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A Few First Thoughts

Since my book *Smart Soapmaking* was published, I've been asked again and again if it covers milk soapmaking. It doesn't. Milk soapmaking is a subject unto itself. It uses different materials, of course, but besides that, it needs a different approach. Too much material to cram into one book, I felt.

Also, milk soaps weren't my specialty at that time. I'd made a few, and they were fine soaps. In fact, several people who received bars of my whipping cream soap as gifts began to nag me to go back into the soap business. But I didn't consider myself an expert.

Time changes things. As I started trying to answer questions from soapmakers about milk soap, I was drawn farther and farther into the subject. I learned about the different types of milk, what to expect from them, and how to handle each one.

I made hundreds of bars of soap from dozens of different recipes. I experimented with scent and color to see what happens when they're used with milk. Then there were non-dairy milks to consider—would any of them make good soap? On a spreadsheet, I kept a log of my experiments—what went into each batch, and what came out.

When I got unexpected results, I asked materials vendors and chemists—*what's going on here?* And they were kind enough to tell me, so a few more puzzle pieces snapped into place. Then I set up a testing program, giving and sending out soap sets identified only by number to testers who rated them for lather, feel, and general attractiveness.

In the end, I decided to write another book. Otherwise, I really would have had to go back into the soap business.

Of course, the chemistry is more complicated than that, but the bottom line is that you don't have to wait for the mixture to thicken all the way to trace before pouring it into the mold. It will get there after you pour it.

How do you know when you can stop blending? Don't worry, I'll describe the signs for you. You'll be able to tell by sight, by sound, and even by temperature. Yes, you'll be able to gauge it with a thermometer!