

**NORTHCOTE POTTERY SUPPLIES  
TECHNICAL TIPS AND PRODUCT INFORMATION #9**

## **EGYPTIAN PASTE**

*Egyptian paste is a self-glazing clay body suitable for small beads, sculptures and press-moulded forms. Its history goes back to ancient Egyptian times when it was used to make small statues (figures), ornaments (scarab beetles) and jewellery (beads and pendants).*

### **RECIPE**

BALL CLAY	14%
NEPHELINE SYENITE	37%
SILICA	37%
SODA ASH	6%
BICARBONATE SODA	6%

COLOUR ADDITIONS COULD BE 2-6% COPPER CARBONATE FOR TURQUOISE, OR 6-10% COLOURED STAIN, OR 2% COBALT OXIDE FOR DARK BLUE ETC.

### **Making up Wet Egyptian Paste**

Mix together all the ingredients in a small, thick, zip lock plastic bag. Seal the bag and then shake it well till all the ingredients are evenly distributed in the bag. Re-open the bag and add small amounts of water gradually, taking time to re-seal the bag and massage the water into the dry mix through the bag wall. Once the water has been sopped up and the mixture is like a thick dough or normal clay consistency, you can use the Egyptian Paste to begin building.

### **Making Egyptian Paste Forms**

Egyptian paste is not plastic (stretchy and bendable) like normal clay mixtures and is therefore more suited to making small solid forms (not too thick) or beads. This means that you need to think carefully about the sorts of shapes you would consider making in this material. It can also be formed by pressing into small plaster or bisque clay sprigg moulds.

### **Drying**

Once you have made your Egyptian Paste form, place it on a sheet of greased paper to dry. Egyptian Paste is self-glazing (as it dries soluble salts migrate to the surface of the clay and forms a white crystalline crust which when fired becomes glaze) so you need to be careful what it touches when drying. Egyptian Paste forms benefit from long slow drying (never rapid drying) as this allows the soluble salts to migrate and deposit on the clay surface evenly. If you have made bead forms, they can be threaded onto a bead tree or rack immediately they are firm enough to hold their shape. Even drying of Egyptian Paste is very important so you achieve even salting of the surface (glazing). Never touch Egyptian paste forms once they are dry. Sometimes it is easier to batt wash small slabs of clay and use them as a mini kiln shelf to dry the Egyptian paste in position for firing.

### **Firing**

Once dry, Egyptian Paste can be fired at the same rate as a bisque firing to 900 - 950°C. NB always put Egyptian past forms onto a bead rack or a batt washed slab of clay in case they stick to kiln shelves. Clay surfaces which contact with Egyptian paste must be well batt washed. Commercial bisque tiles covered in batt wash make a cheap and reusable mini kiln shelf for Egyptian Paste.

NB Egyptian paste ware is not suitable for food containers because of its soluble salts and low firing temperature.

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