SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT COUNCIL

HANDMADE SOAP

CRITERIA

DEFINITION

Chemically speaking, soaps are water-soluble sodium or potassium salts of fatty acids. Soap is created when fats and/or oils or their fatty acids are treated chemically with a strong alkali. An alkali is a soluble salt of an alkali metal of sodium or potassium. Chemically, alkali is a base, the opposite of an acid. The base reacts with and neutralizes any acid that it comes in contact with. Alkalis used in soap making are sodium hydroxide (NaOH) also known as caustic soda, and potassium hydroxide (KOH) also called caustic potash.

Fats and oils to be used in soap-making can come from animal or plant sources. Saponification is the chemical reaction that occurs when fats, oils, and caustics are put into contact with each other under controlled circumstances.

TECHNIQUE

The “Kettle Method” is the oldest and easiest method for the home soap-maker, and it can be adapted for production. Quality soaps depend on the quality of the raw materials, equipment and a commitment to good and careful work.

Soft water, spring water, or distilled water is preferred to tap water. Oils and fats should smell and look fresh and clean. Scents should be used appropriately and not be significantly overwhelming.

General

Quality soap should:

1. Look good – ie: shape and size is suited to its use.
2. Smells great – or not at all if unscented.
3. Feels wonderful when used – should produce lather even in cold water.
4. Each soap bar must be labeled with weight; and name, address and postal code of the maker. Preferably scents, are labeled as well.