coloring Your Bath Bombs.

Your liquid color will foam a little and "ball up" when you try to blend it in. To get it to distribute more evenly, try this:

Scoop up handfuls of the bath bomb mix and rub it back and forth between your hands, letting it fall out from between your palms. This works for me, though my bombs always come out a bit speckled. No matter, though - they're handmade, they don't have to be perfect, and they're just going in the bath anyway!

If you need more water, add it until you have the "right feel" as described in the BFR pages. The water will also help distribute the color. Use the "emergency mix" if you accidentally make it too wet.

Mold, unmold, and dry for 1-2 days. If you have problems molding or unmolding, refer to the "right feel" description in the BFR pages - you probably have too much or not enough water.

Fragrance Oils, Essential Oils, and Absolutes

You will use either fragrance or essential oils to scent your bath bombs and other cosmetics. I get many basic questions about the difference, so I thought I'd give some quick info here:

Essential Oils

Are pressed or distilled “essences” of single parts of single plants. Cinnamon seed is one kind of essential oil; cinnamon *bark* is another.

I know nothing about essential oils used for therapeutic or aromatherapy purposes; I'm just a perfume blender and use the safer ones for the scent.

Some EOs smell great; others smell *terrible*, at least, on their own. Getting good at blending essential oils comes with practice, and there are several good sites with starter recipes.

Before I list them, though, here are a few more things to know about EOs:

- » Some essential oils are toxic. Some are extremely poisonous, and some should not be used by pregnant or nursing women. Plant essences are used as medicine, so essential oils need to be handled carefully. Before you start buying EOs, check a list of “safer” ones to be used for perfumery and skin care.
- » EOs are natural, complex, and unpredictable. They contain hundreds of molecules, and batches of essential oils won't be exactly the same, even if they are the same crop.
- » EOs are not hypoallergenic; in fact, they can be *more* allergenic than synthetic fragrances. They are concentrated essences of plants! If someone is allergic to fir trees, they will be *very* allergic to fir essential oil.
- » EOs are not 100% great for the environment; their manufacturing still has an environmental impact.
- » In bath bombs, essential oils can quickly evaporate and leave only a faint hint of scent. This is especially true with herb, spice, and citrus oils (bergamot, basil, orange, etc.)
- » Some essential oils are very heavily scented (patchouli, for example), but some are extremely light. They don't all have the same perceived

scent strength.

Essential Oil Safety & Info Sites

These two sites are excellent. If you have any questions about a supplier's essential oil, *ask first before purchasing!*

<http://aromaweb.com/>

<http://www.naturesgift.com/>

Fragrance Oils

Fragrance oils come as a shock to many beginners. They are less expensive than essential oils, and you get access to a much wider range of fragrances.

However, they are made of labmade fragrance molecules (synthetic) *and* essential oils suspended in an oil with a long storage life (usually jojoba.) They are, basically, pre-blended and ready to use out of the bottle.

Not all FOs are the same quality. I recommended some of my favorites in the supplier section who have rarely let me down, but there are many more fragrance oil suppliers to choose from.

I highly recommend starting with fragrance oils over essential oils, unless you already know that you need EOs. It is a lot easier for beginners, and the fragrance will be what you expect -- similar to what you'd find from popular bath and body chains.

- » Most people prefer the scents of fragrance oils (which do contain essential oils and absolutes) over pure EOs.
- » There is no such thing as berry or melon essential oils. EOs have a limited spectrum -- you can't get oil out of a strawberry! Most non-citrus fruity fragrances come from labmade fragrance components.
- » FOs are often more rigorously tested for cosmetic use than EOs.
- » There is no such thing as natural musk. Musk comes from animals, and anti-cruelty laws in the US, at least, make the use of synthetic musk a necessity.

Absolutes

Absolutes are only listed here because Lush uses them and you may be wondering what they are.

Absolutes are like essential oils in that they are plant essences, but they contain more parts of the plant. They are far more concentrated -- and, if you think that essential oils smell funny, absolutes smell even weirder out of the bottle because they are so strong

It takes practice to use absolutes, but they are a main ingredient in perfumery. You also can't get certain fragrances except with absolutes, such as the more delicate florals which are damaged by the heat of distillation (jasmine and neroli, for example.)

Nature's Gift does carry some absolutes, as does Snowdrift Farm. I wouldn't start with them -- they are expensive and daunting to work with, for beginners.

6) Coloring Your Bath Bombs

Coloring Issues

There are many options for coloring your bath bombs, and they all have aspects to consider.

Food Coloring and Safety

The question of whether food coloring is safe always comes up. Since I'm not a chemist or with the FDA, I can't tell you one way or another with any kind of authority.

The most I can do at this point is give you my own thoughts on the matter, and point you to some more authoritative sources.

Here are some things to consider. They're just my own opinions and conclusions; although I can be persuasive, I can also be wrong, and I would appreciate your correction if I'm in error:

- » If you see the letters "FD&C" anywhere, those stand for Food, Drug, and Cosmetic. They have been certified for safe use for those purposes...
- » However, on the "Color Additives and Cosmetics" FDA page, it says that just being approved for external cosmetics doesn't cover use for baths (or eyes or lips.)
- » Anything you get at a major supermarket, such as McCormick's food coloring, has undergone probably rigorous safety testing before coming on the market.
- » Consider the low concentration of coloring in the bath water. When you're mixing cake frosting, you probably absorb more food coloring on your hands than you do in your entire bath.
- » It is possible to be allergic to anything, though, and miniscule amounts can set off people's sensitivities. If there is any question of allergies or sensitivities, it might be better to just leave out the color.
- » If you do use colors and sell your bath products, you have to list them on the label.

For more information, consult this page:

http://www.foodinsight.org/Resources/Detail.aspx?topic=Food_Ingredients_Colors

The FDA website is surprisingly friendly and readable. Here's some straight talk from the FDA concerning color, certification, and labelling:

<http://www.fda.gov/Cosmetics/default.htm>

<http://www.fda.gov/ForIndustry/ColorAdditives/default.htm>

Making Purple

If you've ever made Easter eggs with regular food coloring (not the special Easter editions or PAS dye), you know that it's nearly impossible to get a good purple. Instead, you kind of get a greyish red or blue. It just doesn't work.

Making pink is not so hot, either, though blue-green and yellow-orange usually come out well.

This is the trouble with mixing colors using food dye - the blue is too "warm" to make a good purple when you mix it with red. To get a nice purple or pink, you either have to get special Easter or Neon dyes, which are different colors, or go for the powdered colorant.

Getting Vivid, Bright Colors

Like I mentioned before, you're not going to get powerful colors from grocery store food dye. The best you're going to get is pastels, because you'll end up making your bomb mixture too wet if you want anything more intense than that. So, what can you do?

Powdered Colorant

Powdered colorant will give you powerful color, but it's not as easily available as food dye. To get powdered colorant, you'll have to go to craft stores (Joanne's or Michael's), or order it online. I give you a good list of reliable places to order from at the end of this book.

You only need a tiny bit of powdered colorant for eye-popping color. While it's probably possible to put the powdered color right into your bomb mix, I have never seen this as a recommended method of coloring bath bombs.

It's "flyaway" and will float up into the air and possibly irritate your lungs.

You only need a tiny speck, and it is easier to see what you're getting when

you mix it with water and spritz it in.

Some of the powdered colorings are not water soluble, so you may need glycerin or oil instead. Follow the vendor's instructions when it comes to powdered coloring. They will tell you what to use, and how much.

Concentrated Liquid Dye

You can also get more concentrated liquid dye. This stuff is just like the food coloring you get at the grocery store, but much more powerful.

Where you'd need 10 drops of the grocery store variety, you only need 1 or 2 drops of the concentrated stuff. Again, you can find this in my list of suppliers.

This kind of coloring is easy, but you have to use the palm-rubbing method to mix it in fully. A popular brand of liquid coloring is LabColor, recommended by many soapmakers. I haven't used it since I'm too lazy, but I've heard several people swear by it.

***A tip from Pam**

On 4/15/06 One of the "Fast Guide" readers, Pam, wrote in: "Have you seen the new dyes for bath bombs by Bramble berry?" Bramble Berry carries Labcolor Bath Bomb Dyes and calls them "La Bomb."

They're specifically for bath bombs, and you can read about them on Bramble Berry's website:

<http://www.brambleberry.com/Bath-Bomb-Dyes-C50.aspx>

Discoloration?!

Jane writes: "I had a weird experience recently that you may be able to help with. I made several different scented bath bombs and dyed them all different colors using the colors from Bramble Berry (the ones that are good for bath bombs).

Well, about 3 weeks after making them the pink ones started turning a speckled brown color. They contain watermelon fragrance oil we got through The Buying Group (don't know if you're familiar with them). But

it's the weirdest thing. None of the other colors/scents did that. Have you ever had that happen? They still work and smell OK but they look crappy.”

Here was my reply:

I would immediately suspect the fragrance. After all, there is another common example of scent causing discoloration, so it's entirely possible. Vanilla fragrance is notorious for turning white stuff brown, and fruit fragrances are some weird, wacky science.

I'd guess that the watermelon fragrance contains some strange stuff that's turning the bath bombs brown. But use the scientific method: make a test batch of bath bombs with the pink color, but not the fragrance, and see what happens.

Natural Bath Bomb Coloring

There *is* such a thing as all natural coloring, and these are:

- micas & oxides, such as the ones used in mineral makeup
- natural fruit & veggie dye
- powdered herbs

I have no experience with micas & oxides whatsoever, so I can't give you any sort of guidance. Ask the people at Coastal Scents for a recommendation (or I will, for the next revision of the guide.)

www.coastalscents.com

Natural fruit & veggie dye comes in both liquid and powdered form, and the best place I've found to get them is:

<http://naturesflavors.com/>

These dyes are cool, but the liquid ones are highly perishable. I sent out sample kits last year and people report that most of them, especially the reds and purples, *do* color nicely, but they *change* according to pH.

So, that means that your bath bomb will have two different colors from the same source -- for example, if you're using carrot purple, the baking soda may a violet, and the citric acid may turn reddish-purple.

There is a whole rainbow of colors available from Nature's Flavors, and a

whole lot of other cool products as well. There is one issue with them...

They take FOREVER to fill an order, and their customer service really sucks (at least, it did a year ago.) What they don't tell you is that many of their orders have to be made on-demand, so that's why it takes weeks for the stuff to come to you.

Great ideas, poor communication. But now you know.

Powdered Herbs & Spices

I've used beet root, turmeric, and seaweed / spirulina powders for a nice natural coloring. Test first, and make sure they are water soluble. Make individual bath bombs to ensure that your recipe works.

Anything to Add?

This is not an area where I'm an expert, since I usually just go for the grocery store food coloring. If you have any tips or better instructions, I'm all ears!

Just email them to me at: info@excellentlivingguide.com

7) Make Your Own Creative Bath Bombs

Customizing the BFR

Now that you have mastered the BFR, you have the power to make up your own creative bath bomb recipes! All bath bombs - no matter how complex - are just variations built on top of the BFR.

So go crazy! Add handfuls of flower petals, hide little prizes inside, jazz them up with 2 or 3 color swirls. The rest of this chapter contains some ideas to get you started.

Using More Than One Color

Making swirled or layered bath bombs is easy, but there is a little more labor and space required.

I've found that the best way to do it is: mix up your dry stuff, oils, fragrance, and other ingredients that aren't water, and separate the mixture into as many bowls as you want colors. Then, mix the color and water in each bowl, separately.

Some people put their colors into one big bowl and shake it a few times to get the swirl. I never do that - somehow, mine always blend together too much, and I get one yucky color instead of a nice swirled effect. I keep them in separate bowls, and just scoop out the colors from each one as I go.

It's important to get the "Right Feel" for each color; make sure they're about equal in moisture, otherwise your bath bombs might become unstable. If you combine more than one color of bath bomb mix, and they have different amounts of water, might crack due to one color being wetter than the others.

Put Surprises In The Middle Of Your Bath Bombs

You can actually bury little prizes in the middle of your bath bombs. This is one of my favorite techniques to make them memorable! They drop the bomb in the bath and... wait?... what's that?!

It's easy to do, but there are three guidelines:

- 1) Your prize should be small and light
- 2) Your bath bomb should be large (at least 6 oz, I think the 8 or 13 oz is best for this)
- 3) Irregular shapes work better than regular shapes for prizes, since the bath bomb mix "sticks" to them better, in my experience.
- 4) Watch out for glass prizes. They don't float, and they may break.

The first two are non-negotiable, and the third just makes your life easier when you're inserting it in your bath bombs. A small GI Joe tends to "grip" the bath bomb mixture better than, say, a smooth marble.

To put a prize in a bath bomb, you can either try to bury it in the middle of the seam, or you can bury it in one half of the bath bomb, if the object is small enough. Either way, it will take a few tries before you get it right, and you will have to use more molding pressure than normal.

Before you attempt to do this, make sure that you master the BFR! If you have problems with your normal bath bombs, you'll get problems when you try to add things in the middle. And then, you'll be sad or disappointed when they break!

So do yourself a favor and perfect the Basic Bath Bomb before you make "Hidden Treasures."

Children's Bath Bombs

Personally, I wouldn't give bath bombs to a young child. They are made of chemical salts, and the bath bomb water can sting eyes. That being said, many kids take bubble baths, which are also full of chemicals and irritating.

If I ever wanted to give my (currently 3 year old) son a bath bomb, it would be a small 2 ounce one in a full-sized bath. That way, it would be more diluted than a normal 6 ounce large bath bomb.

DO NOT give a prize-filled bath bomb to a child! The prizes inside are choking hazards, but they look reaaaally attractive to toddlers. It seems obvious now, but sometimes we all forget this stuff if we don't have 2 or 3

year olds, ourselves.

An Under-Used Gimmick For Sellers

“Hidden Treasure” bath bombs can be a great gimmick if you sell them and coordinate them to holidays, seasons, or current events.

They make great fundraisers, too; you can put different colored ribbons inside for Breast Cancer, HIV/AIDS, GI Joe’s for supporting troops, etc. (I don’t know what you’d use for natural disaster support!)

Just make sure to tell recipients that there’s a prize inside. Not only will it sell better, but people will appreciate the heads-up if they are giving it to someone else.

What Can You Put Inside?

Oh, the possibilities are endless, but here are a few of my favorites:

- » Silk flower petals (Bramble Berry)
- » Flower Jewels (Oriental Trading)
- » Small shells
- » Fortunes (Bramble Berry has waterproof inkjet labels you can use for this)
- » Sponge capsules (search on Google for “sponge capsules” or go to an educational toy store)
- » Toy rings, mood rings
- » Charms, plastic or pewter
- » Tiny bottles with messages in them
- » Friendship bracelets / power bracelets (colored beads on an elastic string.)

But seriously, go to a toy or craft store and look around for something that fits your bath bomb concept. Anything that’s small and plastic has potential.

List of Cool Ingredients

Here are some ideas for cool ingredients to add to your bath bombs to take them beyond the basics. Some of these I have actually used, some of them I haven't yet, but plan to.

Now, this section touches on skin care and I'm not a dermatologist, so this is where you should take my info with a grain of salt. Most of it is based on personal observation, not tested in any kind of scientific environment.

Corn Starch

Corn starch is a bulk additive found in many bath bombs. It makes the water silky and smooth, and your bath bombs more buoyant. Any bulk ingredient will, however, decrease the fizziness of your bath bombs -- there is less of the active ingredients.

Oat Flour

Oatmeal bombs are my favorite! I have itchy skin, so I make these HUGE 13oz bombs that are half oat flour. Oatmeal contains mucilage, which is what makes it gooey and soothing to the skin. It seems to work for me, anyway.

I highly recommend using oat flour instead of corn starch, though it will discolor the bombs slightly. Be sure to get the oat *flour*, not rolled oats, otherwise you'll end up with a bathtub full of half-cooked oats, yuk!

With both corn starch and oat flour, there is a slight possibility of, um, providing fuel for yeast in feminine private parts. I've heard a few reports of this -- not many, mind you, but still something you may want to keep in mind.

Clay

Some people use this as a functional additive, because white clay is said to make your bombs crack less and dry harder. It does seem to make bath bombs stick together better, especially if you're going with the Extra Large or Jumbo sizes, and putting prizes inside them.

In addition, it can make the water have an excellent silky texture, though it

will be slightly less clear. Clay can also be drying to the skin, so be sure to balance it with a moisturizing oil or butter.

Aloe Powder

This stuff is cool, but kind of hard to find. Aloe powder is freeze-dried aloe, and if you get the 100X strength you can basically take a bath in aloe juice. It won't have the gel-like consistency as when it comes right out of the leaf. Perfect for sunburns in the summer, and goes great with a Green Tea & Aloe-type fragrance. If you sell bath bombs, I bet these would sell really well as a summer special!

Milk, Yogurt, or Goat's Milk Powder

You can find powdered milk and goat's milk at health food stores, but you probably have to buy yogurt powder online. I don't know if this actually does anything for your skin - it's been a folk remedy throughout various cultures for softening and hydrating - but it definitely feels luxurious!

Get the whole-fat kind, because the fat is what gives the water an excellent texture. Powdered milks are found in many cosmetic suppliers' catalogs because milk is such a popular ingredient.

SLS, or other surfactants

You can easily make a bubbling bath bomb by adding a lathering agent. The most popular for bath bombs is a powdered surfactant, such as Sodium Laureth Sulfoacetate, which is easily found from most online soap suppliers. A little usually goes a long way, so even if you get a sample size, you can still make a batch or two.

These are really popular with kids, and Sodium Laureth Sulfoacetate is rated as safe for children - I think. You need to check the vendor's information just to make sure.

Botanicals

Add flower petals or herbs to your bath bombs to give them a natural, luxurious effect. Though they don't really do anything, botanicals totally add to the bathing experience. Try rose petals, lavender buds, calendula flowers, or ground vanilla fibers, but don't add too many. They're a pain to clean out of the tub.

From experience, I know that any kind of solid botanical material is not safe to use in Jacuzzis. It will clog nozzles and filters.

Salts

For a functional, relaxing bath bomb, try putting in some Epsom, Atlantic Sea, or Dead Sea salts. You do have to add at least 1/2 cup to each bomb to be effective -- I recommend using the larger bath bomb sizes, such as my Extra Large or Jumbo, so that you can put enough salt in and still get a respectably-fizzing bath bomb.

It might be beneficial to also try some clay to “glue” your bombs together. The relatively larger salt crystals might make the bombs weaker.

There are differences between the salts, mostly in their mineral profile, but also in their “exoticness.” I recommend this website:

<http://www.saltworks.us/>

It has a lot of good information about the different kinds of salts you can use.

Butters

You can also add luxurious butters to your bath bombs - the possibilities are endless! There’s the common cocoa, coconut, and shea butters, but there are also aloe, mango, soy, and even coffee butters! Different soap suppliers have different butters, so just browse their catalogs to get ideas.

The harder fats, such as shea and cocoa butter, can be problematic. Most people try to melt them and cut them into the bath bomb mix, but it’s far easier to grate them with a fine grater. Obviously, if you’re making a lot, this can get tedious. Cuisinart’s grater attachment, maybe?

I recommend starting with MMS (Majestic Mountain Sage) for butters -- their catalog is simple to browse, and their selection of butters, oils, and additives is quite good for bath bombers.

<http://www.thesage.com/catalog/FixedOil.html>

How Much Fragrance/Milk/Salt/Etc To Add?

There is always a question of “How much of X do I add to my bath bomb batch?” To figure this out, you have to think about the potency of each bath bomb. How much “stuff ” do you want to go into each bomb - and each bath?

Calculating the “Potency-Per-Bomb”

You don't have to actually make a bath bomb to try out the additives. A bath bomb is just a compressed ball of ingredients -- to make a 1-off test bath, just mix 1/4 c. baking soda, 1/8 c. citric acid, and your additional ingredients and dump it in the bathwater.

If you're just testing for fragrance, color, and additive potency -- if you want to know if your bath is smelly enough or moisturizing enough -- you don't even have to bother with the bath bomb mix.

Just run a bath, put your additives directly in, and use that as your test. This is how I come up with the right amounts of oatmeal, goat's milk, etc.

“Potency per bomb” is especially important to think about when you are using functional ingredients or potential allergens, as I do for my Tiger Bombs. Too much clove oil or menthol crystals can burn like the dickens!

Calculating Bomb Batch Size

Another question I get is: “how many bath bombs will my batch make?” You have to do some measuring to figure that out. For example...

My 4 ounce (medium) bath bomb mold holds 3/4 cups each. If I make a 3-cup batch, I'll get 4 bath bombs out of it with no bulk additives. If I put in oats or salt, of course, it will make more.

Measure your own molds and keep the volume handy when you calculate

your total batch size.

Example of the process.

Here's an example of what I do to get the right potency per bomb. Although it is almost a no-brainer system, I have to review each of these steps carefully because I have a tendency to make a lot of mistakes!

Even though I've made my own recipes many times, there is still a high probability of errors, somehow...

» Step 1: First, I decide how many bombs I want to make, and what size. Let's say I decide to make four bombs using my 4oz mold so that I can use one 2-cup box of baking soda, and one cup of citric acid -- a 3-cup batch.

» Then, I look up my Tiger Bomb recipe, extra strength version. Those need 1 pinch of menthol crystals, and 5 drops each of clove, black pepper, rosemary, and eucalyptus. I multiply each of those by 4, since I'm making 4 bombs total.

» Step 3: I make my bath bombs as usual, putting in 2 cups of baking soda, 1 cup of citric acid, and 20 drops each of clove, black pepper, rosemary, and eucalyptus.

As you can see, this system is pretty obvious. In fact, you may have already invented it for yourself. I don't mean to insult your intelligence by spelling it out, but it is surprisingly easy to not pay attention when you're in a fizzy-making frenzy.

I have often doubled a recipe, but left out half the eggs. I'm sure that you've had at least one experience like this, too.

SLS, SLES, Lauryl/Laureth, Etc.

Surfactant (that which creates bubbles) names sound much the same, but there are important distinctions.

Biodegradable

None of these are. They may be “coconut derived,” but they are so refined and changed that they cannot be considered natural.

Powdered vs. Liquid

For making bath bombs, you’ll definitely want a powdered surfactant. These have very, very fine particles so wear a dust mask when you’re working with them, and run a test bath.

Sodium Lauryl Sulfate (SLS)

Is the most common surfactant, found in toothpaste, shampoo, and a ton of other cleaners. It has the reputation of being linked to cancer and ulcers, but that has not been proven by clinical trials.

<http://www.snopes.com/inboxer/household/shampoo.asp>

It is, however, an irritant, but so is soap!

Sodium Laureth Sulfate (Sodium Lauryl Ether Sulfate, or SLES)

A surfactant, an irritant, and used all over the place, just like SLS.

Sodium Lauryl Sulfoacetate

Milder (less irritating) than SLS and SLES, in my experience SLSA makes more foam than bubbles, which is good for a grownup foaming milk bomb. SLSA is newer than the other two, and not that much data is available for it.

More info:

<http://pegasussoaps.blogspot.com/2007/04/sodium-laureth-sulfate-vs-sodium-lauryl.html>

<http://www.soapdisharchives.com/forum/lofiversion/index.php?t49045.html>

Ask a real chemist at Snowdrift Farm:

<http://snowdriftfarm.com/contact.html>

8) When Bath Bombs Go Wrong, Here's What To Do

Before I launch into specific problems, here's a general tip on how to solve *any* bath bomb difficulty.

Make your bath bombs as usual, with your regular recipe, and then make a test batch using the BFR, found earlier in this book.

Did you get the same problems? Then look on the specific solutions described below.

Bombs “flatten out” and soften (Alien Bath Bombs)

You have way too much water! If this happens, you can just rebatch your bombs: throw them back in the bowl, and dry them out with more 2:1 basic bath bomb mix, starch, or clay. Consult the BFR for the “right feel” to shoot for.

Remember the “Right Feel”: loose, soft powder that clumps -- not dough.

Bombs look fine on the tray, but dent easily or crumble in your hand

You're probably not molding them firmly enough. You need to make your bombs denser, so pack your molds harder. I have a separate page on molding tips which might be useful.

If you are packing them harder, then I'd say to leave out the starch and make them only from 2:1 basic bath bomb mix. This never fails for me; I get rock-hard bombs every time.

If you're using a reasonable amount of strength when molding, then there's something else wrong. Do a test batch of the BFR, and see if you get crumbling. Sometimes, extra ingredients, such as coarse salt and starch, can weaken the bombs.

Bombs look fine out of the molds, but form large cracks

Probably still too much water. The bomb is releasing carbon dioxide, which

creates the cracks as it escapes. However, you can also get cracks from drying too fast.

Bombs won't stay together or split down the seam

If you're using up all your strength trying to mold a bomb that just won't stick together, there's something wrong with your water level or ingredients.

When this happens to me, corn starch is usually the problem. Although it's wonderfully absorbent, it has some strange physical properties that may screw up the structure of your bombs.

It's also possible that you just don't have enough water. Add a little more and see what happens.

Bombs won't come out of the mold

Too much water, corn starch, or both. See, baking soda and citric acid aren't really "sticky," but corn starch is. It is a fine powder and likes to cling to things, especially if you're using a mold made of old plastic.

Plastic gets pits and grooves and acts like velcro to the bath bomb mix. Try a new plastic mold or a smooth stainless one.

Properly mixed bombs should practically fall out of the molds.

The recipe I downloaded off the internet doesn't work

The main troubles with following someone else's recipe is that

- 1) everyone's water requirements are different, so you can't add exactly 3/4 tbsp and expect it to work perfectly for you, and
- 2) they're often unnecessarily complicated and hard.

Dry ingredients + a little water + molds + pressure = bath bombs.
That's it! Look at the Basic Foundational Recipe, and build on it.

OK, I got your book and read it, but my bath bombs still don't come out.
If only it were as easy as reading a book to make perfect bath bombs! If that were the case, we'd all be experts, right?

Unfortunately, information - no matter how good - does not make up for practice. If your bath bombs are erratic in quality, don't go changing everything from one batch to the next.

Instead, pick one recipe to master, and practice it. This is the only way you can improve and master the process of making bath bombs.

9) Tips on Molding Your Bath Bombs

If you're having trouble molding your bombs, chances are that the problem isn't with the molding process, but the amount of water you have in your bath bombs. That being said, molding can be a bit tricky, so here are a few tips that will hopefully solve the most common problems.

Use a Round - or at least smooth - Mold

If you have sharp edges or corners, you're asking for trouble. Just look at round cookies vs. ones with sharp edges - the round ones tend to stay intact, while the points of hearts break off.

Rounder is stronger, in my experience. If you're using an ice cube tray, try to use one that makes rounded "cubes" instead of the blocky ones that I have.

Don't use soft silicone

Silicone isn't hard enough for bath bombs, but you can make fizzing bath *melts* -- which are a cross between bath bombs and bath oils. You have to use a rigid mold, otherwise you will not be able to pack them hard enough.

Keep Them Small

If you're a beginner, you'll find it easier to make small bombs. The big ones take some practice, so start with a 2oz mold (or shot glass). Not only do they stay together better, but it's easier to handle something that fits in your hand.

A Trick For Packing Your Molds Firmly and Reducing The Seam

When you mold your bath bombs, you're squeezing the air out of them and forcing them into a certain shape, right? Well, the harder you squeeze, the denser your bombs will be. If you don't pack them hard enough, then they'll be more fragile and prone to breaking.

Here's my method that ensures that you'll get a good amount of bath bomb mix into each bomb. Press bath bomb mix into one half of your mold until it's about flush with the surface. Pretend like it's brown sugar, lightly

packed.

Do the same for the second half. Now, loosely heap mix onto both halves until it forms a little mountain on each and you can't pile any more on before it falls off.

Squeeze your bombs together. If you've done this right, your edges should touch or almost touch. You want to minimize the seam area, since that is the weakest part of your bomb.

You Don't Need Superhuman Strength To Mold Bath Bombs

Molding your bath bombs should be pretty easy. Unless you're doing an Extra Large or Jumbo, you shouldn't have to stand on the molds to get them to compact.

You don't need Forearms Of Steel, so if you feel like you're working too hard, you may have some problems with your recipe. Go back to the BFR!

Resist The Temptation to Screw or Unscrew Your Mold Halves

This weakens the seam of your bomb, especially when you unmold. The seam is already weak and doesn't need any more help!

Don't apply pressure at the seam, either; instead, grasp the mold above the seam and lift it off the bomb, letting the bomb drop onto your other hand. You can tap the mold a few times to encourage the half to drop out.

Reducing the Flat Spot

At the shop, all our bombs had a flat spot from drying. No one complained, but I figured out a way to reduce, if not eliminate, the flat spot.

Obviously, the heavier the bombs, the more they'll weigh and create the pressure to flatten on the bottoms. The XL and Jumbo will have the flattest spots, since the Jumbo can weigh a pound!

Just put a fluffy bath towel down, folded, and a sheet of wax paper over that. Put the bombs on the wax paper. The towels will cushion them so they won't flatten out.

10) Ingredient & Bath Bomb Storage

When your bombs are dry, you should store them in a dry, airtight environment. If you don't, they will absorb water from the air and gradually "fizzle out" over time. I've actually tried and tested this - it is totally true.

You can leave them sitting out for a few days, though, unless you live in the swamp. Then you might have to bake your bombs to get them dry enough to package.

Here are some easy ways to package and protect your bombs:

Extra tupperware or food containers

I eat tons and tons of yogurt, and I save the containers because they're always handy for hobbyists. Often, I'll put one 4oz bomb in each container and snap on the lid. Low class, but effective, and it's good for the earth too!

Plastic sweater boxes

For large numbers of bombs, you can also get plastic Sterilite boxes from Target or Walmart or other big store like that. They're not good for long-term storage because they allow the bombs to jostle around, but they're convenient for lugging stuff to fairs and gift shows.

You can save those sheets of gray foam to put in between your bath bomb layers, but if they are hard enough, you shouldn't have a breakage problem.

Gusseted cellophane bags and twist ties

This is an easy and attractive packaging. If you're selling bath bombs or giving them as gifts, you can just make a little tag and tie them on, or print out labels and stick them right on the bags.

You can also use different colored twist ties or colored "cello" bags - I think there even may be some that glow in the dark!

Be aware, though, that only real cellophane comes from cellulose and is fully biodegradable, though I'm pretty sure that cellophane's manufacturing process still carries some negative impact.

“Cello” stuff is plastic and not biodegradable, but it is far easier to find cello bags than *cellophane* bags.

Shrink wrap

This may be a good way to go if you’re shipping bath bombs: you can just shrink wrap the whole thing. It will keep air and moisture out, and it might strengthen the bomb and make it less prone to cracking.

You can make bombs that are really hard, but they’re probably no match for the USPS!

Clear Plastic or Brown Cardboard Tubes

You can also display your bath bombs in a clear plastic tube like the kind that bath salts come in. It depends on the size of your bombs, of course - it’s probably easier to find a tube to fit 2” bath bombs than 3.5” ones!

This is great for stores, because they’re airtight and eye-catching on the shelves.

Cardboard mail tubes also work, but they’re not as airtight or cute - you probably have to jazz them up somehow. Still, they are good for sending through the mail.

Ingredient Storage

Make sure that your dry ingredients are stored in airtight containers, too. Not only will it keep everything fresh and dry, but it will make your workspace neater and more desirable.

Essential oils should be stored in dark glass bottles (amber is the most common choice), and fragrance oils can be stored in plastic or glass containers. If your fragrance oils are shipped in amber bottles, keep them in amber, because they probably contains some essential oils.

Save On Scents

<http://www.saveonscents.com/>

If you're looking for a particular or special fragrance oil, you're most likely to find it here.

They have a number of other ingredients, but only the basics -- you won't find any cool powdered stuff or even SLSA here. Their essential oil selection is very limited; they have one thing they're known for, and the rest is just support or because so many people bugged them about it.

Their strength is that they manufacture their own fragrances, and you can sample any of them for the cost of shipping. Their site is confusing because their catalog is so huge, so use the search box on the top right.

Here is a link to their "sniffies," where they will give you 1-5 vials of any fragrance they make for \$3.25. You can order as many as you want in batches of 5 (so, if you're ordering 15, you put 3 for the quantity.)

http://www.saveonscents.com/advanced_search_result.php?keywords=SOS+SNIFFIES+%28up+to+5+sample+vials%29

If that link doesn't work, just search for "sniffies" in the search box. Their phone help is also *excellent*, so if you have a question, just call them up.

SOS has different strengths of scent: SOS, Ultra, and Extreme. The sample sniffies are always the strongest, Extreme Concentrate.

I'm not going to get really technical here, but the basic science behind bath bombs is really interesting!

The two active ingredients - baking soda and citric acid - form an acid - base reaction in water. This kind of reaction produces some kind of gas, water, and some kind of salt.

In this case, the gas is CO₂ - carbon dioxide. The salt is trisodium citrate, which is used in food and cosmetic manufacturing. But what I find most interesting about this is: the bath bomb reaction produces more water!

I don't know about you, but I think it's cool that there is more water in your bath after the dry bath bomb dissolves. It's only a tiny - almost immeasurable - amount, so you won't be able to tell.

On a more practical note, this might explain something that I thought was just my imagination. Whenever I added water, it always seemed that my bath bomb mix would suddenly become wetter, even though I hadn't added more water!

It could also be the reason why bombs that are way too wet seem to soften and flatten out - the fizzing reaction is producing more and more water, which makes it fizz more...

Speculation About The Use of Corn Starch

This is just based on my own observations, but I think that corn starch may not be beneficial for bath bombs. Sure, it's awesomely absorbent and is a great save if your mix is too wet, but after a little practice with getting the "Right Feel," you can eliminate that problem.

When I don't use corn starch, my fizzies are as hard as pool balls. They even sound like pool balls when I knock them together! I had to throw my bombs in the ceramic bathtub to get them to chip and break, last time I tested them.

Now, here's the junk science part: I think that corn starch actually weakens bath bombs! According to my research, both citric acid and baking soda are

salts. They're crystals, so they form "regularly ordered, repeating pattern extending in all three spatial dimensions." (Wikipedia: Crystal)

In other words, crystals form in a certain orderly way. When the citric acid and baking soda react, the result is sodium citrate (trisodium citrate), another crystal.

So far, this is factual. But warning: speculation ahead!

When you add the water to the baking soda - citric acid mix, you are setting off The Reaction. It can't be helped, and if you put your ear right next to the mixture, you can hear it fizzing faintly.

But I think that the Dreaded Reaction helps hold the bath bombs together. The water is freeing up ions in the baking soda and citric acid, and they're exchanging the ions and forming ionic bonds. When the water evaporates, what you have are baking soda, citric acid, and sodium citrates all partially glued together, and that's what makes it hold.

But it's my guess that when you add the starch, it disrupts this process in two ways.

Not only do the starch molecules not fit in with all the crystals' orderly processes, but the corn starch is hogging all the water.

There isn't as much of that ionic bonding process between the citric acid and baking soda.

The wet starch may mold well, but after the water evaporates, the crystal structure of the baking soda, citric acid, and sodium citrate isn't as strong.

So, it sounds good, but is it right? I don't know. I'm really just making up explanations on why my bath bombs are so hard. I don't have any chemistry past high school, and I don't remember much of it, to be honest. If there are any chemists out there who can support or disprove this, speak up!

12) Choosing Fragrances For Your Bath Bombs

If you don't know what fragrances to use for bath bombs, just start with one or two. Most people prefer scents they can easily identify; I know this is true for me and my friends!

Here are two easy fragrances that work well for baths:

- * Vanilla
- * Lavender

Really, can you go wrong with these two scents? If people don't like one, chances are they'll like the other, and the smell good on most people. Let's say I was in dire straits and had to sell bath bombs at a flea market to raise ransom money, or something. If I could only sell them in two fragrances, these are the ones I'd bet on.

But there are plenty more to choose from, and vanilla and lavender are pretty darn common! Here are more popular, but less worn, categories:

Old Fashioned Simple Florals

These go in and out of style:

- * Rose
- * Violet
- * Lilac
- * Hyacinth
- * Bluebell
- * Magnolia
- * Lily of the valley
- * Gardenia
- * Jasmine
- * Narcissus
- * Tuberose

Tropical Romance

These are synonymous with “vacation” in the minds of many:

- * Coconut, banana
- * Mango, pineapple
- * Tahitian Vanilla
- * Ginger
- * Orange blossom
- * Ylang-ylang
- * Plumeria
- * Maile leaf
- * Fresh aquatic notes / fantasy ocean scents

Trip To The Spa

Spa, marine, clean, and laundry-type fragrances are relatively safe, but they work best if they smell “clear” and fresh, not like a thick, sweet air freshener. Make sure you sample first with this family.

- * Garden mint
- * French lavender (classic laundry scent)
- * Any “rain” type scent -- even China Rain works well
- * White / fresh musks
- * White tea notes
- * Cucumber
- * Seaweed or algae notes

Candy & Desserts

Sweet strawberry, milk, carmel, chocolate cheesecake, candied cherry, apple brandy... these are all dessert scents so popular around the holidays, especially Valentines Day.

- * Strawberry / strawberries & champagne
- * Chocolate, coffee, carmel blends
- * Apple, vanilla, chai, or pumpkin spice
- * Cranberry, fig, or both
- * Brown sugar, maple, honey

- * Sweet fruit - orange, lemon, cherry, watermelon candy

“Exotic” or Orientals

For Americans, Oriental fragrances = sexy or seductive. They are usually heavy, sweet, or both.

- * Jasmine
- * Neroli, carnation, osmanthus
- * Sandalwood, balsam
- * Mandarin
- * Patchouli
- * Vanilla, cocoa
- * Musk
- * Amber
- * Cinammon, pepper, coriander, and other spices

In addition, many fragrance suppliers make duplicates of popular companies' scents! Origins' ginger, BBW Juniper Breeze, and The Thymes' Eucalyptus are just a few of the many scent duplicates you'll find online.

Start with the recommended supplier list - I'm sure you'll find something great. When you add your scent, remember that some of them are stronger than others, especially when you're working with essential oils.

Don't be surprised if you have to add 1 tsp of bergamot to scent a batch, and only 1/4 tsp of patchouli to scent the same size batch. This is just natural, and part of what makes scenting your own products unpredictable and exciting (and really annoying, sometimes.)

I won't say much about scent blending, since that is a topic that could fill a book on its own. However, here is one great trick, a "secret" that has people asking how I can make such creative-yet-classic blends. I'll be the first to admit that it's a cheap 2-second hack, but it can get amazing results.

Build On Pre-Blended Fragrances!

Take a classic scent blend and build on it by adding one or two other "pure" single scents like the ones listed above. This is a quick way to get a sophisticated fragrance that's all your own when you want something

beyond basic.

You don't always have to use 20 different components to get a good scent! Just leverage other people's good work - after all, that's why they sell blending bases! Even big perfume houses have their own stock blends that they build on.

Scent blends that I like to use are:

- * Musk and Frankincense & Myrrh - gives depth and 'dries out' a blend
- * Amber - adds well-balanced mystery
- * China Rain - instant Asian class
- * Coconut Lemongrass - adds tropical flavor
- * Green Tea - lightens and sweetens anything
- * Green garden bases - adds flower-shop freshness
- * Forest-whatever / Oakmoss - when you need to make something masculine

Examples Of Using Pre-Blended Fragrances

So, let's say you wanted an exotic rose fragrance. Take your simple rose FO and blend it with Amber for the smoothest blend, Musk for something sexy, or Frankincense & Myrrh for mystery.

None of these have any distinguishable florals, though they contain flower notes, so the rose will pop out on top, if you get your ratios right. There you go - call it something romantic like "Midnight Rose."

Obviously, some things will not work out, but you might be surprised at what will! The key to making a good, fresh fragrance blend is to just be creative and do things that people don't usually do. Choco-lemongrass, or Green Tea and Woodsmoke? Go for it... and be sure to write it down.

I'm always interested to hear what other people come up with. If you have any good blending experiences, email me and let me know!

End Notes

And We're Done!

I hope that by this time, you're reading this with a batch of completed bath bombs drying on a tray nearby, and a feeling of accomplishment in your DIY soul.

Yay, you did it! See how easy that was? Once you get used to the process, you'll be able to whip up a small batch in 5 - 10 minutes.

I realize that you may have questions that I haven't answered, or tips that I haven't included (or even thought of.) If you want to contact me, email me at:

info@excellentlivingguide.com

Keep in mind...

That I have 4800 people on my list (as of Christmastime 2010), and I get many emails. If you ask a question that has been answered by the Fast Guide, I may not answer. I get too many emails.

That was the entire reason for writing this guide in the first place -- to write up everything I know about bath bombing and answer people's most common questions.

Thanks for bath bombing with me!

- Katherine

Last Revision:

December 19, 2010

To be added next: beautiful branding, and bath bomb packaging for gift / sale.

Stainless Molds & Other Resources

As I mentioned, I carry several sizes of hand-held stainless molds. You can see them here:

<http://www.excellentlivingguide.com/stainless-bath-bomb-molds/>

Download the bath bomb mold info sheet here to see photos, sizes, and prices:

http://www.perfumemirror.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/bb_pric-sheet.pdf

I do not carry a regular stock because the supply is limited. I cannot get the molds any faster, and often, I cannot get all the sizes -- just one or two of them.

It is extremely annoying, but the importer I work with is just not speedy.

First pick goes to my list members. I email my members every time I get a shipment, and they just tell me what they want over email. If you're not a list member yet, you can join on this page:

<http://www.excellentlivingguide.com/2009/11/bath-bombers-unite/>

I email out once a month or less, unless something exciting is happening in the world of bath bombs.

ELG Business

If you want to sell your bath bombs or other handmade cosmetics, I started a little website where I wrote up my experiences as a sales person of high-end bath stuff. I haven't updated in a while, but that's because I haven't had anything more to add in a while!

I do plan to list a bunch of practical resources -- business books, courses, and decent classes to take at community colleges to help crafters become better sellers.

Visit <http://www.elgbusiness.com/> for more.