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# FEATURES

BY DIONNE MEEHAN

A Donegal soap maker has been dubbed one of the most influential TikTok creators globally for the year 2022.

Mirenda Rosenberg aka 'Homestead Donegal' made her debut on TikTok in 2021 when she began posting videos of her life.

With over half a million followers and over 20 million likes, Mirenda can't even visit her local McDonalds without getting recognised at the drive-through.

Moving to Ireland in 2005, Mirenda started urban homesteading. Recently divorced with two children still in school, she learned how to grow her own food which brought her expenses down significantly.

But her homesteading tips weren't the only thing unique about Mirenda's videos. Her method of making soap is what makes watching her content truly addictive.

Now living in Termon, Mirenda embarked on her soap making journey when she couldn't afford the products to help her son's severe eczema.

By reading books and watching YouTube videos, she came across the most sustainable method of soap making there was.

Speaking to the Donegal News, Mirenda said tallow was the answer.

"I started going to my local butcher and asking them if I could have their beef fat off cuts. They said yes because otherwise they just throw them away. I collected them, rendered down my tallow and have been using this method ever since," she said.

Tallow is an extremely versatile type of fat that is made from rendered animal fat. Tallow is made by taking beef or mutton fat and cooking it down on very low heat until it melts into a liquid.

However, before using it for soap making the tallow needs to be rendered a few times before it is clean enough to use. Rendering is when you add water and salt to the tallow to remove impurities.

Although some may think soap making is complicated, Mirenda says it is easier than it looks.

"To make soap all you need is an oil base and a lye solution. A lye solution is lye mixed with a water based liquid like water, goats milk or even beer. If you combine them at just the right ratio you trigger a chemical reaction called saponification, which turns your mixture into soap. All you need to do is make sure you have measured everything properly," she said.

Mirenda is now the founder of a



Mirenda Rosenberg, TikTok creator and founder of 'Simply Butters'.

## Soap maker is one of the most influential creators on TikTok

### Termon based Mirenda Rosenberg uses animal fat to create soaps



Soap made from tallow, the rendered form of beef fat.

successful business called 'Simply Butters', where she sells her handmade soaps that are made primarily using skin nurturing tallow.

Apart from her soap making life, Mirenda is also a musician and a workshop teacher for vulnerable at-risk youths. Stuck in a pandemic with all other work gone, Mirenda turned to TikTok where she began posting videos about her hobbies.

Very quickly she discovered people were very interested in rendering tallow, homesteading, learning how to compost and learning how to cook.

"I think what makes my videos different is that I don't use any special

equipment to do what I do. You don't need any special ingredients to cook what I cook, I just use simple skills," she said.

With a substantial online following, Mirenda began living her best influencer life by travelling to Dublin last October to give a talk for Black History Month.

However, this was only the beginning of her special appearances.

When she was invited back in December for an event alongside Ireland's biggest TikTok faces, the penny dropped and Mirenda realised she was now being classed as one of the larger content creators.

When TikTok named her one of the most influential creators globally of 2022, Mirenda said she broke down in tears.

"I didn't know what to do with myself. I just record my daily activities. I'm being praised for just living my life," she said.

In the future, Mirenda hopes to begin making longer form videos for YouTube. She also hopes to begin teaching online soap making and cookery classes.

If there's one thing Mirenda is good

at, that is giving grace where it's due.

"I could not do what I'm doing without the support of my community. From my local coffee shop giving me coffee grinds for composting to my local butchers, McElwaine's Friendly Butchers in Kilmacrennan. If it wasn't for their tallow, what would I do?"

"One of my neighbours just turned up recently with a whole tractor load of manure and asked me if I wanted it for my homestead. I didn't do all of this alone, my com-

munity holds me up, especially with me being a little blow in," she said.

If you are interested in watching Mirenda's videos you can do so via TikTok @mirendarosenberg.

