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30

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THERE'S nothing like spring to make me start feeling crafty (in the glittering, sticking, creating sense, rather than the wily sense). My son is long past the stage of being interested in gluing fluffy chicks on hats - if he ever was - but I still have a need to make or do something new when the daffodils appear. Determined, I researched workshops in Surrey.

Surrey mums are famous (almost infamous) for seeing to it that their children have a diversity of hobbies but perhaps we neglect pursuing our own needs and interests; a shame when leading by example is a tried and tested formula and there's so much on offer in Surrey to peak interest.

My friend Louise and I excitedly signed up for a soap-making class at English Handmade Soap. It's a cottage industry, literally run from a kitchen table in central Guildford by a local Surrey business woman and mum.

Faith McCarthy is a designer and maker of high-quality glycerine soaps, which are decorative, practical and quirky. She draws on 1950's patterns and colour palettes for inspiration



A sparkling spring clean

Continuing our series on workshops in Surrey, this month we sent bestselling author Adele Parks to try her hand at making soap

The science bit

She went on to the science bit, explaining that glycerine is a colourless, odourless, organic compound, a neutral, sweet tasting substance (I'll take her word for that), which has a high boiling point and freezes to form a thick gummy paste. It has a soothing, softening effect on skin. All-in-all, ideal for soap making.

During the workshop we were introduced to the basics of melt and pour soap making and given an opportunity to experiment with colour mixing and fragrance.

We each created a large block soap with embeds, that sliced into six individual bars. I limited my colour palette to neutral tones but some created bars that looked like Liquorice Allsorts and they weren't shy with the glitter - great fun! Faith also introduced us to the malleable qualities of the soap base and we experimented with cutting out small guest soaps. We packaged everything up prettily and left with some rather lovely products that will be a pleasure to gift (or keep). All materials are provided, as are tea, coffee and refreshments. I'm hooked and going to go again. Next time I'll push my inner colour! ♦

and is generous enough to run workshops so that we can all unleash our inner creativity.

The workshops are limited to six, so everyone gets plenty of attention. Quickly becoming friends, we chatted and laughed, sharing our motivation for attending. One lady explained she was, 'looking for a hobby she couldn't eat'; fudge making had been disastrous for her waistline! The feel of the day was professional but unhurried, a treat for most women who are forever clock-watching and trying to pack in too much.

Faith started by talking about her philosophy. She prefers soap over shower gel because she can't bear the thought of gallons of gel gugging down plugholes. She uses high quality ingredients, sourced from a Yorkshire supplier.

"My friend Louise and I excitedly signed up for a soap-making class at English Handmade Soap"

Top and left: The finished product and Adele at work

For more on Faith's soaps or details of how to sign up to a class, visit englishhandmadesoap.com

