THE house & HOMESTEAD'S

Complete Guide to Candle-Making with Soy Wax & Essential Oils

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About Candle-Making

The History of Candle-Making

The art and science of candle-making dates back to ancient times. Thousands of years ago, animal fats, beeswax and even waxes made from plants and insects were used to make the very first candles in ancient civilizations spanning from Egypt to Asia.

Candles went mostly unchanged for centuries upon centuries, and remained the primary light source for human beings all the way through the late 19th century when man discovered how to harness the powers of electricity.

During the mid 1800s, chemists also discovered paraffin wax: a byproduct of petroleum that was both odourless and white in colour. From this time forward, candles were by and large made from a mixture of paraffin wax and stearic acid (an animal byproduct that is extracted from fat).

Many candles are still made from paraffin wax today, but recent studies have found that there are toxic chemicals in paraffin wax that can be quite harmful when burned in the home.

Likewise, many of the dyes and fragrances that were added to candles in the 20th century when they became sought-after decorative items have been shown to release toxic carcinogens into the air when burned.

A recent spike in interest in healthier, more natural products has led to the development of more natural candles as well. Soy wax was developed in the late 20th century and has become a popular choice for candle wax due to being a clean-burning, plant-based wax with no known health risks.

Likewise, people are opting for candles without added dyes, and synthetic fragrances are slowly being replaced by essential oils.

While the market is still saturated with scented, dyed candles that are full of toxins, people are becoming more knowledgeable about the dangers of these traditional store-bought candles and are looking for safer alternatives.

Over millennia, candles have evolved from items of necessity to decorative pieces in most homes, and from purely decorative accents to products that also support and nurture our health. So I'm very excited to share with you today how to make all-natural soy wax candles at home for yourself and your friends and family!

Making Candles vs. Buying Them

While it is possible to buy all-natural soy candles with essential oils and no dyes, they will likely cost you a fortune, especially if you're buying them on any regular basis. Also, there's been

some discussion that not all soy candles on the market are 100% soy (even if they say they are), and that some are actually mixed with paraffin. And even if they are 100% soy, soy is often a heavily genetically modified crop, meaning they're not all that environmentally friendly and may even be sprayed with chemical pesticides.

As with many things, the only way to really know exactly what's in your candles is to make them yourself. It is possible to buy 100% non-GMO soy wax to make your candles and then you can add your own pure essential oils, omit the dyes, use cotton wicks (no lead core!) and even reuse old glass jars to save money, help the environment and make sure you're burning clean, safe, natural candles in your home.

Soy vs. Beeswax

While the dangers of paraffin wax are known and obvious, you may be wondering why you should choose soy wax over beeswax. To be honest, you shouldn't. Well, not necessarily.

Beeswax is still one of the oldest forms of candle wax and the most natural, and may even have health benefits when burned. But there are downsides to beeswax too, depending on what you're hoping for in a candle.

Beeswax, for one, can be very expensive (even when buying the wax to make your own). Also, beeswax also has a distinct scent and colour of its own, so if you're looking for an odourless, colourless candle wax, soy wins over beeswax in this department. I usually prefer an odourless wax when making scented candles as then the scent of the oils comes through rather than the scent of the beeswax.

Lastly, if you're vegan and don't use any animal byproducts (or you're gifting to someone who is), soy wax is 100% plant-based so no issues there.

Honestly, both are good options as far as natural waxes go. It's just a matter of personal preference.

While you can make homemade candles out of both soy and beeswax, the process is slightly different as beeswax is a hard wax and soy is soft, so you may not get the same results with beeswax if you follow the instructions in this guide. However, if you've chosen soy, then let's get started!

Getting Started

What You'll Need

(All links that follow are to affiliate products that I use or recommend).

- Soy wax (flakes or pellets)
- Essential oils (I use and recommend Plant Therapy essential oils)
- Fragrance oils (these are optional, but will help your candles to throw more scent
- Wicks (either pre-made or cotton wicking by the length plus wick tabs to make your own)
- Wick holders (store-bought or using items from home such as clothespins)
- Jars (Mason jars work great!)
- Glue gun (for sticking wicks to jars)
- Pouring pot plus sauce pan to use as double boiler
- Digital kitchen scale
- Wooden spoon or dowel for mixing
- Kitchen thermometer
- Customized printable labels **Downloadable labels on page 9*

Buying Guide

Here is a link to all of the candle-making supplies and ingredients that I use and recommend. Below is a breakdown of each one.

Wax

I always purchase EcoSoya© brand CB-Advanced Soy Wax. I have purchased Ecosoya© wax in both flakes and pellets before and both work great. Ecosoya© brand wax is 100% soy wax, made in the USA and certified non-GMO, making it the best choice for an all-natural soy wax I've found on the market. Purchase on Amazon or at local craft and candle-making supply stores.

Wicks

In my video tutorial, I mentioned that buying wicking by the length is much cheaper. While this is still usually the case, you can often get pre-made wicks on Amazon for a very reasonable price, so I would recommend starting with these as it's much easier to use the pre-made wicks when you're first starting out.

Essential Oils

I spent years trying out different essential oil brands until I finally fell in love with Plant Therapy essential oils. They're super affordable, they're 100% pure and quality-guaranteed, and there's

a huge range essential oils (including a KidSafe line) to choose from. Of course, any oils will do as long as they're pure.

Labels

I've included templates for printing the labels I use in the last two pages of this e-book. You can either print them on regular printer paper and stick them on with a glue stick, or you can use brown kraft paper sticker labels. I use Avery© brand round kraft paper labels, which fit my label templates perfectly. You can purchase these on Amazon or at your local office supply store. You can find a link to these labels (along with all of the other above-mentioned candle-making supplies) right here.

Step-By-Step Instructions

1. Prepare your jars. If repurposing old jars, make sure they are clean and dry.

2. Measure out your wax. I recommend weighing wax with a digital kitchen scale. Tare the pouring pot first. This should reset the scale to 0. then fill with wax until you've reached your desired weight. **Note: Two pounds of wax will fill approximately five 8-oz Mason jars (jam jars or half-pints) or 10 4-oz jelly jars.*

3. Melt wax in pouring pot or double boiler on the stove. Never heat up a pouring pot directly on the stove top. Always fill another pot with about an inch or two of water and place pouring pot in the pot. Melt wax on high until wax has completely liquified. Use a kitchen thermometer to check the temperature of the wax. For best results, allow it to reach 180ºF and then take it off the heat and allow it to cool.

4. While wax is cooling, prepare your wicks. Centre and glue wicks to the inside bottom of jars using a glue gun. Place wick holders (or clothespins) on to keep wicks upright and centred.

5. Allow wax to cool to roughly 130ºF. Once cooled, add in essential oils. You'll want to add about 100 drops of essential oils for every pound of wax. Mix in essential oils using a wooden spoon or mixing tool. (If you're using fragrance oils, I've found I like 2 ounces of fragrance oil for every pound of wax, and then only about 20 drops of essential oils mixed in).

6. Pour wax slowly into prepared jars. Allow to cool completely before moving. Trim wicks to desired length, put custom labels on your jars and voilà! Enjoy your candles, whether you are giving or receiving them!

Essential Oil Recipe Guide + Tips

When it comes to using essential oils in your candle-making, it might shock you to learn how much you need to use just to get the faintest scent. I use about 100 drops of essential oils per pound of wax, and even then, the fragrance is very mild.

You could use more if you are looking for a stronger scent, but essential oils can also be quite pricey, so you probably don't want to overdo it. I've included a few bonus tips below that can help you save a little money and get your candles smelling stronger…

Essential Oil Tips

1. Buy generic essential oils to save money. While I personally use and recommend Plant Therapy essential oils (which are some of the most affordable oils on the market), I recommend spending as little as possible on the oils you'll be using in your candles. As long as they're pure essential oils, you're safe to go a little more generic here (think oils you might find at your local supermarket or drugstore). But definitely check out Plant Therapy's huge range of essential oils because they do actually rival generic essential oils when it comes to price and they have a huge range of pure tested essential oils to choose from.

2. Dip your wicks in essential oils. This works best if you're using cotton lengths of unwaxed wicking that you will be waxing yourself, but you could also do this with pre-waxed ready-made wicks if that's what you're using. First, mix up some of the essential oils you are using in a shallow dish or tray (I like using the top of a Mason jar lid (without the band)). Blend the oils together and then drag your wicks through the oil so that the wicks absorb the oils. Lay wicks on a paper towel or parchment paper and let dry.

3. Dip the corner of a paper towel in the oils you are using to scent your candle and spread lightly over the top of your candle once the wax has set and dry. This will help to give it a stronger initial scent and be able to smell it better before you burn it.

4. Mix essential oils and fragrance oils together for a stronger scent (see instructions on previous page). You may choose to avoid fragrance oils completely if you'd like a 100% natural product, but if it's a strong scented candle you're after, you may want to add some fragrance oils too.

*** See next page for favourite essential oil combinations ***

Favourite Essential Oil Combinations

The beauty of using essential oils is that you can combine whichever oils you like best to create your own all-natural custom candle fragrances. You can use single oils or blends and combine as many as you like. I prefer to keep it simple and I usually blend two or three of own singles to create a custom scent. Here are a few of my favourites:

1- Lemon & Lavender

This makes for a beautiful, bright and floral scent combination that is perfect for spring and summer, to use as a relaxing candle in the bath or to give as a gift for a birthday or Mother's Day. To create, mix equal parts lemon and lavender or 3 parts lavender and 1 part lemon or visa versa if you prefer one scent over another. If adding a third scent, I like to mix 2/5 lemon and 2/5 lavender and 1/5 of an additional oil.
** Optional addition: Bergamot oil.*

2- Orange & Cinnamon

This combination is warm and spicy and especially comforting on a cold winter's night. Perfect for fall or winter, especially for the holiday season and makes a great Christmas gift! To create, mix equal parts orange and cinnamon bark oil. If adding a third scent, mix 2/5 orange, 2/5 cinnamon and 1/5 of additional oil.
** Optional addition: Clove oil.*

3- Rosemary & Black Spruce

This combination is woodsy and earthy and perfect for the outdoorsy type or the man in your life. Great as a gift for Father's Day or for him on any occasion. To create, mix equal parts rosemary and black spruce (or any spruce or pine) oil. If adding a third scent, mix equal parts rosemary, spruce and additional oil.
** Optional addition: Eucalyptus oil.*

4- Tea Tree & Eucalyptus

This combination is cleansing and refreshing and especially nice when you're under the weather with a cold or flu, or when relaxing in your "home spa" (a.k.a. the bath;). To create, mix equal parts peppermint and eucalyptus oil. If adding a third scent, mix equal parts peppermint, eucalyptus and additional oil.
** Optional addition (or substitution): Peppermint, Rosemary or Lemon oil.*

*** If using fragrance oils, start with whatever fragrance oil you're using and add essential oils to compliment or enhance the scent of the fragrance oil. For example, a pumpkin pie fragrance oil pairs well with cinnamon. Lemon can be enhanced by more lemon essential oil and vanilla goes with just about everything!*

Troubleshooting Tips & Tricks

While candle-making is pretty straight-forward if you follow the process exactly, there are some common issues that arise. Here are a few of them with tips on how to prevent and solve them:

Problem #1: Sinkholes or rough, uneven tops on your candles.

Prevention: This is likely caused by the wax cooling too fast. Make sure you follow all procedures correctly and use your kitchen thermometer to check the temperature of your wax before you pour it. Also, make sure all doors and windows are closed and the heat is set at 19-20ºC (66-68ºF) to create a controlled environment for your candles to cool in

Solution: If this happens despite your best efforts, you can fix it by allowing your candles to cool completely and then melting a little more wax to pour over top to create a smooth, even finish. I always do my original pour just a little bit under where I want the final top of the candle to be. I save a bit of wax from that batch in my pouring pot so I can reheat it and pour overtop to ensure a smooth finish to all my candles. I have 2 pouring pots so that I have one to use if the other still has wax from another batch waiting to be used while the candles cool.

Another option is to take a hair dryer and melt the top of the candle enough to even out the roughness and then let it cool again. This works sometimes but it can take longer and can actually introduce more air bubbles if overdone, so it's a last resort for me.

Problem #2: Wax is pulling away from the jar, leaving unsightly, uneven patches.

Prevention: Again, this is caused by wax cooling too quickly. Some experts suggest that you can help to avoid this by heating up your jars in the oven first, although I have tried this and had no better luck with it. Some pull-away is usually inevitable in candle-making in my experience.

Solution: Once you have pull away, there's not a lot you can do to fix it. You could try heating the candle in the oven and letting it cool again, but I have only had minimal success with this and it can cause other problems such as problem #1. I live with it and accept that it is a part of making candles in clear glass jars, but if you really can't stand it you might consider using containers that you can't see through, such as tea cups, metal tins or ceramic jars. The only reason pull away is a problem is that you can see it through clear glass and it looks a little spotty, so if you change your jars so you can't see through them, problem solved!

Problem #3: The essential oils are "sweating" or seeping out of the top of your candle.

Prevention: If this happens, you might have used too much essential oil. While you need to use quite a large quantity of essential oils to get your candle to throw scent, certain waxes blend

better with essential oils and fragrance oils than others and at a certain point you might simply have too high of an oil to wax ratio. Ease up on the oil on your next batch!

Solution: If this happens, there is not much you can do about it other than wipe off any oil that leaches out and add less next time.

Problem #4: When I re-light my candle, it emits black smoke and/or turns the glass black around the rim.

Prevention: If your candle is emitting black smoke when it burns, I have found two possible causes.

1) When I have used candle dyes in the past these candles have burned black, so I don't use any dyes in my candles anymore.
2) If I don't cut the wick between burns, the stumpy wick-end tends to emit this black smoke until it is burned off. So always cut your wicks between uses.

Solution: Blow your candle out and let cool for a minute. Then cut the balled-up, stumpy end of the wick off and re-light. Your candle should now burn nice and clean.

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