

Stinky Man Soaps Mixed Up In A Shop

If the names of Uncle Stinky's Man Soaps don't impress you as manly enough—Irish Scum, Mechanics Soap, Redneck I, etc.—the way he makes them will. Waterloo, Iowa, roofing contractor Andy Mills blends his soaps in his shop with a drill press and pours his creations into molds made out of pvc molding.

But don't let the unorthodox methods, duct tape packaging and crazy names fool you. Mill's soaps really do work and are based on science with the right proportion of fat to lye.

"Mills and his wife, Cathy, started making natural soaps and cleaning products in 2007 for their own use. The couple lives as "naturally" as they can. Mills grinds wheat and makes his own pasta and bread, and he cans vegetables, jelly, hot sauce and chicken broth. The couple also raises a variety of animals on their hobby farm, including Guinea Forest hogs, which may provide lard for soap in the future.

The couple started out with a line of soaps, scrubs, lotions and other skin products to sell at a local farmers market.

"This is a sideline we do for fun," Mills says. "It's more about meeting people and having a good time."

When he noticed some women were looking for soaps for men, Mills decided to have a little fun and create his own manly line. Key ingredients include some type of grit (sandblasting crystals, charcoal, grits), beer or wine for the liquid ingredient, and fat (beef tallow, lard, oils).

"I do superfatting of the soap," Mills says. "We up the fat content to 6 to 8 percent. I have really, really rough hands, and it just really moisturizes them. I use it

in the shower every day as soap and shampoo, and a bar lasts 6 to 7 weeks."

Though he adds a crazy assortment of ingredients (peppercorns and Italian spices in Italian Guy, for example), most of the soaps are basically unscented. But he does add patchouli oil for Irish Scum as well as sandalwood and Egyptian Musk to other soaps.

Mills heats his fats or oils in one pot and measures lye in another. He mixes them along with other ingredients with a beater he welded to his drill press. He pours everything into his pvc molds that he covers with boards and old Carhartt coats. A day later, he cuts the cooled soap in generous 8 oz., 3 by 4 by 1-in. bars.

He wraps each bar lengthwise with duct tape, slaps labels on the front and back, and secures everything with clear packing tape. He lets the bars cure about a month before selling them for \$5 each (available on www.Etsy.com).

The packaging is as intriguing as the soap. The label has a photo of him full-bearded with a red fox cap to personify "Uncle Stinky." The tagline completes the picture: "Remember! It's not tested on animals! It's made with animals!"

So far, he has nine kinds of soap: Irish Scum, Modern Male, Heart of a Hunter, Redneck I, Redneck II, Mechanics Soap, Frenchie, Old Duffer and Krauten Raten (German Rat). Labels on the back list ingredients and include Mills' humor.

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Andy Mills uses a drill press to blend natural "Uncle Stinky's Man Soaps" in his shop.



He pours his creations into molds made out of pvc (left). A day later, he cuts the cooled soap into bars.

Homegrown Alternative To Olive Oil

By Dee Goerge, Contributing Editor

When I stopped in at our local Deere/Stihl dealership to pick up a chainsaw for my husband, I noticed bottles of cold pressed virgin sunflower oil for sale. They seemed out of place at the dealership, so I read the label and picked up a brochure. It turned out the oil is cold pressed here in Minnesota, and that the price is competitive with imported olive oil.

Tom and Jenni Smude of Pierz, Minn., appreciate the diversity and value that sunflowers have added to their operation.

"I wanted a drought tolerant crop," Tom Smude explains. "We feed cattle so I also had use for a byproduct. We thought, why not produce something on the farm."

Research led him to sunflowers with their water-sucking 7-ft. taproots that thrive in the driest conditions. Growing them for seeds didn't seem profitable due to transportation costs. Setting up a biodiesel operation was a possibility, but Smude was more attracted to producing edible oil out of high oleic sunflowers.

"It's the highest in Vitamin E. It's a monounsaturated fat and low in saturated fat (1 gram/serving), one of the lowest of all oils and half of olive oil (2 grams/serving). There are no trans fats or chemicals, and all the nutrients are in there because it's not refined," Smude says.

He chose a high oleic sunflower variety from Seeds 2000 based in Breckenridge, Minn., and grew his first crop in 2009. He put the harvested sunflower seeds in storage as he set up his facility and ordered

a Kern Kraft oil press from Germany. In 2010, he convinced five neighbors to grow 500 acres of sunflowers, and he planted 150 acres.

With the oil press manual written in German, Smude admits there was a big learning curve—and a few expensive broken parts—before he figured out how to use it. He bottled his first oil in February 2010.

The sunflowers are stored in two 3,000-bushel bins outside his Minnesota Department of Agriculture-inspected processing building. Sunflowers are run through a screen and shaker, a destoner and a huller, which removes up to 70 percent of the hulls. Then the seeds go through a classifier, which blows the remaining hulls up and drops seeds. An auger takes the seeds through the press, and the oil flows through a filtration system into three 7,000-gal. storage vats, ready to be bottled.

"It's filtered down to one micron," Smude says. "It's very stable and has an 18-month shelf life."

It takes about 100 lbs. of sunflowers to yield 30 lbs. of oil. Smude averaged 2,200 lbs. of sunflowers on his heavy soil fields. He pelletizes the seed byproduct to provide 33 percent protein to feed to his 60 beef cows and 200 steers. Hulls are sold as bedding for free-stall dairy facilities. Sunflower stalks are tilled back into the ground.

Setup was costly, and Smude is hoping for a 10-year payback on his investment. His biggest challenge is marketing, but he's finding buyers in markets he hadn't expected.



Tom Smude grows high oleic sunflowers and presses them into bottled edible sunflower oil (left). It takes about 100 lbs. of sunflowers to yield 30 lbs. of oil.

Smude sells the oil at 45 stores, and at farmers markets, craft shows and trade fairs. The oil tastes nutty when raw or used for baking, and has a buttery flavor when heated for cooking chicken, fish, potatoes or popcorn. Orders have come in from diverse culinary markets. The light oil works well for chicken broasters and kettle corn. A commercial cooking operation in California ordered sunflower oil, as did a pet food maker.

Others have non-food uses for the oil. "We've had people use it to moisturize premature babies' skin. It's good for cracked heels or elbows, and some people are using it for skin care products in salves," Smude

explains. Other medical uses suggest it heals wounds, and relieves psoriasis and arthritis and can be used as massage oil.

Smude sells the oil through his website. Prices start at \$8.99 for 16 oz. and \$25.95 for a gallon. Special orders for up to 250-gal. totes are available.

With the addition of more growers, Smude expects to produce 60,000 gallons of sunflower oil a year.

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