

How to Make Beeswax Candles

Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of USA



Needed Items:

- At least 10 lbs of natural beeswax (If you use beeswax candle in your parish, don't throw away the stubs. Collect them and reuse them! This is a wonderful way to also be good caretakers of what God had given to us.)
- Candle wicks (should be on a spool so you can trim to the size desired)
- A deep crock pot or stock pot that you will not mind filling with hot beeswax and/or a tall olive oil can (above 15 inches). Your pot or can need to be at least two inches taller than your wicks.
- A long wooden pole, broom, or dowel rod at least 1.5 inches in diameter and at least four feet long
- Two chairs
- Small weights such as a nut, nail, curtain weight

Step One: The Wax

- If you are using old candles, begin by boiling a pot of water. Remove the wicks from the stubs. Once the water is boiling, add the candle stubs. This will separate any sand from the wax. If your candles were not in sand then you may skip this step. Remove the wax when it is floating on top. Dry thoroughly.
- Beeswax can be expensive. Look online in your local community to discover if there is a local farm that sells beeswax. This is a much more affordable option.

Step Two: Your Work Area

- If you are using a crock pot, choose an area near an outlet. Cover your work surface with newspaper to catch drips. If possible, you should set up your work area outside to avoid dripping the wax on your floors.
- If you are using a stock pot on the stove, place aluminum foil around the burners to catch drips.
- Set up your drying rack. See the illustration with the two chairs and brooms.



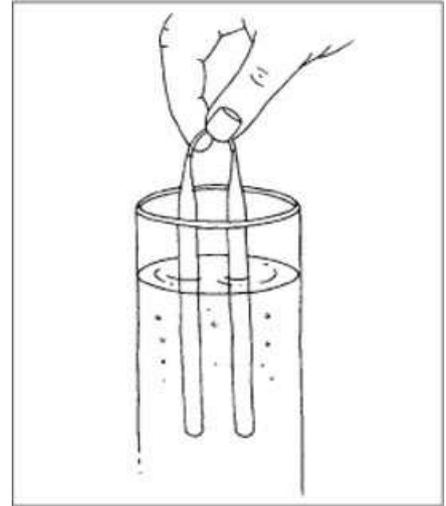
Image from
Shepherd's Hill
website



Image from
Apartment
Therapy

Step 3: The Wicks

- You will want to trim your wicks to a size that will dip easily into your pot. Anywhere from 6 to 12 inch candles. You will have to double the length of the size and add another few inches (3 to 4) to hold while dipping. You will make two candles at a time. Tie on your weight.



Step 4: Getting Started

- If you are placing your wax directly into the pot, break it up into small pieces while inserting.
- If you are using the "double boiler" method, fill your can with the broken pieces of wax. Place the can in the larger pot/crock pot. Fill the outer pot with water. Turn on the heat. The wax should melt slowly and should take at least 30 minutes.
- Consistent heat is important. The wax should not be allowed to cool or get too hot. 160 degrees to 175 degrees is ideal.
- Once the wax is melted you can begin!

Step 5: Dipping*

- Hold a length of wick in the center (looped over your fingers) and dip both ends into the melted wax, keeping your fingers 2" above the melted wax. Leave the wick in the wax for about three seconds. Remove and allow to cool on a holding peg for about three minutes. Don't touch the candles while they cool down. If the first layer of wax is smooth when cool, continue the dipping and cooling process until you have produced candles of the thickness you desire.
- Before re-dipping, make sure the previous layer is cool. Dip the candles in the melted wax quickly, to the same level as the first dip. Pull them out slowly and steadily. You should begin to see a waxy buildup on the wick by the third dip. If the wax isn't adhering properly to the wick, let the wax cool a bit (about 50 Fahrenheit) and re-dip the wick until you see the wax beginning to grow.
- Your dipping can will initially contain much more wax than you will actually use for making the many layers of the final candles. However, because you are taking wax out of the dipping can, you will need to replenish your supply of wax frequently. The best way to do this handily is to keep a second double boiler setup going with a supply of extra wax for refilling the dipping can. In order to be consistent, remember to first determine the exact wax formula, that you want to use for all of the candles you are dipping in one session.
- The dipping and drying process can take fifteen to thirty dips, depending on the thickness you want the candles to be. This requires a certain amount of patience, but it is quite fascinating to watch the candles grow into their lovely tapered shapes as you work with them. As your candles begin to accumulate layers of wax, the cooling time in between dips will increase. Make sure the candle is cooled each time before you re-dip.

- After several dips, the candles will have thickened enough to serve as their own weights. At this point, before doing your final dips, take the sharp knife and slice off the bottoms of the candles where the weights are embedded in the wax. When cutting off the bottoms, make sure the candles are cool and hard enough not to be imprinted with your fingertips. Do this as cleanly as possible so that the candle base will be finished nicely. If you don't get it quite right, you can always repeat the process later. Save the candle ends with the weights in them to remelt and use later on. You can achieve a shiny surface on your dipped candles by submerging them into cool water after the final dip. After doing this, hang them up to dry for one hour or more. Store newly made candles laid flat and away from direct sunlight.

Image and references from *Take the Plunge* by M. J. Abadie



Step 6: Finishing Up

- Have everyone work together to clean up.
- The candles can be rolled in plain paper for storing or to take home.
- Snip the wicks to separate the candles when ready for use.
- Your parish priest may want to bless the candles prior to use in the church

Notes:

- Safety first!!! The wax and water in this project are extremely hot. Be sure to have proper adult supervision and instruction when conducting this exercise.
- For younger children you could purchase beeswax sheets from a craft store and have them roll candles.