

MADE IN INDIANA

# Dollars and Scents

Don't scoff: Even Estee Lauder had to start somewhere.

Just in time for the skin-baring months, we've found two Hoosier entrepreneurs who are cooking up lotions, soaps and scrubs in their home kitchens and selling them one bottle or tub at a time.

Ambre Ashley, a masseuse who studied massage and aromatherapy, started making soaps and lotions using herbs grown in her own garden. She gave them away as gifts, and people started asking where they could buy them. "The products were selling before I had a business plan, before I had a Web site, before anything," she says. She still makes everything herself, using KitchenAid mixers, and part-time helpers assist with packaging and shipping.

The Ambre line—about 25 products in three fragrances, Ambre, Invoke and Solace—is available online ([ambreproducts.com](http://ambreproducts.com)) and at Haus, Girly Chic, Frankey's and Tree Haus. "My customers are everyone from hippies to yuppies, men and women," she says. "The wife of Pacers coach Rick Carlisle likes my stuff, and one of the Pacers wears it, too." The scents are mild but earthy—just right for people who have graduated from patchouli but find Chanel No. 5 too stuffy. Prices range from \$22 for bath crystals to \$70 for a one-ounce flacon of fragrance.

Christy Flowers, creator of Palm Sugar Spa, learned about making bath and body products on an *Oprah* episode. It caught her eye because she spends a lot of money on such indulgences: "I have a problem with perfume departments and Bath & Body Works," she says. Though she has three young children, Flowers—a retired WNBA player—has energy to burn, so after researching recipes, she tried making soap, then branched out into lotions and scrubs. She knew she was on to something when her husband—a teacher and football coach—got compliments from students on how good he smelled. The Palm Sugar Spa line includes four sugary scents and four florals; they smell like a

combination of suntan lotion and tropical-flavored candy.

Flowers still makes and packages everything herself at her home in West Lafayette.

For now, her products are available only online ([palm sugarspa.com](http://palm sugarspa.com)) and at stores in California and Tennessee. Prices range from \$12 for a cream to \$25 for eau de toilette. —Liz Joss

