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Cleaning Beeswax: No home cleaning method is perfect. Normally, dirt sinks, so use that fact and collect the clean wax that rises to the top. Remember that wax will burst into flame at around 400F, so always melt wax in water, and **never put wax in a pot directly over heat.**

Method 1:

Add wax to water, bring to a boil, melt wax, turn off the heat, let cool, and scrape dirt from bottom. Repeat as needed. Works best if you pour the wax and water into a long, narrow space--a thin, flat disk is hard to scrape--you lose too much wax. Depending on how much you're doing, a milk carton (or several) works well, or several yogurt containers, or PVC pipe (I haven't tried that, but it would work--freeze it to shrink the wax to get it out).

Method 2:

Buy paint strainers from the hardware store. Pile the wax into one, rubber band it closed, and drop it into boiling water. This works well with really dirty wax, because the dirt stays behind in the bag, and the wax flows into the boiling water. Let the water cool, and collect the wax disk. Some tiny particles remain, but the wax and water can be poured into a tall, narrow container, then clean wax cut from the dirty parts which sink. Or do the paint strainer trick several times, or double or triple the paint strainers to make a finer mesh.

I don't use cheesecloth, because it leaves lint behind, and lint in lip balm is... yuck.

Soap and cosmetic labeling:

Yes, rules are a pain, but I like knowing what I put on my skin, and your customers will, too. Start the way you mean to go on: label it right!

Soap and Cosmetic Labeling by Marie Gale Comprehensive, plain English guide to labeling.

FDA web site; comprehensive, convoluted language guide to labeling (but free):

<http://www.fda.gov/Cosmetics/CosmeticLabelingLabelClaims/CosmeticLabelingManual/ucm126444.htm>

Formulas and inspiration:

No matter how wonderful a site, always test the formula! Typos happen. You shouldn't give away or sell something unless you know it's good! Once you understand how beeswax, oils, and butters work together, you know the proportions for making harder or softer balms, and making your own recipes is easy. If you're making water-based lotions, be especially careful about hygienic practices; you don't want stuff growing in your lotion! The first two sites give good information on sterilization and preservatives.

Point of Interest! <http://swiftcraftymonkey.blogspot.com/> A really good, long running blog that teaches the reader about crafting, and provides recipes.

Soap Queen: <http://www.soapqueen.com>: Soaps, lotions, balms, scrubs--she provides recipes, tutorials, and free videos that can get you started. Anne-Marie Faiola has been in business for 15 years (she owns Bramble Berry, a supplier listed below), and has a good reputation.

Miller Soaps: <http://www.millersoap.com/>

The Sage: <https://www.thesage.com/recipes/recipes.php> Soaps, lotions, balms, etc. Part of a site where supplies can be purchased

TeachSoap: <http://teachsoap.com> Recipes for soaps, bath fizzies, scrubs, and more, along with a discussion

forum

There are a lot of crafting and soaping forums on the Internet; find one with a community you enjoy. They can be a wonderful source of formulas and inspiration.

Where to buy supplies (I'm not affiliated with any of these sites):

Camden Grey: <http://www.camdengrey.com/> Essential oils, base oils, herbs, additives (pumice, calendula petals, preservatives, etc.), fragrances, etc.

Bramble Berry: <http://brambleberry.com> Essential oils, base oils, herbs, colorants, fragrances, etc.

Majestic Mountain Sage: <https://www.thesage.com/> Essential oils, base oils, herbs, colorants, fragrances, etc.

Online Labels: <http://onlinelabels.com> You can buy any quantity of labels, and you get access to their label making software.

SKS Bottle: <http://sks-bottle.com> You'll need containers. Don't buy them from bee supply houses--the mark up is huge.

Many, many more. I've had good luck with these.

Marketing:

Facebook: it's free, it's easy, lots of people are on it.

A blog: you can write about your bees, your business, your family... engage your customers. Let them know about you, so that they know where their honey and sundries come from.

Pinterest: Are you visual? Do you take a lot of pictures? Start a Pinterest page, with pictures of all your marvelous creations.

A newsletter: depending on how you sell, a newsletter can be a way to remind customers about your products, let them know you'll be at a fair or market, a way to give them discounts, etc.

Lotion Bars

These are best sellers. People love them, and they really help with cracked, dry skin. The basic formula is $\frac{1}{3}$ beeswax, $\frac{1}{3}$ "soft oil" (any oil that is liquid at room temperature), and $\frac{1}{3}$ butter, such as cocoa butter, shea butter, coffee butter, mango butter, avocado butter, etc.

I usually use olive oil as my soft oil, and a combination of shea and cocoa butter for my butters. Other oils to use are rice bran, sunflower seed, and grape seed. Instead of the more expensive cocoa and shea butters, you can use palm and coconut oils, too, and they work well. You want a bar that is hard at room temperature, but melts on contact with skin.

Melt the wax and oils together in a double boiler (remember--no wax directly over heat! It can burst into flame!). Check the temperature; at about 150F, when the beeswax is melted, add your fragrance, if desired. I recommend 1% of any essential oil, essential oil combination, or **skin safe** fragrance. Most fragrances come with information on recommended amounts; don't use too much, or it can be irritating! Don't use scents meant for candles or potpourri. They aren't meant for long term skin contact, and can be irritating. Pour the liquid wax and oils into molds--any silicone mold works well, and many can be found at the dollar store or craft stores. You want the cavity size to be about 2 ounces or less. Round shapes tend to work better, but experiment, use what you have on hand.