

My favourite things

Anouk Skurek, who designs children's blankets for The Stripy Company in Cheltenham, loves Cornwall and snuggling up with a good book



What's your favourite book?

Pride and Prejudice – I love the language and the amazingly happy ending.

Where's the best place in the world for you?

Cornwall – I love the art scene and the coastline, the light and the slate.

The CD you always reach for?

Snow Patrol at the gym or Scouting for girls when out running.

A must-see television programme?

I cry with laughter at You've Been Framed.

Who is your best friend – and why?

I have some really great friends, but best of all is my friend Helen, who lives in London. When we get together we laugh and laugh and just have fun.

What's your most-treasured possession?

A Jessica Copper painting that we bought on our first trip to Cornwall.

Do you have a hobby?

The Stripy Company – however it is more of a job now than a hobby.

What's your favourite food?

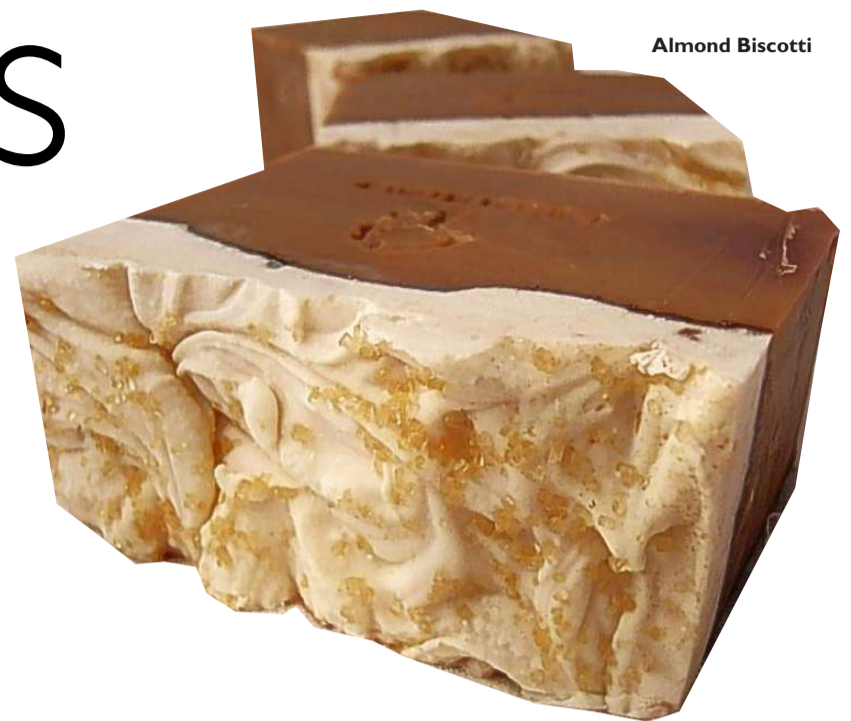
Risotto.

And drink?

Always a gin and tonic.

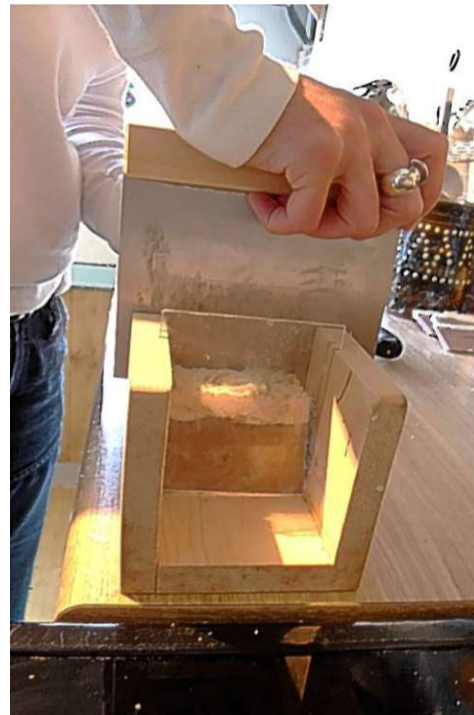
■ For more details, see www.thestripycompany.co.uk

Tiggy's soap stars



Almond Biscotti

With names like almond biscotti and lemon citron, Antonia Fiander's homemade organic soaps are simply delicious. **LUCY PARFORD** discovered how making small batches for family and friends has grown into a thriving business



A LOVE of all things natural and the great outdoors has inspired green-fingered Antonia Fiander to create her own range of botanical and organic soaps.

Antonia worked at the specialist nursery Cotswold Garden Flowers for seven years before setting up a sideline selling plants on eBay and eventually her own web company futureprimitiveplants.co.uk

With her knowledge of flora and scents, she moved into making soaps a couple of years ago. There are three main ranges – botanical (made with 100 per cent essential oils), organic and fragrant.

"I was spending so much money on things like soap I thought I would have a go at making it myself," Antonia explains.

"I bought a book and started reading other people's blogs about how they made soap.

"So many people do it in America, they've been making it for years and it goes back to how their grandparents used to make it. But not so many people seem to do it in England.

"It's absolutely amazing. They're not just normal bits of soap."

Antonia set up her own blog – futureprim.blogspot.com – and made a small batch which she gave away to her friends and family, who all know her as Tiggy.

When they came back asking for more she knew she was on to a good thing.

Antonia started to expand her range which now includes 15 gorgeous scents such as geranium and patchouli, almond biscotti, cut

grass, lemon citron, floral marquee and South Pacific.

"I love the plant side of it and got really into that," Antonia says, who juggles her soap making with a job in credit control.

"It just totally took over my life. There are so many things you can put into them to make these different types of fragrant soap.

"I knew I wanted everything to be natural with no artificial colours or preservatives. You don't need them. People use them because they're cheap but if you use really good ingredients you get the quality. So I decided to move on and go organic as well."

Antonia makes the blocks of soap in her kitchen at home in Evesham, which she shares with her partner Matt Grimmitt, who sells his slipware pottery through FuturePrimitive too.

"We didn't want to work for somebody else and wanted to do this for ourselves," Antonia says.

"We don't get any time off and it's really hard work but we've come quite far in the past year and it's moving the way we want it to."

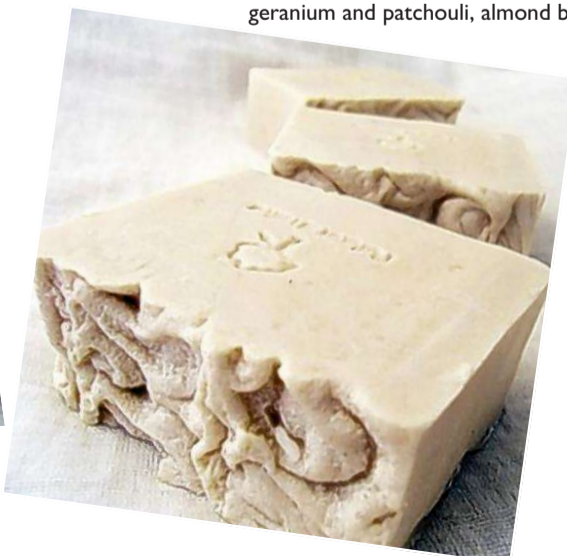
Antonia often gets ideas just before she goes to sleep and has started leaving a notepad and pen by her bedside.

She has let her imagination run wild with ideas such as the Walkabout bar, inspired by aboriginal art and made with purifying organic Australian red and yellow clays, and tea tree essential oil.

The Orangery is based on a beautiful sunny room where she used to work as a gardener. It contains essential oils of ylang ylang, orange,



Sundown soap, top, Floral and right, Snowdrift



Pictures: Submitted. Not for resale



Good enough to eat . . . Antonia Fiander with her slices of homemade soap

cardamom and cedarwood, along with organic cocoa butter and calendula oil to nourish the skin.

And Herbaceous has notes of thyme, sage, rosemary, marjoram and lemon myrtle.

Antonia sources her ingredients from a few select suppliers including Fresholi which sells natural, raw ingredients for soap and lotions.

“The range just keeps on growing as I try out new and different things,” says Antonia, 36. “People also request something be made for them and I take inspiration and go with it.

“The most popular one is still the first one I ever made – the geranium and patchouli slice.

“I always need to make more of that. People go mad for the Snowdrift one as well.”

If you’re having difficulty choosing, FuturePrimitive sells a bundle of eight soap

slivers for £4.50, so you can try them all out. As well as being sold online Antonia’s bright and cheery soaps are available at Spirit Organic in Stow-on-the-Wold, Capability in Cheltenham and at Toddington Garden Centre.

■ For details, visit www.futureprimitive.co.uk



I love the plant side of it and got really into that. It just totally took over my life. There are so many things you can put into them

Antonia Fiander

