



# Kitchen Inks Lesson Plan

Tina Jubinville

**Population:** elementary level, secondary level or community setting. Younger populations will need supervision.

**Lesson time:** 1½ hour.

## Rational

When it comes to art materials, there is nothing more sustainable than something you can compost. The kitchen is full of colourful spices and various types of food scraps that can easily be made into colour. By using food which might otherwise go to waste (wilted spinach, beet tops, onion peels, used tea bags, etc.) students get to understand the value of using something to its fullest while creating completely non-toxic drawing material.

## Educational Objectives

- Students will produce art using inks they have made themselves from food scraps and items found in the kitchen.
- Students will understand the environmental benefits of working with these types of materials and cultivate a greater awareness of sustainable art practices.
- Students will share their ink experiments with their peers and reflect on the importance of sustainability and their experience making their own drawing supplies.

## Materials and Equipment

For making the inks:

- A variety of colorful food scraps (beet tops, old berries, coffee grounds, carrot peels, etc.) and ground spices (turmeric, paprika, spirulina, etc.)
- Plug-in kettle
- Butter knives (or sharper knife depending on age or available help from an adult), cutting boards and spoons
- Many jars (glasses and mugs will work too)
- Small strainer

For drawing:

- Paper (watercolour, printmaking or mixed media papers work best)
- Brushes, pipettes, pen and nib, sponge, etc.
- Kitchen inks

### Art making: Process and Procedure

The ink making process in this project is incredibly simple and involves house hold materials. Amazing colours can be obtained by simply steeping colourful food stuff in boiling water, straining it and drawing with the coloured water.

The first step in this project is to make the inks. The educator (and possibly the students) should have a variety of spices and kitchen scraps on hand. Work areas should be set up with knives, cutting boards and empty jars.

After a brief explanation of the project, students will begin making inks right away.

While the inks are steeping, the educator can lead a discussion about sustainable practices and present work created with homemade inks or artists who use similar materials in their practice.

Once the inks are ready, students can strain the colourful water into another container and use them with brushes or other tools to create their drawings.



**Step 1**

Get water boiling in the kettle and have students cut food into small pieces (supervision may be necessary depending on age group). Put each type of food in its own jar. Leafy greens (if using) should be pressed down into jar and broken up with a spoon. About 1 tbsp of spices is enough.

**Time:** 5 to 10 minutes depending on age group



**Step 2**

Pour just enough water into each jar (with supervision if necessary) to completely cover its content and let it steep until it's cool enough to handle.

This is a good time for a presentation or discussion.

**Time:** 10 to 15 minutes



**Step 3**

Pour the water through a strainer into another jar. It's ok if some the spices go through the strainer.

Now you have ink!

(should be stored in the fridge)

**Time:** 5 to 10 minutes

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**Time to draw!**

**Time:** 40 to 45 minutes

Using brushes and other available tools, students can experiment with the food inks they've just made on various types of papers. Educator can circulate and join in the fun of drawing while encouraging discussion amongst students.

**Clean-up**

**Time:** 15 minutes

Food stuff can go in the compost and there will be a lot of dishes to do! Designate one student to wash and one to dry dishes. Brushes and table will need to be cleaned. Drawings can be set somewhere to dry flat. Inks will keep in the refrigerator for a few days (with lid). A drop of clove essential oil can be added to preserve inks longer.

**Studio Etiquette**

Students should be mindful of others as they work and participate in the preparation and clean-up tasks. Students should be careful while cutting and pouring hot water; for younger age groups, butter knives are a better option and the water should be poured by an adult.

**Motivation**

In order to maximize time, the class will begin with only a brief explanation before getting into ink making. While the ingredients are steeping, give a presentation showcasing artwork made with plant material and lead a discussion on the importance of sustainable practices.

**Response**

**Time:** 5 minutes

A gallery walk to see everyone's work is a good way to compare which inks work better, favorite colors, differences between inks, etc. and view each other's work.

**Reflection and Assessment**

This will depend on where the lesson is being taught and age group. Criteria can be set for the ink making process (number of colors, efficiency of ink, etc.) or incorporated into drawing requirements (used more than one color, able to produce a line, a wash, etc.). Students should be encouraged to reflect on the process, the materials and the importance of sustainable practices in art.

## Prototypes



Mushroom (left): beets and spirulina and volcano (right): activated charcoal and paprika

## References

I did not reference any specific texts for this lesson plan and did my research in the kitchen. However, some credit is due to the following people:

This project was inspired by a friend and fellow artist, Martine Chartrand, who uses her kitchen and locally foraged materials in order to create zero waste and eco-friendly inks. Some of her recipes are based on those of Jason Logan of the Toronto Ink Company and some are her own.

<https://www.instagram.com/touskifaitoutmartine/>

Jason Logan and the Toronto Ink Company

<http://www.jasonslogan.com/>

<https://torontoinkcompany.com/>

Aimée Lebeau, a classmate in ARTE 220. Her maker demo assignment introduced the class to a quick ink making technique using berries. <https://www.instagram.com/le.beau.arts/>