

Soaping Vegan

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Pronounced, “VEE-gun,” this term refers to something that does not contain or someone who does not use animal matter, animal products, or animal byproducts. While vegetarians do not eat animal flesh (meat), vegans do not eat meat, eggs, milk, or honey, etc. Vegan people use vegan personal care products, such as vegan soap. A skin care product or soap can be defined as “vegan,” if it meets stringent guidelines.

For example, vegan soap and vegan skin care products cannot contain the following ingredients, for the following reasons:

Beeswax: A product of animal (insect/bee) labor. Instead, use candelilla wax (from a plant native to the southwestern US and northern Mexico) or carnauba wax (from palm fronds). The properties of candelilla wax more closely resemble the properties of beeswax and candelilla wax is softer than carnauba wax. Cosmetic grades of both may be purchased from Liberty Natural Oils, at www.libertynatural.com.

Cocoons: Product of animal (worm/pupa/moth) labor.

Emu Oil: Animal (avian/emu) product.

Fish Oil: Oil extracted and produced from the liver (and other viscera) of sharks, codfish, and other fish.

Honey: A product of animal (insect/bee) labor.

Lanolin: A residue extracted from lamb’s wool. Lanolin is available in a synthetic form, but sometimes contains a percentage of animal lanolin and often causes allergic or comedogenic reactions.

Lard: Animal product; fat rendered from the tissue of swine. In soap, use palm oil for similar properties; palm oil performs very similarly to lard because both are mainly oleic and palmitic fatty acids. (Palm oil performs almost identically to tallow; see “tallow,” below.)

Milk: Dairy animal product. When desiring luxurious soap, use 3%-5% jojoba oil with the base oils instead of combining milk with lye. When desiring lactic acid properties, use natural fruit acids or glycolic acids. When desiring protein to add to skin care, use micronized soy protein or other plant protein.

Mink Oil: Animal product.

Pollen: A product of animal (insect/bee) labor.

Propolis: A product of animal (insect/bee) labor.

Royal Jelly: A product of animal (insect/bee) labor.

Squalane, Marine: An animal product, usually from sharks.

Silk: Product of animal (worm/pupa/moth) labor.

Suet: Animal product; usually refers to unprocessed tallow. See “tallow,” below.

Sugar, Refined: Sugar is refined through a process that uses animal bone char as a filter to remove the natural golden blond color from sugar. Use raw sugar, unrefined sugar, or turbinado sugar.

Tallow: Animal product; usually the processed solid fat cut from alongside beef or mutton/sheep kidneys. When making soap, palm oil performs almost identically to tallow. Both have low iodine values to produce a harder bar of soap; both are made

primarily of oleic and palmitic fatty acids; both produce a stable lather; both have similar SAP values; both have similar INS point values.

Urea: The solid component of mammal urine; usually equine or bovine urine.

Soap and other personal care products can be made without depending on animal ingredients or animal-involved processes. Although some soap makers swear by their tallow, the same wonderful bars of soap can be crafted by using palm oil. My objective is not to persuade soap makers that one ingredient is “right” while the other is “wrong” when considering animal versus vegetable ingredients; no. I leave “right” and “wrong” for each individual’s personal preference, opinion, and perception. My objective is to present to soap makers the idea that creating fabulous, effective, affordable, reliable, nutritive vegan products is possible, easy, fun, rewarding, and worthwhile. Hopefully, this article will provoke an experiment (or two) with your ingredient lists. Furthermore, you may be surprisingly delighted with new results.

Please, keep in mind that ingredients from natural vegetable sources are not automatically the “best” ingredients. For example, research done by James E. Fulton, Jr. (MD, PhD, and Dermatological Research Scientist)¹ has indicated that cocoa butter and soybean oil are both severely comedogenic and even small quantities of these oils applied to skin can cause comedons and acne. Although his research does not specifically target the effects of these oils after saponification, it is always a good idea to thoroughly research and test new ingredients before investing in large quantities. Similarly, some people are so allergic to nuts and nut derivatives that they are susceptible to anaphylactic shock from any form of contact with nut derivatives, such as peanut oil, almond oil, macadamia oil, palm kernel oil, etc. So, when using vegetable source ingredients, proceed with the same openness, consideration, and caution that you would use with ANY ingredient. Always research, experiment, and test in small batches.

Further information about vegan lifestyles and product guidelines may be found at www.vegan.org, the website of Vegan Action. If you find yourself committing to a vegan line or special vegan product, contact Kristine Vandenberg, the Executive Director of Vegan Action, to have your vegan product scrutinized and certified vegan.

Additionally, any product deemed to be vegan will also meet Jewish Kosher-Parve standards, because the Parve rating is reserved only for products that do not contain or come into contact with meat or dairy goods. For more information on the Kosher-Parve rating, please refer to <http://www.okkosher.com/Content.asp?ID=120>.

¹ Ongoing acne & complexion research by Dr. James E. Fulton, Jr. is obtained from volunteer human subjects, not animal testing.

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