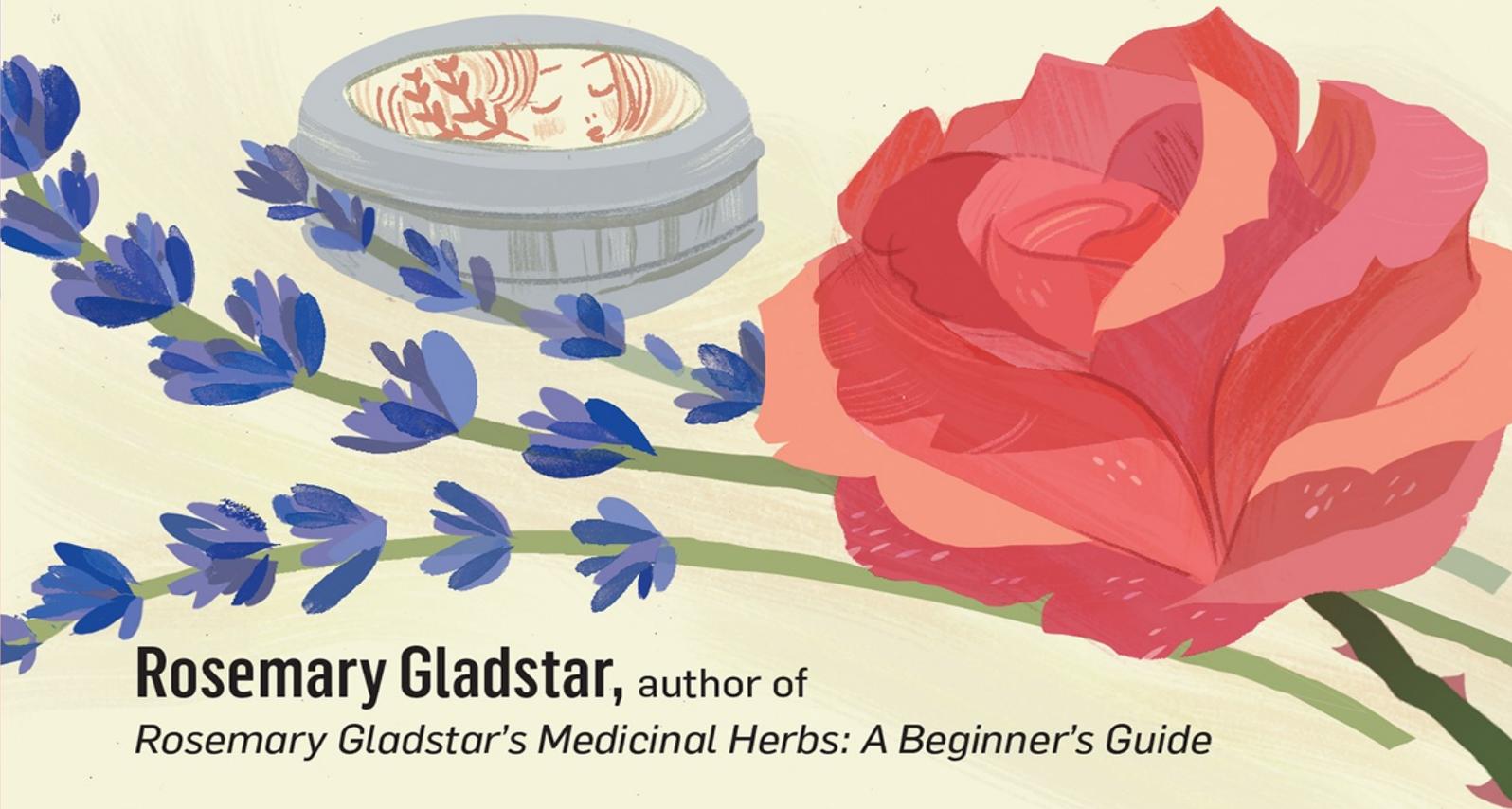


HERBS for NATURAL BEAUTY

Create Your Own Herbal Shampoos, Cleansers,
Creams, Bath Blends, and More



Rosemary Gladstar, author of
Rosemary Gladstar's Medicinal Herbs: A Beginner's Guide

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Contents

Dedication

Acknowledgments

Preface

Chapter One: Women's Health, Women's Beauty

Chapter Two: Selecting the Ingredients

Chapter Three: A Cornucopia of Natural Skin Care Recipes

Miracle Grains

Moist Miracle Grains

Herbal Facial Steam

Queen of Hungary's Water

Bay Rum Aftershave and Astringent

Homemade Rose Water, Method #1

Homemade Rose Water, Method #2

Homemade Spritzer

Rosemary's Perfect Cream

Green Goddess Facial Magic

Golden Elixir Facial Serum

Basic Body Butter

Edible Body Butter

Body Butter Bars

Herb-Infused Oil

Creamy Massage Oil

Body Powder

Chapter Four: Beauty and the Bath

Stimulating Bath Blend

Relaxing Bath Blend

Homemade Bath Salts

Basic Salt Glow

Brown Sugar Scrub

Tooth Powder

Spilanthes Mouthwash

Luscious Lip Balm

Sleep with the Angels Dream Balm

Chapter Five: Hair Care and Coloring

Make-It-Yourself Herbal Shampoo

Goldie Locks Herb Blend

Dark of the Night Herb Blend

Desert Bloom Herb Blend

Rapunzel's Locks Herb Blend

Vinegar Hair Rinse

Herbal Hair Rinse

Hot Oil Conditioning Treatment

Recommended Reading

Resources

Other Books by Rosemary Gladstar

The Storey Basics Series

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Share Your Experience!

To the original Garlic Queens, who inspired me with their moist and juicy tales, their vulnerability, and their exquisite wild beauty: Sara Katz, Diana DeLuca, Mindy Green, Brigitte Mars, Kathi Keville, Jane Bothwell, and Cascade Anderson Geller.

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Thanks also to my editors, Deborah Balmuth and Nancy Ringer, for their endless patience, guidance, and care.

Preface

I recently found an old journal of mine (circa 1978). I would like to share with you a few thoughts from all those years ago.

“In the long winter evenings when friends would gather, we’d sit around the fire sipping herb teas and, most often, talk about herbs. I remember the first night we did herbal facials and massaged gently one another’s skin, stimulating the circulation, awakening the glow, creating friendships that seemed would last a lifetime. It felt so good to each of us that we began to experiment with natural cosmetics and skin treatments on a regular basis. We felt a bit unusual at first, walking around with egg white drying on our faces, honey dripping off our chins, and henna piled high in our hair. But the results were so rewarding, so fun and nourishing. *Cosmeos*, that ethereal being of harmony and balance, became our teacher. Our skin reflected our inner state of being, the mountains and rivers around us, and the nourishing good food we ate.”

As you experiment and play with these recipes, perhaps inviting friends and family to join you, may you also experience the fullness of life in the sharing of *Cosmeos* gifts. Use these natural recipes, all gifts from nature, to gently touch the hearts of those you love. It’s a wonderful way to practice the art of healing, and your children, partner, friends, and loved ones will love you the more for it.

~~Women's Health, Women's Beauty~~

There is a story we herbalists have conjured up that I particularly enjoy. Cosmeos, mythical Greek goddess whose name meant harmony and balance, personified radiant health and inner beauty that flowed from a core of harmony and balance. Cosmeos never sought to mask what she was or how she looked; rather, she fed her inner fire with the eternal gifts of the earth. Her beauty was as unique as the flowers growing wild on the hillside and as powerful as the granite bones of the mountain. Wanting to endow the world and its inhabitants with greater beauty, Cosmeos gave to mortals the gifts of herbs, flowers, and other simple pleasures to nourish the body and soul.

The modern word *cosmetic* stems from the Greek word *kosmetikos*, meaning “skilled at adornment.” This is precisely what Cosmeos is all about. It was never her intent to cover up; she used her creations to revel in who she was. She is one of my favorite goddesses. I envision her as a wild woodland creature running freely through the forests with her sister herbalist Artemis, whose name also has been immortalized in the name of a plant.

Beauty at Any Cost?

The ethereal concept of beauty and cosmetics has created a rather bizarre fashion industry, one in which beauty means self-manipulation, starving oneself in the name of fashion, and actual surgical restructuring of the body to please somebody else's sense of style. There is little contentment in the profound sense of beauty anymore; rather, it has become a restlessness to achieve something unattainable.

We've replaced simple, old-fashioned truths such as “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” with the new adage “beauty at any cost.” Whether that cost is the depletion of rare and precious resources, the inhumane use of animals to test cosmetics on, or the deprivations and depredations of the body to sculpt it in the manner deemed “beautiful” by the beauty industry, it hasn't seemed to matter. But beauty cannot exist long alone. It needs balance and harmony, Cosmeos's gifts, to truly emerge and endure.

Natural Beauty and Good Health

When I was a young child growing up on my parents' farm, I would often walk into the fields and lie in the tall grasses. I would take off my clothes and lay my body on the bare ground, and feel the earth beneath me. It nourished me and filled me with a deep sense of beauty. I would look up at the blue California sky and ask that I be a reflection of all that I saw in nature, so that when people looked at me they would see the fields and the wildflowers and the depth of the sky in my eyes. It is this early sense of beauty that has permeated me all these years.

The Healing Power of Beauty

Though much of my work as a community herbalist has been concentrated on making medicinal products and helping people manage and heal from their illnesses, I always find a way to weave "the beauty way" into my healing work. I want Cosmeos's hand in the pot!

When I mixed and blended my early medicinal tea blends, they always contained a few herbs "just for beauty," such as roses, calendula, and blue malva flowers. My tinctures and medicines, likewise, had a sweet taste, a touch of the beauty way. I'm a firm believer in the fact that beauty aids in healing, and is perhaps one of the greatest healers. It seduces and induces people back to wellness, back to that place of balance and harmony that is the soul of life. Without beauty, why would anyone want to get well? The flowers, the fresh air, the running waters, and the loving hearts of those who care for us feed and nourish the soul and invite it back to wholeness.

Over the years I've delighted in making wonderful "all natural" cosmetics and skin care products. In the kitchen, whatever I was cooking up often went on my face! It wasn't unusual to find me with egg or avocado or oatmeal on my face, my long hair rubbed with olive oil and rosemary and securely tucked up in a towel. I was a walking salad! I'd spend my evenings playing with and perfecting recipes for herbal masks, baths, and creams and then share these recipes with others. We'd stage "facial parties," gathering friends together to treat one another to herbal hand and foot baths, facial steams, and masks. After the "works," we'd finish with a gentle massage using my favorite face cream.

I'd often take the show on the road, packing up baskets of materials to take to workshops. I'd treat everyone there — and you can bet these classes were well attended. When I first moved to New England and was invited by Rick Scalzo to speak at the annual Gaia Herbal Symposium, I offered to do a cosmetics workshop. Rick was hesitant; he wasn't sure anyone would be interested at a conference that featured herbal medicines. But I felt that if even just a few people showed up, it would be fun. So the cosmetics workshop was included on the schedule, and Rick, still thinking

would be of limited interest, assigned me a small room in which to do my presentation. When it came time for the workshop, it was apparent that we would have to do some quick maneuvering; there were more than 150 people in attendance.

Making Your Own Natural Beauty Products

The recipes in this book are among my favorites. Most are my personal creations; a few have been enhanced by the creative suggestions of others. When I first began making my own natural skin care products, there were no classes being taught and very few books on the subject. Many of these recipes came to me in those moments of inspiration when I'd been out among the flowers. Others I labored long over to get the exact proportions and effects. And some of them were garnered from students, who often took a simple suggestion I made and added the oh-so-perfect ingredient to create a product of excellence.

Gathering the Ingredients

As with most undertakings, it is wise to assemble all the ingredients and utensils you need ahead of time. There have been times when I haven't followed this little bit of advice and in the middle of a project found I was out of a necessary ingredient. This can be either a big or little inconvenience, but it's always annoying.

As with any recipe, you can substitute ingredients and experiment with the formulas to create a more personalized product, but be sure you understand what the particular ingredient in the formula is "doing" so that you can substitute one product with another that has similar properties; otherwise the product may not turn out as you hoped. For instance, in a cream formula, if you substitute liquid oil for a solid oil, the cream may turn out runnier than you'd like. So ask yourself: What is the purpose or role of this ingredient? Is it an emulsifier? Does it help thicken the product? Does it add moisture?

My recipes are designed with lots of room for creativity. I am one of those people who gets frustrated with exact proportions. Coffee cups are most often my measuring cups, and spoons from my silverware drawer serve as measuring spoons. When adding essential oils I lose count somewhere after the fourth or fifth drop and proceed forward by scent and common sense alone. Nothing is exact in my world, and, needless to say, things don't always turn out exactly the same. But I've learned to follow my

intuition, and generally it leads me on a very creative process. Using my common sense rather than exact measurements has often produced exquisite results.

Not to worry, however, if you prefer to follow exact directions! I have carefully formulated each of these recipes so that you can follow them step-by-step with assurance. I highly recommend that you make the recipes as directed the first couple of times so you get a feel for how they are supposed to turn out. Then begin experimenting! Try adding your own combinations of essential oils, substituting one type of oil for another, or using different herbs in the formula. Be sure to write down each of the ingredients so that you can re-create the formula at another time. Don't make the common mistake of thinking that you'll remember. I still lament the many times I've made a perfect product but couldn't recall the oils I'd added or the proportions I'd used.

Use Cruelty-Free Products

Though I'm a stickler for using cosmetic products that are as pure and natural as possible, of even greater concern to me is the barbaric use of animals for testing cosmetics in the name of beauty. Though we are assured that this testing is necessary and humane, visits to animal testing labs will convince you otherwise. There is nothing humane about placing shampoo in a rabbit's eyes — the gentler of the procedures practiced — or testing for allergic reactions on its shaved skin, often creating huge, ulcerated sores on these gentle creatures.

While many cosmetics companies have changed their animal testing policies in recent years, both because of pressure from caring citizens and animal rights advocates and because science has developed more sophisticated testing methods that do not require animal subjects, there are many still that refuse to end the abuse. When purchasing commercial beauty products, check the labels for the words "Against Animal Testing" or the "Leaping Bunny" symbol; this emblem indicates that no animals were harmed during the making of the product.

Helpful Kitchen Tools

No special tools are needed for creating any of the wonderful cosmetics described in this book. A kitchen with all its normal gadgets will supply you with most of what you need, and the ingredients called for are mostly found in supermarkets or natural food

stores. If not available locally, these items are easily ordered from the suppliers listed in the resources at the end of this book.

Although you don't need many specific items in order to create your natural beauty products, these everyday tools will be helpful:

- Blender
- Fine-mesh strainers
- Hand grater — reserved for grating beeswax, because it's almost impossible to clean the wax off
- An assortment of glass bottles and jars
- Stainless steel or glass mixing bowls
- Measuring cups
- Labels of various sizes

Selecting the Ingredients

Following is a list of some of the most common natural cosmetic ingredients, with some discussion of their properties and “actions,” or what they do in the formula. Understanding the basic action of each ingredient helps you determine when to use it and gives you greater ability to personalize and formulate your own recipes. Most of these ingredients are widely available. They vary greatly in prices, so shop wisely!

Common Natural Ingredients

One of the best reasons for making your own skin care products is that you can control which ingredients go into them. Do not be fooled by the many “natural” ingredients used in commercial skin care products. Many of these ingredients are added only so that the consumer is impressed. Notice how far down on the list of ingredients the natural ones are. The farther down it is, the smaller the amount of the ingredient is in the product. Also note how many ingredients are preservatives, coloring agents, synthetic scents, and other chemicals.

While it is true that not all “chemical-sounding” ingredients are synthetics or “unnatural” additives, most natural ingredients are called by names we recognize. My advice is to know what you are putting on your skin in the same way you are responsible, or try to be responsible, for what you eat. The skin is, after all, our large organ of assimilation and elimination. If you don’t recognize an ingredient, look it up. Don’t use it on your body until you know it is really natural, safe, and good for you - and the environment.

Truly natural skin and hair care products take advantage of the incredible diversity of nature in their formulations. Though ingredients will vary, I’ve listed here those that are ubiquitous, valued across the board for their usefulness, effectiveness, versatility, and safety.

Aloe vera

What it is: This plant originated in Africa but is now found growing in most tropical and subtropical regions of the world. It is also an excellent houseplant to keep around.

What it does: The juice from the large, succulent leaves is an excellent first-aid treatment for burns, rough or irritated skin, and wounds. (Because of its ability to seal over a wound, it should never be used on staph infections.) Aloe juice is a wonderful moisturizer that also firms and tones the skin. Though fresh aloe juice is wonderful to use in products that you'll use up in a few days, it doesn't have preservative properties. For those products that need a longer shelf life, such as creams and lotions, use aloe vera gel that has at least 1 percent citric acid added as a natural preservative; you can find commercial preparations of this type of aloe gel in most natural foods stores and pharmacies.

Beeswax

What it is: This rich honey-scented wax is made by bees to build their honeycombs.

What it does: Beeswax is one of the most popular and widely used thickeners in skin care products, found in everything from lip balms to body butters, creams, salves, and lotions. But along with thickening products, it also adds its own rich, soothing, healing, and antibiotic properties — bee energy!

Most recipes call for grating beeswax, so that it melts more quickly; you can also buy beeswax granules. Be sure that the beeswax you buy is pure and unrefined. It should be golden to green in color, not white. White beeswax has been refined.

What it is: Borax, or sodium borate, is a natural mineral mined from only a few places in the world. Imagine the surprise when women discover that those lovely bath salts they love contain the same ingredient as the popular laundry soap 20 Mule Team Borax. In fact, you can use grocery-store borax in your formulas.

What it does: This mineral softens water, is a cleansing agent, and has the unique ability to suspend soap particles in water so they don't adhere to the skin or clog the pores. The skin is left cleaner and softer because of it.

Vegetable Waxes and Butters

Though beeswax is my preferred wax for a thickening agent, there are other natural waxes available. You could use candelilla wax, derived from the leaves of *Euphorbia antisyphilitica*, a tree native to the southwestern United States and Mexico, or carnauba wax, derived from the Brazilian palm *Copernicia prunifera*. Both of these waxes are good, non-animal-derived alternatives to beeswax.

You could also use any of the solid or semi-solid butters, such as **Cocoa butter** or **Coconut oil**. Illipe butter (pressed from the nuts of *Shorea stenoptera*, native to Borneo) or kokum butter (pressed from the seeds of *Garcinia indica*, native to India) may also do.

These vegetable waxes and butters differ in texture from beeswax, so if you substitute them for beeswax, you'll have to experiment to determine the right amount to use.

Clay

What it is: Clay is another one of those wonderful substances mined from the earth. It is the essence of a mountain ground down through the ages into a smooth powder, and blessed by thousands of sunrises, sunsets, wind, and rainstorms. When we use clay in our formulas, we are unleashing the energy of thousands of years.

What it does: Clay has been used for thousands of years as both a medicine and a cosmetic. It is found in products as varied as kitty litter (as a deodorizing and absorbent agent), poultices and facials (to help draw out impurities), and bath salts (to cleanse and remove impurities). There are many types. All are drawing, drying, and mineral rich. The concentrations of the various minerals are what determine the color and different effects of the clay. But when one clay isn't available, another clay will do.

Bentonite

This softer, more mucilaginous clay has mild properties good for most skin problems. Bentonite is also taken internally as a mineral supplement. It aids in binding toxic minerals, making them insoluble, so they can be more easily eliminated.

Green Clay

High concentrations of minerals (chromium, nickel, and copper), plant material, and volcanic matter give this clay its green coloring. It is my favorite clay for medicinal purposes, but I also find it excellent for most cosmetic purposes. It is fairly mild and can be used successfully for most skin types. However, its green color isn't appropriate for some body powders.

White Clay

This is the most versatile of all clays and the one used most often in cosmetics. Because it's milder and less drying than other clays, white clay is used in skin masks, body packs, powders, and bath salts. The white clay generally used in cosmetics is called *kaolin* and is available in natural food stores but can be purchased at a much lower price in ceramic supply stores. White clay is comprised primarily of aluminum oxide and small amounts of zinc oxide.

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