

Preventing Soda Ash

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In all of the instructions describing how to make soap, I am always warned about dreaded soda ash. I've read books, pamphlets, magazines, and websites that all include "disfiguring a beautiful bar of soap to remove soda ash" as a usual step of soap making. Of course, they don't use the word "disfigure;" they say to "scrape, cut, trim, or wash" the soda ash from the finished bar. To this day, my parents caution me "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Therefore, let's simply PREVENT the soda ash from forming.

To prevent the formation of soda ash, do not allow fresh air to contact with the soap surface while incubating; try to create an (almost) air-tight mold. The most cost-effective method is to use saran wrap over the open face of the mold. In this manner, the saran wrap never touches the soap surface. Saran wrap is quite effective if the amount of air trapped above the soap surface is only a small amount of air. If the top end of the mold—the end to be covered with saran wrap—is several inches above the soap surface, then too much fresh air may be trapped under the saran wrap. In this case, after the soap is poured into the mold, gently "float" a sheet of saran wrap across the top surface of the soap. Insulate and incubate the mold for 24 hours (or the usual length of time). When unwrapping the mold, carefully peel the saran wrap from the soap surface. It's really that simple!

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