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: ca 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 (recommend getting 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

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 with her design is to create a deeper sensory resonance between human and object.

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. Participation is free and no design background is necessary. You can share your creations using #makersmanual. We will pick our favourite submissions and publish the results in a limited printed edition of all of the manuals. Everyone who makes it into the book will receive a free copy.

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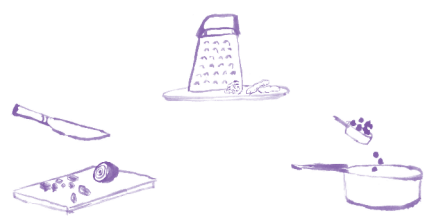
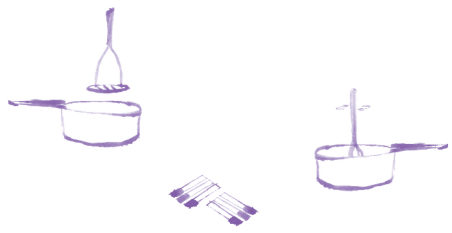
STEP 1
It can be a bit messy so when you are setting up your workspace I recommend you use gloves, not your favourite clothes, have a damp cloth and paper towels nearby so you can clean up if you spill some of the ink while you are working. Also don't use your best pots and utensils because the ink can stain them.

STEP 2
Time to prepare the colour ingredients before you add them in your stainless steel pot.
Beetroot: Finely chop 2-3 beetroots then toss it in the pan and add 200ml water
Turmeric: Peel and grate ca 7cm fresh turmeric then toss it in the pan, add 100ml water.
Berries: Measure up 300ml berries and add to the pan, also add 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, keeping it just below boiling. I recommend heating the material for at least 30 min (berries ca 20 min). The colour will get more intense the longer it cooks but you might have to add small amounts of water if too much liquid evaporates. Use the potato masher to mash the material to get out even more pigment 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.

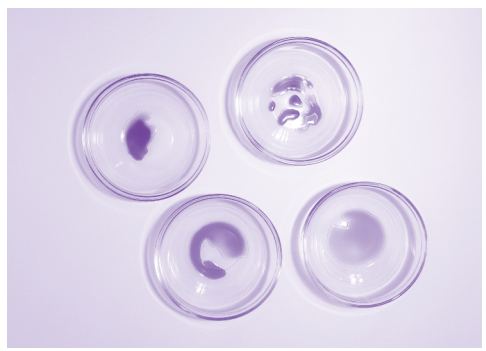
STEP 6
When you are happy with the colour you will have to strain it. Put the strainer over the glass bowl and slowly pour the liquid through it. Gently press the plant material with a spoon to get out the last drops of colour.

STEP 7
Once cool, line your funnel with a coffee filter and pour the ink very slowly into your glass jar to remove the last small particles.

STEP 8
Add the Gum Arabic (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 ink, this prevents it from molding.

STEP 10
Now your ink is ready!
Label and store the inks in your refrigerator.

STEP 11
Time to start painting! I recommend that you use aquarelle 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.

STEP 12
Try to mix the different colours to make new ones.