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WRITTEN BY DEBRA MASLOWSKI •

# 44 Ways to Color Homemade Soap Naturally

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# 44 WAYS TO Color Soap Naturally



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As a follow up to last week's article on [homemade soap](#), this article will explore a number of ways you can color your soap naturally.

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## Coloring Soap Naturally

With natural colorants you won't get the bold, vibrant hues that commercial soaps give you. (Remember most of those are artificially colored.) Instead, you get the soft to deep muted tones that nature intended. While some give you only color, some natural colorants give you more, such as exfoliation, antioxidants or other benefits. Here's a list of some of the things I've used and the colors they produce. I've included some benefits where applicable.

- **Alfalfa:** (use dried, ground alfalfa) gives medium green color ([find it here](#))
- **Alkanet root:** (infuse in oil) produces purple to blue color ([find it here](#))
- **Annatto:** (infuse in oil) produces yellow to orange color ([find it here](#))
- **Beet root powder:** results in squash yellow color; contains antioxidants ([find it here](#))
- **Black walnut hull:** (use dried, ground) adds purple to black specks; good for exfoliating ([find it here](#))
- **Calendula:** (dried, whole flowers) produces yellow streaks; has healing properties ([find it here](#))
- **Calendula:** (powdered) adds yellow color; healing benefits ([find it here](#))
- **Carrots:** (use ground, raw) produces yellowish orange color; contains beta carotene
- **Chamomile:** (use dried, powdered) produces beige to yellow color ([find it here](#))
- **Chamomile essential oil, German:** (also known as Blue Chamomile) results in light green color ([find it here](#))
- **Chlorophyll:** (use powdered) green color; has deodorizing properties ([find it here](#))
- **Cinnamon:** brown color; can be irritating to some skin types
- **Cloves:** (use ground) brown color; can be irritating to some skin types
- **Cocoa powder:** brown color
- **Chocolate:** (use a melted chocolate bar) brown color

- **Coffee:** (use finely ground) brown to black color; exfoliating, has antioxidants, and removes odors
- **Coffee:** (instant) brown to black; antioxidant and odor eliminating
- **Cornmeal:** yellow color; exfoliating
- **Blue cornmeal:** purplish blue to brown color; exfoliating ([find it here](#))
- **Elder berries:** (use in lye) light brown color; high in antioxidants even though original color has changed ([find it here](#))
- **Green tea powder:** brownish green color; antioxidants
- **Henna:** olive green to greenish brown color ([find it here](#))
- **Indigo powder:** deep blue color; *Caution: Stains easily!*
- **Kelp:** green color; minerals and iodine in minute amounts ([find it here](#))
- **Madder root:** red to purple color ([find it here](#))
- **Milk:** shades of beige to brown, maybe orange
- **Moroccan Red Clay:** brick red color; draws out impurities in the skin ([find it here](#))
- **Orange Juice:** (use in place of water in lye/water solution) beige to light orange colors; lowers pH of soap
- **Paprika:** gives an orange color
- **Poppy seeds:** black specks; exfoliating
- **Pumice:** gives gray color; good for exfoliating ([find it here](#))
- **Rose pink clay:** produces brownish pink color; draws out impurities in skin ([find it here](#))
- **Rose hips:** (use ground) produces burgundy to brown color; high in Vitamin C ([find it here](#))
- **Safflower petals:** produces yellow to orange color ([find it here](#))
- **Saffron:** results in yellow color
- **Sage:** (use dried, ground) produces green to brown colors

- **Sandalwood powder:** (depends on the type used) red will be brownish red; yellow will be yellow to beige
- **Spearmint:** (use dried, ground) green to brown color
- **Spinach:** (use dried, ground) produces light green color
- **Spirulina:** produces green to bluish green color ([find it here](#))
- **Tree lichen:** (depends on type used) from pink to green to brown
- **Tumeric:** results in yellow color
- **Wheat grass juice:** (use dried) gives green color ([find it here](#))
- **Woad powder:** produces blue shades; *Caution – can stain!*

You can see that many of the natural items used in soap making are similar to (if not the same as) those used in [coloring fabrics](#) or [naturally coloring hair](#). Don't be afraid to experiment, though there are some things that can't or shouldn't be used.

## Things that don't work as well

There are some things, even though they're natural, that I've found just don't seem to work. Fresh fruits and vegetables, for the most part, don't work at all. Lye does what's called [transmogrification](#). In short, that means it changes things. In the case of fresh foods, lye will usually rot them, creating an ugly mess and a ruined batch of soap. Sometimes even dried things don't work. Many of the mints will turn bright green, then after a few weeks will turn brown. Rose petals usually turn brown in a matter of days. Lavender will stay purple for a few days, then turn green, finally ending at brown.

So what can you do to get around that? Not much. Most soap makers don't use plant material, relying on essential oils alone. You can try soaking the dried herbs in [Vitamin E oil](#), a natural preservative of sorts. Mostly, it works for a while then you're back where you started.

What do I do? I use what I know works. Calendula for yellow, kelp for green, and coffee and chocolate for brown.

## More Fun Soap Additions

One herb I rely on a lot is oak moss. It has a natural earthy scent, stays a grayish brown and acts as a loofa in the shower. I've also used a tablespoon or so of jam in a batch if I want something special, like the Vitamin C content found in strawberries. I use strawberry jam and get the added benefit of the small amount of sugar, which serves as a mild chemical peel due to the alpha hydroxy-like ingredients.



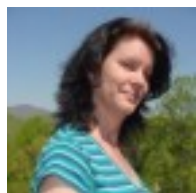
I also add some heavy whipping cream to my Strawberries and Cream soap. I've heard from others that if fresh cream is used it will go bad, but I've never had a problem. I put a tablespoon or so in after trace has been reached. Another favorite during fall is my Autumn Soap. It has canned pumpkin, heavy cream, turbinado sugar and [pumpkin pie spice](#). I can't keep that one in stock!

If you decide to deviate from the norm and experiment, do it with small batches. That way if it doesn't turn out the way you like, you can make [homemade laundry soap](#) with it.

**Always be sure to keep track of what you add and how much.** I keep all my notes on 3x5 cards and record each batch, even if I've made it a dozen times before. That way I can keep each batch consistent or change things as I like.

Have you used anything unusual to color soap? Let us know what you've done!

\*\*\*\*\*



### About Debra Maslowski

**Debra** is a master gardener, a certified herbalist, a natural living instructor and more. She taught Matt and Betsy how to make soap so they decided to bring her on as a staff writer! Debra recently started an

[organic herb farm](#) in the mountains of Western North Carolina. Connect with [Debra Maslowski](#) on G+.

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**Dawn**

FEBRUARY 21, 2014 AT 9:14 AM

Do you add the jam at trace?



**Debra Maslowski**

FEBRUARY 21, 2014 AT 11:30 AM

Yes, I do Dawn. It only takes a tablespoon or so. Too much and it gets sticky and stays that way.



**Myava**

FEBRUARY 21, 2014 AT 10:36 AM

You have to use orange juice “in place of lye” that can’t possibly be right?



**Debra Maslowski**

FEBRUARY 21, 2014 AT 11:32 AM

Good call, Myava! I can’t believe I didn’t catch that. No, it should have said to use the orange juice in place of the water for the lye solution. Sorry for any confusion this may have caused.



**Myava**

FEBRUARY 21, 2014 AT 12:32 PM

Lol. Thanks. So the orange juice is for color, you said it lowers the ph, would that make for a milder soap?



**Karly**

FEBRUARY 21, 2014 AT 4:39 PM

What did you use to color the soap in the photo? Do you have photos of the other colorants you mention? Thanks:)



**Matt Jabs**

FEBRUARY 21, 2014 AT 7:05 PM

It’s a stock photo, we don’t have any photos of our own yet.



**San**

FEBRUARY 22, 2014 AT 6:01 PM

Would natural colorants work with melt and pour soaps? Thanks!



**Laura**

FEBRUARY 22, 2014 AT 11:52 PM



I have used a variety of natural substances to colour my soap, tho not as long as your list. My favourite soap, right now anyway, is goatmilk soap base (I haven't used the make-it-totally-yourself method, but purchase several bases in 2 pound blocks.) Then I put in red moroccan clay, and tea tree oil. I LOVE this soap in the shower, for face and body. It is cleansing, kills germs, softens the skin. I wash my face twice with it, leaving some on (avoiding the eyes) while I shower. I don't have problem skin, but I am sure the tea tree oil, and the clay would be good for someone whose skin needs some help.

I have used paprika (orange), kelp (green), french green clay (green), cocoa powder (brown), lavender, sage, oats, etc (crushed, they give a speckled colouring), Himalayan pink salt (which didn't give a pink colour, but gave a snowflake look to the soap), brown sugar (golden yellow brown), honey (pale yellow), and a few others I don't remember off hand. I did write it down.

I found with the white soap bases certain colourings show up better, and with the clear bases others work better. Experiment! Make small batches of a few bars at a time. You can remelt if you want to add something else, tho you can't take anything out.



**Laura**

FEBRUARY 23, 2014 AT 12:00 AM

Yes, see my post about the ones I have used. I use the bases you can get at Hobby Lobby, Michaels, etc. I liked the brown sugar or honey or Himalayan salt with the clear bases; the clays or crushed herbs, oats or flax with the white bases. Sometimes they just looked nicer or more appealing.



**Sandy**

FEBRUARY 23, 2014 AT 12:40 AM

Thanks for the great information Laura! Very helpful :)

San

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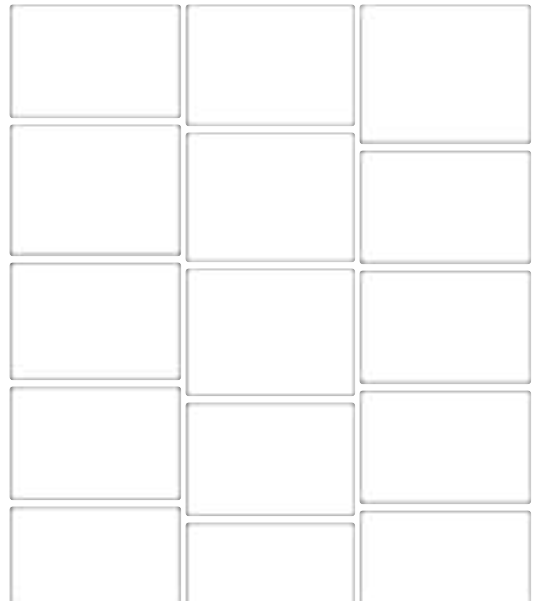
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