MAKERS MANUAL #29
Britt Jönsson

GROCERY INK

INTRODUCTION

This is an introduction to creating natural inks made out of fruits and vegetables found at your local market or grocery store. With this manual I hope to help you to start exploring the many different colours you can find in your everyday surroundings. With these basics you will be able to create inks from almost anything, rusty nails, acorns, grass, charcoal, and walnuts. Let your imagination run wild! With the finished inks you can stain wood or make a painting. Be aware it's living ink and can change or fade over time.

LIST OF THINGS

MATERIALS
– Water
– Gum arabic (available at art-supply stores)
– White vinegar
– Salt
– Wintergreen oil or whole cloves

COLOUR MATERIALS
Plant based colourful materials found at your local market or grocery store. I used the following plant materials to create the colours for this project:
– Yellow: about 7cm Fresh Turmeric
– Deep Purple: 300ml Blueberries
– Hot Pink: 2-3 whole Beetroots
– Blue/Purple: 300ml Cherry
– Green/Purple: 300ml Lingonberries

TOOLS
– Rubber Gloves
– A Heat Source
– Fine-Mesh Strainer
– Coffee Filter
– Funnel
– Measuring Cups
– A Stainless Steel Pot (it is recommend that you get a pot from thrift store and only use it for making inks)
– Knife And Cutting Board (when making hot pink)
– Grater (when making yellow)
– Potato Masher
– Spoon Or Stirring Stick
– Glass Bowl
– Old Cloth (for cleaning)
– Thick Paper For Testing (optional)
– Wide Mouth Jar With Tight-Fitting Lids
– Fridge For Storing The Finished Inks

Caution: Take care when using the stove.

BIO OF THE DESIGNER
Britt Jönsson is a Malmö-based designer working within the fields of product design and art. Through sensory and emotional design she seeks to investigate social structures and emotional bonds to our everyday objects. The driving force behind her design is to create a deeper sensory resonance between humans and objects.

FURTHER READING
– The Natural Paint Book by Lynn Edwards, Julia Lawless
– MAKE INK: A Forager's Guide To Natural Inkmaking by Jason Logan
– The Organic Painter: Learn to Paint with Tea, Coffee, Embroidery, Flame, and More by Carne Griffiths

Makers Manual is a collaborative project between exciting makers and STORE STORE. This is a collection of manuals encouraging people to make objects from what is around them. These manuals are both a practical guide to making for beginners and experts, and a journey into the designers' practice. You can share your creations using #makersmanual.

This project is supported by G.F Smith.

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STEP 1

This process can be a bit messy so when you are setting up your workspace I recommend you use gloves, old clothes, and have a damp cloth and paper towels nearby so you can clean up if you spill some of the ink while you are working. Also don't use your best pots and utensils because the ink can stain them.

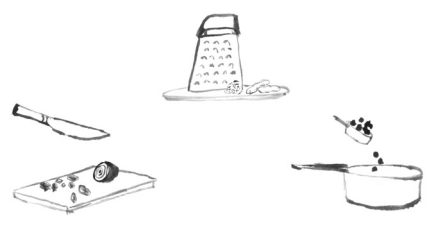
STEP 2

First, prepare the colour ingredients before you add them to your stainless steel pot.

Beetroot: Finely chop 2-3 beetroots, and add them to a pot with 200ml water

Turmeric: Peel and grate about 7cm fresh turmeric and add them to a pot with 100ml water.

Berries: Measure up 300ml berries and add them to a pot with 200ml water.

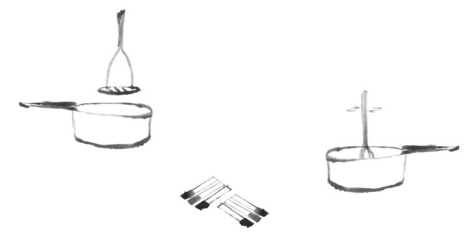


STEP 3

Add vinegar (0.5 tsp per 100ml water) and salt (dash per 100ml water).

STEP 4

Place the pot on the stove and heat it, keep it just below boiling. I recommend heating the ingredients for at least 30 min (berries for about 20 min). The colour will get more intense the longer it cooks, you might have to add small amounts of water if too much liquid evaporates. Use the potato masher to mash the ingredients to get more pigment out and stir every now and then.



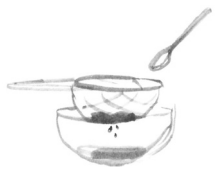
TIP

I recommend you make test strips to dip into the colour liquid every now and then to see the depth of your colour. You will be surprised how the different berries and vegetables react when they hit the paper and are exposed to air. Keeping a notebook and pen at hand so you can write down your experiments is a good idea.

Tip

STEP 6

When you are happy with the colour, put the strainer over the glass bowl and slowly pour the liquid through it. Gently press the plant material with a spoon to get the last drops of colour out.



STEP 7

Once the liquid is cool, line your funnel with a coffee filter and pour the ink through it very slowly into your glass jar to remove the last small particles.

STEP 8

Add the Gum Arabic (this works as a binder) and stir so that it dissolves, use 1 part Gum Arabic to every 10 parts of ink.

STEP 9

Add 3 drops of wintergreen oil or 1-2 whole cloves to preserve the inkand prevent it going mouldy.

STEP 10

Now your ink is ready!

Label and store the inks in your refrigerator.

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STEP 11

Time to start painting! I recommend that you use watercolour paper to paint on and to spray the finished piece with fixative to make the ink more uv-resistant (available at art-supply stores). You can also use the ink to stain untreated wood. Finish it off with a coat of lacquer to preserve the colours.

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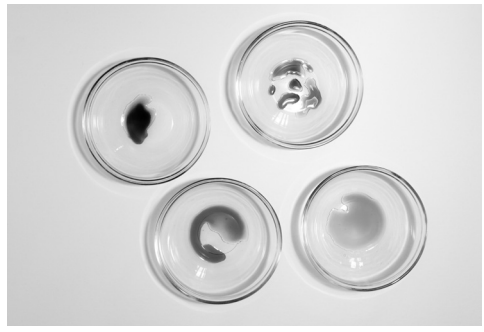
STEP 12

Try to mix the different colours to make new ones.



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Britt Jönsson, Malmö.