

Making Ink

So you've whittled up a nice dip pen, and now you're ready to practice your penmanship. But first, we've got to get some ink. These days, our first thought when we find ourselves in need of something is to go to the store or order it off the internet. In the early days of Little Rock, you might be surprised to learn that several merchants had ink for sale. If you happened by the office of the *Arkansas Gazette*, you'd find a nice selection of writing inks, including a superior blue variety, as seen in this advertisement from November 28th, 1837.



If you were more of a do-it-yourselfer, or lived in a rural area and need ink **ASAP**, there were plenty of tried and true receipts (now known as recipes) to choose from, including this recipe published in the 1819 book by Maria Eliza Ketelby Rundell called *The Family Receipt Book, Containing Eight Hundred Valuable Receipts, in Various Branches of Domestic Economy*.



Now that is a complicated and time consuming receipt! If you are fresh out of Aleppo galls, we've got a much simpler receipt using common pantry items. Plus, it won't need to sit by the hearth for a month, it'll ready in just a few minutes!

You'll need:

- 1/2 cup fresh or frozen blueberries
- 1/2 tsp vinegar
- 1/2 tsp salt
- Spoon
- Strainer
- Bowl
- Water



608. To make one gallon of black writing ink.

Into a glazed stone jar or pitcher put one pound of Aleppo galls, slightly bruised; then add one gallon of rain water, nearly of a boiling heat; let these stand together for fourteen days upon the kitchen hearth, or moderately warm; after that time add four ounces of green copperas or sulphate of iron, four ounces of logwood chips or shavings, one ounce of alum, one ounce of sugar-candy, and four ounces of gum arabic or senegal. Let the whole remain ten or twelve days longer in a moderate heat, the mouth of the vessel slightly covered with paper. Stir the ingredients well with a stick twice a day during the whole time; then strain off the ink through linen or flannel, bottle it, pour a little brandy on the top of the ink in each bottle, then cork them well, and keep them for use in a place of temperate heat.

This ink may be depended upon as excellent, durable, and preserving the writing all a deep black.

Directions:

Place the blueberries into the strainer, then set or hold the strainer over the bowl.

Mash the berries into the side and bottom of the strainer to release the blueberry juice.

Continue mashing until you get all the juice out of the berries. Leave the strainer over the bowl to drain the juice into the bowl.

Remove the strainer and mashed blueberries, then add 1/2 tsp. each of vinegar and salt. Stir the blueberry ink with a teaspoon until all the ingredients are blended.

Add 1 tsp. water to thin the ink if it is too thick, then stir the mixture again.

Pour the blueberry ink into a covered container until ready to use.

