

EGYPTIAN PASTE

Technical Tips And
Product Information

#09

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 WET EGYPTIAN PASTE

Mix together all the ingredients in a small, thick, zip lock plastic bag. Seal the bag and shake it well till all ingredients are evenly distributed in the bag. Open the bag and gradually add small amounts of water, reseal 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 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 more suited to making small solid forms (not too thick) or beads. Think carefully about the 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 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 evenly on the clay surface. 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. Drying of Egyptian Paste is very important to 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.

NOTE: always put Egyptian paste 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.

NOTE: Egyptian paste ware is not food safe due to its soluble salts and low firing temperature.