Making Herbal Baths Salts

presented by: Di-Di Hoffman.
The primary aim of the SA Herb Academy is to help you discover and develop your own savoir faire (your own personal touch) for using herbs in the kitchen, for growing herbs indoors and outdoors, for making your own herbal remedies, and to discover the individual herbs virtues.
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Introduction
Spoil yourself with your own unique blends of natural ingredients and relaxing scents.

Bath salts are the easiest natural skin care products to make and are often some of the most expensive items in gift sets. Making them at home with your own home-grown herbs can cut some of those prices by half or more and you can ensure that you only use natural ingredients.

You don’t need fancy or expensive equipment, hard to find ingredients, or complicated procedures to make them at home. This crash course contains eight popular recipes which will soon be your favourites too. And this is just the beginning. You’ll also find out which herbs to use for making your own relaxing-, stimulating- and healing bath salts.

Essential Tools
The list of essential tools is amazingly short and most of them can be found in your kitchen. You will need:

- Measuring cups
- A large mixing bowl - you can also use a large plastic bag
- A large spoon
- Something to store your salts in – see packaging for some ideas
- A mortar and pestle – to ground your herbs. You can also use an electric blender or food processor.
- A funnel - if you are going to use something with a small mouth to store your salts in. You can also make your own funnel by rolling up a sheet of paper.

Ingredients
The ingredient list is as simple as the tool list. Most of the ingredients can be found in your local grocery store or pharmacy. Special soap fragrances and soap dyes can be purchased from soap craft stores. Aromatherapy oils can be purchased from a health shop or pharmacy. You will find herb plants, to grow in your garden, at your local garden centre. You can also buy dried herbs from a health shop.

You will need:

- **Table salt or sea salt** – we prefer coarse salt.

- **Epsom Salt** - magnesium sulphate is a pure naturally occurring mineral. Externally Epsom salt benefits your skin and body in a number of ways. You can soak in it to soften skin and use it as a scrub to exfoliate rough patches. You can also soak in it to reduce the swelling and inflammation of body aches and pains. It is also very beneficial as a stress reducer and can even ward off a cold or the flu if used in a bath at the onset of symptoms. To discover how
to make an Epsom salt bath visit www.herb.co.za/herb-remedies/epsombath.htm

- **Dye** – you can use ordinary food colouring (Moir's is a well know brand). The result is not always predictable, nor is the colouring stable if you store your salts for a long period of time. You can also purchase special soap dyes, which produce a more stable and (sometimes) professional colouring. These are however a chore to obtain and more expensive. If you intend selling your bath salts we advise you to incur the extra expense and trouble to use special soap dyes.

- **Fragrance** – a very important ingredient in your bath salt. It sets the ‘mood’ for your bath salt. You can use special soap fragrances, aromatherapy oils, or herbs to create your ‘mood’. Soap fragrances add nothing but fragrance, but aromatherapy oils and herbs add a desirable health dimension as well. Please pay attention to the Safety Precautions if you are using aromatherapy oils and herbs, or you intend selling your bath salts.

- **Herbs** – finely ground dried herbs add a wonderful dimension to your salts. For the best results grow and dry your own herbs. It is easy and very rewarding. Ground your herbs just before mixing them into your salts.

Some recipes ask for baking soda and borax. You can omit these if you want.

- **Baking Soda** - sodium bicarbonate, is a naturally occurring substance that is present in all living things - it helps living things maintain the pH balance necessary for life.

  Baking Soda acts a cleaning agent because it is a mild alkali and can cause dirt and grease to dissolve easily in water for effective removal. Baking Soda’s deodorization power is a result of its ability to neutralise odours, rather than just covering up odours with perfumes. Because of its chemical makeup, Baking Soda has unique capabilities as a buffer. (Buffering is the maintenance of a stable pH balance, or acid-alkali balance.)

- **Borax** - sodium borate, is a naturally occurring alkaline mineral first discovered over 4000 years ago. It cleans, deodorises, disinfects and softens water. Borax has no toxic fumes and is safe for the environment. Borax can irritate skin and should not be ingested. Keep it away from children and foodstuffs.

**Packaging**

Packaging is something that should be considered before you start making your bath salts. Preferably it should be something that can be sealed. This keeps the salt fresh and fragrant. The packaging also determines how much salt you make in a batch.

We prefer to use little cellophane bags and twist tags, raffia or ribbon. They are simpler and easier for the person making the salt and the person using the salt. They are also a lot cheaper than glass jars.
If you want a more sophisticated and elegant look, a glass jar is your best bet. As long as it has a lid. You can also use canning jars. Tie raffia, ribbon or yarn around the jar to give it a touch of class. If you are really creative you can purchase glass paint from a craft store and paint decorations on the jar. Glass jars can be purchased from craft stores.

You can also purchase or make your own little cardboard boxes. These can be decorated with a variety of materials. We put a piece of wax paper inside the box before we put the salt in. This helps keep the fragrance from fading quickly.

Finally, don’t forget your label. It can be glued to the bag, jar or cardboard box or it can be tied on with a piece of string or raffia.

**Procedure for Making Bath Salt**

1. Gather all your equipment, recipe ingredients and packaging before you begin.

2. Decide on the type of salt you are going to use. Next decide on the grade – fine to coarse. If you are using different types and grades, decide if you prefer to have more of one or the other.

3. Use your packaging to determine how much salt you need. Fill your packaging container to the desired amount. Pour from the packaging container into your mixing bowl.

4. In a smaller bowl take ¼ - ½ cup salt mixture. Stir in your fragrance, starting with a few drops and adding gradually until you reach the desired strength of scent. Make sure that the salt is mixed well with the fragrance.

5. Next stir in the dye. Add it gradually, like the fragrance, until you get the colour you desire. Be sure to stir really well. You want to ensure that the colour is even all the way through the salt crystals.

6. Add the mixture back to the balance of the salt mixture and mix well. It’s very frustrating to pour your salts into their container, only to find the salts at the bottom of the mixing bowl still a pure white without any fragrance. It’s a sure sign that you were rushing.

7. Pour or scoop into your packaging container, seal, and label and decorate.

**Safety Precautions**

If you have high blood pressure or any heart condition you should not use bath salts. Elderly or frail people, or those that can hardly move their joints without excruciating pain, should also be careful. Also use very small quantities during pregnancy.
8 Popular Bath Salt Recipes

In some recipes we list the ingredients in parts. Use any convenient measure such as a teaspoon, cup, spade or wheelbarrow. Follow the procedure above for all the recipes.

**Basic Bath Salts Recipe 1**
3 parts Epsom salt
3 parts table salt
Fragrance, herbs and dye

**Basic Bath Salts Recipe 2**
3 parts Epsom salt
2 parts baking soda
1 part table salt (or borax)
Fragrance, herbs and dye

**Energising Bath Salts**
1 cup Epsom salt
1 cup coarse salt
10-20 drops green food colouring
6 drops eucalyptus essential oil
10 drops rosemary essential oil
15 drops peppermint oil

**Sinus Headache Bath Salts**
2-3 cups Epsom salt or salts of your choice
1/3 cup dried peppermint ground to a fine powder
1/3 cup dried spearmint ground to a fine powder
If you want to ensure potency you can add 20 drops peppermint essential oil

**Relaxing Milk Bath**
To your favourite salt recipe add:
1 part powdered milk
Finely ground chamomile or lemon balm

**Oatmeal Milk Bath**
1 cup corn starch
2 cups milk powder
½ cup finely ground oatmeal
½ cup finely ground lavender

You can also add some salts to this recipe.

**Ocean Blue Bath Salt**
1 cup Epsom salt
1 cup baking soda
4 drops blue food colouring
3 drops Jasmine essential
4 drops vanilla essential
2 tablespoons liquid glycerine (skin moisturiser, optional)

**Desert Sands Bath Salt**
3 cups Epsom salts
1 cup baking soda
5 drops yellow food colouring
2 drops red food colouring
4 drops musk fragrant or essential oil
3 drops Jasmine fragrant or essential oil
2 teaspoons liquid glycerine (skin moisturiser, optional)

**More Herbal Bath Salt Ideas**

**Relaxing bath herbs**
Chamomile, hops (sometimes very difficult to obtain), jasmine, lime flowers, valerian.

**Stimulating bath herbs**
Basil, bay, eucalyptus, fennel, lavender, lemon balm, lemon verbena, mint, pine, rosemary, sage, thyme.

**Healing bath herbs**
Calendula, comfrey, spearmint, yarrow.

**To boost circulation and aid deep cleansing**
Rosemary.

**For soothing and gentle cleansing**
Applemint, chamomile, chervil, lavender, lemon balm, rose petals, spearmint, thyme.

**For healing**
Comfrey, fennel.

**For oily skin**
Calendula, sage, yarrow.

**For dry, sensitive skin**
Borage, parsley, salad burnet, sorrel.

**For mature or sallow skins**
Lemon verbena.
How to Take a Therapeutic Herbal Bath

Full body baths are the most beneficial baths that can be taken and are, as we all know, very pleasant. They have been used for centuries as specific therapeutic aids in the treatment of disorders and for their beautifying effect.

To obtain the most from a therapeutic herbal bath apply the following guidelines:

- Never take a full body bath within two hours after meals. The best time for a hydrotherapy treatment is about three hours after breakfast, which is a luxury most of us can't afford. The best time for most of us is just before retiring in the evening.

- Water temperature is important. Never start with an extreme. The ideal temperature is one that is agreeable to you, unless giving some particular treatment for effects. Rather increase or decrease the water temperature gradually as needed.

- Cold baths should be brief and should be avoided during menstruation.

- Room temperature is also important and there should be good ventilation - but no drafts. As a precaution, especially in winter, always decrease the temperature of the bath before you get out.

- Atmosphere is also important if you are taking a long, warm, relaxing bath to wash away the day’s stress and tension. Take appropriate measures such as soft music, candle light, etc.

- Rest after a therapeutic herbal body bath is very important as this will add to its beneficial results. Try to lie down for at least an hour, preferably longer, immediately after your bath and keep yourself covered.

- Try to take a therapeutic bath every three to four days.

Therapeutic Herbal Bath Ideas

Therapeutic herbal body baths are beneficial to almost any condition you can think of. They are commonly used (prescribed) as home remedies in the treatment of the following conditions: arthritis, colds, colic, constipation, gall-stones, gout, neuralgia, rheumatism, sciatica, stress, tension, etc.

You can add any of your favourite herbs to your herbal bath or you can make up a formula that will be of benefit to whatever condition you want to alleviate. Use the standard recipe below as a guideline.

Aromatherapists make extensive use of full body baths, and theirs is to a certain extent a more standardized bath than a herbal bath, as most quality aromatherapy oils are of a known strength. However, this in not to say that a full body bath with aromatherapy oils is superior to a herbal bath.

- Antiseptic bath: To aid infective skin disorders try Lavender, Peppermint, Thyme.
• Calming bath: Due to whatever reason try Lemon balm, Valerian.

• Circulation bath: To aid circulatory problems try Cayenne, Ginger, Rosemary, Thyme, Yarrow.

• Cleansing bath: Especially for oily skin try Lemongrass, Lovage, Yarrow.

• Feverish Conditions: Try Cayenne, Ginger, Yarrow.

• Moisturizing bath: Chamomile Flowers, Rose Petals.

• Sleep: To induce restful and heeling sleep try Hops, Lime Blossom, Valerian.

• Sleep: For children with sleeping problems try Chamomile, Lime Blossom.

• Skin: To tone the skin try Lavender, Nettles, Peppermint, Thyme, Yarrow.

• Softening bath: Or as wrinkle-removers try Fennel, Rose Petals.

• Stress/Tension bath: For a relaxing bath try Elder Flowers, Lavender leaves or flowers, Lemon Balm, Rosemary.

• Teething problems: For babies with teething problems try the herbs mentioned under Sleep: For children with sleeping problems.

**Standard Herbal Body Bath Recipe**

You can either prepare an infusion (or decoction) which you add to the bath water, or you can place a handful of the herb in a muslin bag (or old stocking) which is suspended from the hot water tap so that the water flows through it.

For a stronger effect I often use a combination of these methods. I tie the herbs into the bag and first make the infusion or decoction. (Sometimes I will simmer the herbs for 10 to 20 minutes in a closed container) Then I add the resulting infusion or decoction to the water and tie the bag to the hot water tap.

When making an infusion or decoction you usually use two cups of water and up to half a cup of the herb or formula. If you are using fresh herbs use more. Exact quantities are not that critical as the infusion will be diluted in the bath water. Apply common sense.

**How to Take an Epsom Salt Bath**

Epsom salts (magnesium sulphate) is a naturally occurring mineral. It has numerous health and beauty benefits as well as many uses in the garden.

When correctly prepared, an Epsom salt bath eases stress and relaxes the body, relieves pain and muscle cramps, and it eliminates toxins from the body. It can even ward off a cold or the flu if taken at the onset of symptoms.
Epsom Salt Bath Recipe

**Ingredients**

- Tub of hot bath water that will just cover your body when lying down in the bath
- 1-2 cups Epsom salts (see the frequently asked questions below)

**Instructions**

1. Fill the bath with hot water.

2. Dissolve the Epsom salts in a jug of water. Add the Epsom salt to the bath whilst the water is still running. This will ensure that it mixes properly.

3. Relax for about fifteen minutes in the bath, get out and give yourself a thorough vigorous rub.

4. Avoid becoming chilled.

5. Do not use soap or bath oils as it will interfere with the action of the salts.

6. Try to rest for about two hours afterwards.

**Cautions**

- If you have high blood pressure or any heart condition you should not take an Epsom salts bath.

- If you have arthritic joints you will need to move them as much as possible after an Epsom salts bath to prevent congestion in the joints, which will only aggravate the pain.

- Elderly or frail people, or those that can hardly move their joints without excruciating pain, should start with a smaller quantity of salts (about 1/2 to 1 cup), and gradually increase that as the bath becomes better tolerated.

**Frequently Asked Questions about Epsom Salt**

**Where can I get Epsom salts?**

You'll find Epsom salt in a pharmacy or in the supermarket. Most supermarkets stock it in the baking supplies isle.
How much Epsom salts can one use in a bath?

For a healthy adult you can add as much as 2 cups Epsom salts to a bath of hot water that will just cover the body when lying down in the bath. Elderly or frail people should start with smaller quantities.

What is Epsom salt?

Epsom salt is a naturally occurring mineral also known as magnesium sulphate which has numerous health, beauty and gardening related uses.

Action Steps

1. Try your hand at making at least one of the bath salt recipes. How did it turn out? Will you make it again? How can you personalize the recipe?

2. Make a list of the people who’ll appreciate a gift of bath salts. Which fragrances will they prefer?

3. Do you have any other comments, remarks, thoughts, feelings, etc., regarding this session? What went well? What could we improve? Please share them with didi@herb.co.za