

TOX-FREE TUTORIAL

Sandee Ferman and Callie Milford, the mother-daughter duo behind vegan skin care line **No Tox Life**, give us the lowdown on cultivating an all-natural lifestyle.

WORDS BY KRISTIN SCHARKEY



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No Tox Life regularly hosts workshops like kombucha- and toothpaste-making. Classes are held in the brand's Soap Factory, next to their retail store at 3351 Fletcher Dr. in Los Angeles. (notoxlife.com)



ANYTHING ELSE?

Sandee: SLS, also known as sodium laureth sulfate. It's what they call a surfactant. A surfactant [is] supposed to increase bubbles and decrease the barrier to washing away dirt. But the odd, unnatural thing is that's what soap does all by itself. You don't need to add another chemical to increase soapiness of soap.

Callie: It's petroleum-derived, so it's really cheap to make. It makes giant bubbles. Companies that use SLS, they're creating a product really inexpensively so they have a lot more money for marketing.

Those are the types of companies who are saying, "Foamy toothpaste is good for you!" Well, guess what makes it foamy? SLS.

Sandee: Big bubbles does not necessarily equal cleanliness.

WHAT KINDS OF INGREDIENTS DO YOU USE IN NO TOX LIFE SOAPS?

Sandee: We like to use olive oil as the main ingredient in our soaps because it's been used for thousands of years, and it's moisturizing and cleansing. It's more of a creamy lather, more like a lotion lather. Then, in order to make it more like what people are expecting with a little bit more of a bubbly lather, we also add coconut oil. Coconut oil can help do more cleansing. It's good for removing excess oil from the skin when you turn it into soap. ... With the chemical reaction of a traditional soap recipe, the oil is no longer an oil. It's actually considered ... a salt.

Callie: People can get confused because they're like, "This has coconut oil and I know coconut oil [is] going to clog my pores." But, ... it's not coconut oil anymore. It's a soap now, it's different.

In 2013, Sandee Ferman stood in a grocery store holding a bottle of natural shampoo, and – for the first time – decided to read the label. The watercolor painter had just started making soaps for gifts, and was fascinated by the art and science.

"I was fairly horrified with the ingredients," Ferman recalls.

"They were mixes of chemicals, and it looked like I was actually just using detergent on my hair. ... That's when I was like, 'Man, people need an alternative to this stuff.'"

Fast forward four years, and her idea has turned into an expanding (but still made in small batches) skin care line. From conditioning hair rinse to beard oil, body bars, clay masks, deodorant and more, Ferman and her daughter, Callie Milford, are developing products free of ingredients "you can't pronounce." Using gentle oils such as olive and coconut, and natural clays and minerals, their brand, No Tox Life, has earned appreciation from the likes of celebrities such as Tracee Ellis Ross. We chatted with the co-founders to learn about a more natural beauty routine.

SANDEE, YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF AS "ON A MISSION." WHAT MOTIVATES YOU?

Sandee: A lot of people can try making deodorant at home, no problem. They might not come up with our recipe but they might come up with something that works for them. But who wants to go through all the thousands of hours of development work we've done? It has been a lot of development work. To get it right takes time and that's what we do for people: We buy them time, and we give them an alternative to the chemicals that are found in most products in most grocery stores.

SO, I'M SHOPPING FOR SOAP. WHAT DO I LOOK FOR?

Callie: In case you don't know what detergent is versus soap, a detergent is a chemically created substance to strip away oil. So, it's different from a soap which is a reaction of alkaline – which is lye with natural fats and oils. ... Soap doesn't strip away all the oil but detergent does. Examples of detergent are laundry detergent

or car wash detergent or dish detergent. Unfortunately, in today's society, the big companies have figured out that it's really cheap to make detergent because you can make it with petroleum products. So now detergent is in personal care products including stuff you put on your face and your sensitive areas.

WHAT INGREDIENTS DO I WANT TO AVOID?

Callie: There's a couple chemicals you can add to soap to extend the shelf life and to also prevent soap scum in the shower, and one of them is tetrasodium EDTA. ... It's a neurotoxin. Even though it's in tiny amounts, how many times are you going to apply that to your body?

Sandee: The other thing that tetrasodium EDTA does is it opens up the barrier. Your skin has a natural barrier to keep out toxins from the outside getting in and tetrasodium EDTA breaks down that barrier so that dirt and toxins and chemicals from outside can actually get inside the skin.

LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUR DEODORANT. WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH ANTIPERSPIRANTS AND ALUMINUM?

Callie: So, that is the question that almost every single person who comes to our farmers market booth has. ... They have tried a natural deodorant and it did not work for them. They think they just smell really bad and they have to use aluminum because that's the only thing that's going to work. The thing about aluminum is it actually swells the pores closed. Aluminum is considered what's called a styptic. A styptic is a substance you can [use] to stop blood flow. When men cut themselves shaving and they put that powder on the face, that's aluminum.

In an antiperspirant, you're applying aluminum powder in stick form to the armpit. What's happening underneath the skin is the glands are still sweating. ... The normal toxins your body tries to let out in that part of the body, they can't come out and they get reabsorbed back into the body. You can also get an accumulation right there in the tissues of built-up toxins.

What happens is when people stop using aluminums, their pores will open up. The armpit's like, "Oh my god! I can let it out!" and all of the toxins that have built up over the whole time period that you used aluminum, all come out. Almost every single person will smell really bad at the beginning. ... The thing is, they're detoxing.

WHAT DO YOU RECOMMEND FOR THAT TRANSITION?

Sandee: Reapplying is one thing but that's not necessarily the problem. They still have toxins coming out. What I suggest to people is once or twice a day, go in the bathroom and wipe it dry with a paper towel, then reapply. It's always better to reapply to a dry armpit. The second thing I recommend at nighttime is [to] use a warm washcloth to wash their armpit to help massage the stuff out of the area. They can also, a couple of times a week, do a little clay mask detox down on the armpit which will help pull stuff out from deeper in the pores; ... for five to 10 minutes, just enough to pull the crud out. Also, it depends a bit on their diet. If a person is eating a lot of red meat, and if they're drinking a lot of alcohol, and if they're drinking a lot of coffee, ... they're putting more toxic substances into their body.

Callie: They'll naturally smell a little sweeter if they're eating a lot more vegetables and staying away from overly cooked, processed, caffeinated type things, fried foods. What comes in goes out, so if you're eating stuff that's overly fried and cooked, that's what it's going to smell like coming out.

WHAT ARE THE INGREDIENTS IN YOUR DEODORANT?

Callie: We use enzymes ... similar to brewer's yeast. It basically



SHOP IN PERSON

No Tox Life products are available locally at **Moon Wind Trading Co.**

1141B Old Woman Springs Rd., Landers

moonwindtradingco.com



eats the bacteria that causes odor in the armpit area. So, instead of trying to block the sweat or cover it up with a bunch of fragrance or anything else, it actually gets rid of the cause of the odor. It's extremely effective. The base is aloe vera and then we add tapioca starch, which absorbs a little bit of moisture and helps a little bit with the wetness, although it's not going to be stopping the sweat.

ONE OPINION IS THAT ANTIPERSPIRANTS CAUSE CANCER. WHAT IS YOUR PERSPECTIVE?

Callie: Nobody has proven that antiperspirants cause cancer. But nobody has proven it. ... Aluminum is toxic to humans. If you ate aluminum, you'd get dizzy, you'd get sick. You'd start vomiting, you might have to go to the hospital. So why would you apply that to your armpits every day? Also, there is the overall toxic load that you're putting on yourself in your whole daily life. It's better to just take away the things that you can, the things you can control, try to take that away so you're not daily applying something that's toxic. 🌱