



# *It Takes a Village...*

*West Africa Shea Butter & Import Co., LLC combines time-honored traditions and modern technology to strengthen markets and the local economy of Burkina Faso.*

Headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas, West Africa Shea Butter & Import Company is the only US manufacturing and processing company of unrefined shea butter that owns and operates facilities in Burkina Faso, West Africa. Since 2004, WASB has worked closely with the women of Burkina Faso, combining time-honored techniques with modern day technology – resulting in some of the highest quality unrefined shea butter available. WASB does not buy ingredients through secondary sources, no do they subcontract any of the production of this unique phyto-chemical. Through ownership of their facilities in Burkina Faso, they are able to employ the local population in the harvesting, transportation, and manufacturing of Shea Butter.

For WASB, it is paramount that they are able to positively affect people's lives beyond the production of shea butter. They use portions of their products to help people in need in various parts of the world, and also aid in the development in the immediate community where they have production facilities. WASB is committed to the continent of Africa, and in the future they plan to use their current system for unrefined shea butter to assist other countries to develop their own natural resources, in order to benefit their particular communities.

WASB is an LLC with representation on the member board both here in the US and also in Burkina Faso where the shea butter is produced.

In recent years the shea tree has gained importance as an economic crop because of the heavy demand for its butter, both locally and internationally. The shea tree grows naturally in the wild in the dry Savannah belt of West Africa from Senegal in the west to Sudan in the east, and into the foothills of the Ethiopian highlands -- in a total of 19 countries across the African continent. The trees grow slowly from seeds and average about 30 years to reach maturity. They can only be propagated by seed.

## **Refined Vs. Unrefined**

Unrefined shea butter is quickly becoming a highly sought after commodity in the cosmetics and body care industry. With its natural healing and moisturizing properties, unrefined shea butter is beneficial, simply in its raw form. There are also a variety of products that may include shea butter, such as, soaps, body butters, lotions, lip balms, and hair care products. Unrefined shea butter is good for dry skin, rashes, itching, rough skin (on feet), eczema, dermatitis, and a host of other skin ailments.

Refined shea butter, by comparison, is both white and odorless, and has been “refined” in order to remove the natural nutty scent and color of natural shea butter. Refined shea butter is often extracted from the shea kernels with hexane or other petroleum solvents -- it is then refined, bleached, and deodorized. The resulting product is an odorless white butter -- but one that retains little of the nutritive and healing properties of its unrefined counterpart.

Shea Butter is the fatty extract derived from the seed of the Shea Tree. Widely lauded for its moisturizing and healing properties, Shea butter has gained increasing popularity in herbal preparations, primarily due to its anti-microbial

then mixed with water and continuously stirred, and kneaded into a paste.

This vigorous mixing breaks the emulsion, causing a grey, oily scum to rise. The oil is then skimmed, and washed repeatedly in a basin with clean water to eliminate residues, then placed in a pot where it is brought to a boil to rid the butter of excess water. (WASB ensures that the shea butter is not boiled long enough to damage the healing fractions in the unrefined shea butter.) Finally, the oil is then poured into a basin where it is left to solidify.

One common misconception of unrefined shea butter is that it has a bad odor. While unrefined



properties. It has also gained wide market use in the pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries as an important raw material.

The trees begin to bear fruits at maturity, and the harvest season runs annually from April to August. Once the fruits ripen and fall to the ground, they are harvested. The nuts are then allowed to dry out in order to crush the shell to remove the kernel. Once removed from the shell, the kernels are inspected and cleaned in order to ensure little to no bacteria, fungus or mold.

The first stage of butter extraction involves grinding the kernel into a powdery material or flour -- followed by cooking it to open the vacuoles, which releases the oil. Once cooked, the flour is then pressed to release the oil and to separate it from the leftover nut cake. The oil is

shea butter is a wild-crafted product, it does not always have a bad scent. WASB has monitored the production of their shea butter, and have had success in eliminating a lot of the “bad odor” that can be associated with unrefined shea butter. While there is still a faint smell due to the shea butter being unrefined, the odor does dissipate after about 10-15 minutes of being used.

Customers who use this product in their product matrix report that they have had great success in adding fragrances and essential oils to mask the natural fragrance of the unrefined shea butter.

*Create the Dream!™ features a different Supplier Profile in each issue. For more information on West Africa Shea Butter & Import Co., LLC - visit them online at [www.WestAfricaSheaButter.com](http://www.WestAfricaSheaButter.com).*

*\* See following page for recipes featuring shea butter - courtesy of WASB.*