

# finishing, decorating and packaging

Having lovingly laboured over your soap creations it is time to display them to their maximum effect. In other words, it is show-off time! There are lots of things you can do to finish and decorate your soaps. Here are a few ideas to get you started.



*fig 56: just a few of the ways you can package your soaps*

## **bar soaps**

### **paint designs on the surface**

You can paint designs on the surface of the soaps using cosmetic grade colourants.

### **icing**

Beautiful designs can be created using the traced soap mixture in a piping bag to pipe 'icing' on the soap. It is important to bring the traced soap to the texture of glacé icing to enable a smooth flow of the mixture through the piping bag, and to work quickly.

### **emboss designs into the soap bars after they harden**

Soaps can be made to look expensive and beautiful by embossing designs on to the surface of the soaps a day after the soap is set and hard, depending on the hardness of the bars and the amount of saturated fats used in the formula. As soon as possible after the soap sets it should be cut into bars and allowed to harden enough to accommodate the pressure of the stamp without the stamp taking some of the soap with it on release. There are a variety of tools you can use such as leather and sealing wax stamps, specialised soap stamps, rubber stamps and ceramic cookie stamps to name but a few. See *resources* page 159.

### **soap shapes**

A variety of shapes such as hearts, circles, stars and leaves, can be used to decorate the finished soap bars. These can be made by cutting out shapes from the soap a day after it sets using cookie cutters. Use some melted soap mixture to 'glue' the shapes on the top of the soap bars.

### **make soap balls**

Soap balls are easily made from freshly cut soap bars a day after the soap sets. Squeeze and knead the soap bars and roll them into balls using the palms of your hand. Dip the finished balls in botanicals like lavender seeds, rose or calendula petals for a beautiful finish.

### **make soap-on-a-rope**

Soap-on-a-rope is an old favourite and it is easy to make. Make a loop of the rope by knotting the two ends of the rope together and form fresh soap securely around the knot.

### **packaging for bar soaps**

Soaps make wonderful handmade gifts and the possibilities are endless when it comes to packaging them. You can use handmade papers,

fabrics, ribbons, strings or raffia. You could also use tins, boxes, miniature wooden crates, leaves, barks and just about anything that fits the bill. The packaging itself can be used as part of the gift. You are really only limited by your imagination. It is important for the soaps to be cured for a minimum of four weeks before wrapping.

### **cellophane bags or paper**

This is a good choice as it allows the beautiful colours and designs of the soaps to be seen although soaps made with natural colourants will fade from exposure to light. Put the soaps into a gusseted cellophane bag, fold the top over, punch a hole in the bag with an office hole-punch and tie with pretty ribbon or raffia.

### **paper and paper bags**

When using paper to wrap your soaps allow a generous amount for the quantity of soaps being wrapped. Place the soaps in the centre of the paper, bring the corners of the paper to the centre to create a parcel and tie the top with pretty ribbons. Paper and paper bags are easy and economical. Kraft bags highlight the natural quality of the soap and can look appealing when themed with beautiful ribbons. Put the soaps in the bag, fold the top over, punch a hole and tie with pretty ribbon.

### **baskets**

Purchase a selection of small, inexpensive baskets or recycle any you already have. Put wood shavings or tissue paper shavings at the bottom of the basket, carefully arrange your soaps in the basket, then, wrap the basket with cellophane paper and add a pretty bow.

### **soap dishes**

Purchase soap dishes – or you could make wooden ones. Place the soaps in the soap dish and tie them with pretty ribbon or raffia.

### **flower pots**

Small flower pots can be used as part of a theme for gardeners' soaps. Purchase ceramic pots, fill the bottom with wood or paper shavings, arrange the soaps in the pot and tie with pretty ribbon or raffia.

### **fabric**

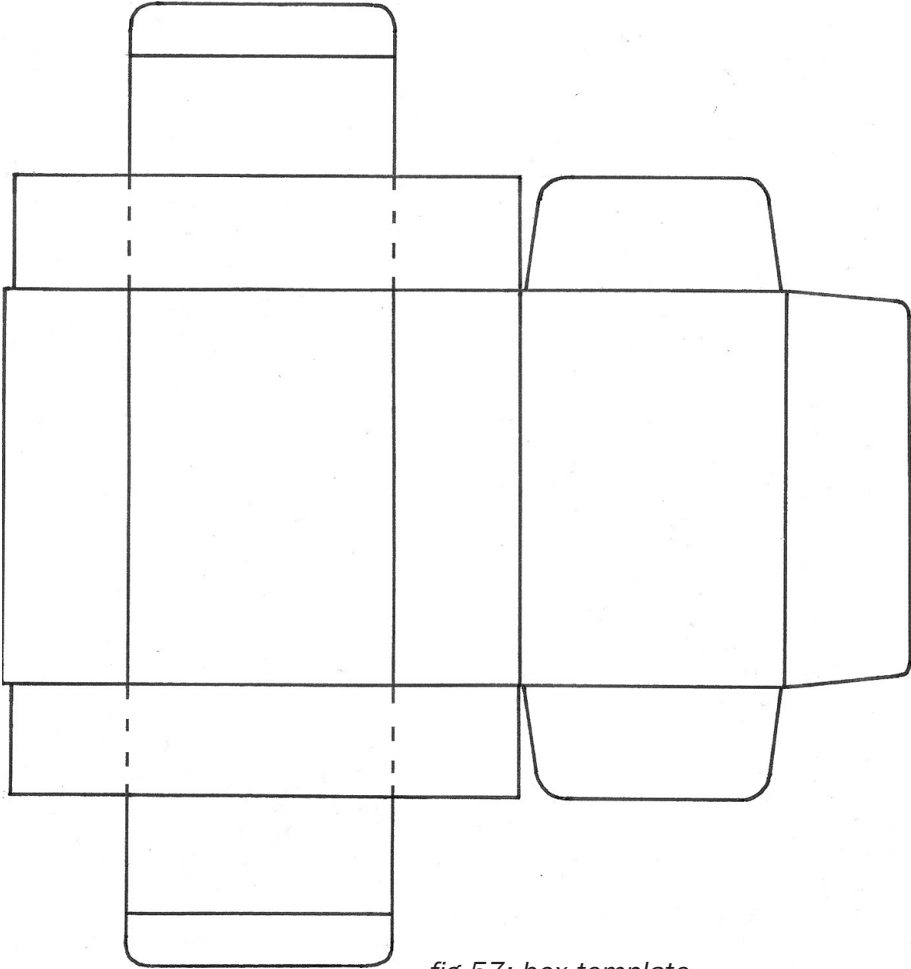
Fabric offers amazing versatility, textures and colours and when it is combined with beautiful ribbons and other embellishments can transform the simplest gift into something amazing. Cut the fabric with pinking shears for a neat finish.

### **face towel**

Purchase a good quality cotton face towel, fold neatly, place soaps on top of the cloth and tie with pretty ribbons or raffia.

## boxes

These give a professional finish with cigar band labels or tied with pretty ribbons. You could make your own boxes to fit the size of your soaps. I have included a template for a box, see fig 57. I use it for my 7.5cm x 5cm x 2.5cm sized soap. You could use this template as a guide to make your own boxes and re-size it to fit your own soaps; just cut along the dotted lines to make flaps to fold in. The box does not need to be glued together and the soap should fit snugly in the box.



*fig 57: box template*

## liquid and cream soaps

Use fancy pump bottles and jars to show off your soaps and combine them with any of the ideas suggested above.