



<http://www.hauntedattraction.com/workshops/getbloody.html>

Let's Get Bloody

by Brian D. Oberquell

"Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?" from William Shakespeare's MACBETH

"More blood, more blood! Here, give me the bottle!"
director William Wyler on the set of BEN-HUR

One of the effects that I am always being asked for is blood. Whether it is a small amount for a play or a large amount for a film involving major mayhem, blood is one of those things that if used properly, brings out a reaction in the audience. Sometimes the effect is subtle, like a poisoning victim in Ten Little Indians, with only a small amount of blood running from the corner of the mouth, and sometimes the effect is designed to create a larger impact, like the scenes from The Wrong Apartment, where there was wholesale death and destruction.

No doubt some of you will wonder why I go to the trouble of making my own blood when there are a number of "professional" brands on the market. Well for one thing, there are not a lot of makeup stores in the area where I live and the ones that are here do not carry a variety of different brands. I see no reason to spend 30-45 minutes traveling each way to buy something that I can make myself. Secondly, it is cheaper to make my own blood than it is to buy a prepared version. The main reason, however, is for the aesthetics. I have found that the stage blood carried "locally" does not give me the look I want. They are usually too orange for my liking. I have had Mounties in Canada and Police in Montana compliment me on the realistic look of my blood. When the police tell me that the blood looks real, I take it as a definite compliment! Blood has come a long way since chocolate syrup was used in black & white films such as PSYCHO. Over the years I have collected lots of blood recipes and the purpose of this article is to share some of them with you. Credit for recipes has been given when I have been able to track down a specific "author," and of course, you use these recipes at your own risk. Note: any comments listed are usually those of the formula's provider.

All preamble aside -- let's get BLOODY!

Dick Smith's Blood Formula #1

This is the formula that I use most of the time; it is a basic recipe developed by the legendary makeup artist Dick Smith (THE EXORCIST, TAXI DRIVER, LITTLE BIG MAN to name a few). It is fairly easy to make and shows well:

- 1 Quart White Corn Syrup (any grocery store)
- 1 Level Tsp Zinc Oxide (any laboratory supply)
- 2 Oz. EhlerRed Food Color
- 5 Tsp EhlerYellow Food Color
- 2 Oz. Kodak Photo-Flo*Poisonous* (any photo supply store)
- 2 Oz. Of Water (from the tap)

Mixing Instructions

Put the zinc oxide into a bowl, add an equal amount of water and stir into a paste. Add the food coloring and stir. (If you are not using Ehler's brand yellow, use only one-half the amount indicated). Then add a little of the corn syrup and mix well. Pour into a container that holds more than the final amount (you have to shake it up before use, as it may separate), add the remaining corn syrup and mix well. Then add the amount of water specified and mix again. This will give you blood with a normal consistency. Keep the blood refrigerated when not in use (or it will grow mold) and mix well before use.

If you want to thin this blood for pumping, use the Photo-Flo (a wetting agent which makes the blood flow and soak into fabric better) and dilute the corn syrup with an equal amount of water before you add in the rest of the ingredients. Only use the Photo-Flo if you are NOT going to use the blood in the mouth. For thicker blood, add small amounts of smooth peanut butter. Experiment with the amount until you get the thickness you want. (Make sure your actors are not allergic to peanuts). This blood may look too bright when used on white materials; if you need to darken it, add about 35 drops of green food coloring per quart of blood.

While this formula washes off of skin and most clothes with no trouble, certain fabrics may stain. So test them first and/or use old clothing that you do not mind ruining.

Dick Smith's Blood Formula #2

- 9.9 grams of Methyl Paraben (any laboratory supply)
 - Weigh 7.6 gr. Alcone Red #33(718-361-8373) in N.Y.
 - Weigh 10.4 gr. Alcone Yellow #5 (718-361-8373) in N.Y. 3.5 quarts Karo (any grocery store)
 - 6 oz. Photo-Flo *Poisonous* (any photo supply store)
- Add Methyl Paraben (A preservative, which can be omitted if the blood is used right away.) to 1/2 oz Karo corn syrup in a 5 oz. paper cup, and beat to a smooth cream. Add the colors to 1 pint of distilled water. Add remaining Karo in a 1.5 gallon pail and stir in the colors. Add 6 oz. Of Photo-Flo (Be aware that Photo-Flo is

poisonous and should not be used in the mouth.)

MB2 Blood Formula

This recipe comes from Murr Rhame, moderator of the SHOW-FIRE mailing list; he can be reached at murr@vnet.net. It makes a good base for stage blood. Slightly slimy. Fairly low surface tension. Soaks and spreads well.

Flour Base:

1/2 To 2 Level Teaspoons Plain All Purpose Flour

1 Cup Of Water.

1 Oz. Red Food Coloring (DurkeeBrand Or Equivalent)

1/8 Teaspoon Green Food Coloring (Durkee Brand Or Equivalent)

Mix flour into water completely (no lumps) before heating. Bring to boil then simmer for 30 minutes. Stir frequently. Let cool before adding the food color. Stir in any surface scum.

This is both much more realistic and simpler than the old Karo corn syrup, Hershey's chocolate syrup and food coloring based formula. There is no sugar and very little food in the MB2 formula so it is less attractive to insects. The shelf life is fairly short (days) at room temperature. It does not go rank, but ferments a bit and loses viscosity. I have not tested refrigerated or frozen storage. This formula will temporarily stain skin, but seems to wash out of most cotton cloths. Cardiff Red

Here is a recipe from the United Kingdom courtesy of Stephen Broadhurst and Dale Murchie and provided by eXposure, an Internet resource for young film makers. Their web site is at <http://www.exposure.co.uk> and Dale can be contacted at dale@exposure.co.uk:

Because of the food coloring used in a lot of blood recipes they tend to stain easily and can sometime look more purple than red. This formula is a more natural alternative that is closer to a Spaghetti Western style arterial red. It washes out of clothes easily and can be eaten reasonably safely.

1-2 Teaspoons Of Arrowroot (A White Powder Found In Health Food Shops)

4 Cups Of Water

1 Oz. Non-Toxic Children's Red Poster Paint Powder

1 Oz. Brown Powder Paint (Or Coffee Concentrate Mixed With Water)

Take a teaspoon or two of Arrowroot and add to water heated on the stove. Stir continuously until the mixture becomes gloopy. Add a small amount of non-toxic children's red poster paint powder and stir in. The

mixture should now be bright red. Add a tiny amount of brown powder paint or coffee concentrate to darken the blood as required. Store in a bottle or jam jar. Thin by adding water to get the required consistency as needed. For bullet hits you need to thin the blood quite a bit to allow it to spray out.

Lo-Cost Blood (Also from eXposure)

Add a few drops of red food coloring to the cheapest washing up liquid you can find. Add a drop of blue coloring or some coffee concentrate to create a more realistic color. Produces a runny blood that has a slight tendency to foam. Great for those bucket of blood effects on the cheap. Washes off reasonably well, but tastes foul if you accidentally get it in your mouth.

Jelly Blood (Also from eXposure)

This recipe is credited to Mike O'Hare, who can be reached at mikethemanwiththeplan@yahoo.com:

3-4 Bottles Of Glycerin
1 Cube Of Strawberry Jelly
1/5 Of A Packet Of Gelatin
Red Food Coloring

Heat the glycerin in a microwave and add one cube of strawberry jelly. Mix until dissolved. Then add small amount of gelatine and the add red food coloring to desired effect. Keep stirring until mixed well. This fomula is slightly runny, but all of the ingredients are easily found in a supermarket.

HalloweenNet Blood

Provided by Steve Rowin of HalloweenNet. His web site is at <http://www.HalloweenNet.com>. This makes a nice thick blood, that may not come out of good clothing.

1 Pint Of Karo Light Corn Syrup
2 Tablespoons Of Red Food Coloring
10 Drops Of Green Food Coloring (Darkness Factor)
1 Tablespoon Of Vegetable Oil

Kool-Aid Blood

(Originator unknown)

Karo Syrup (Light Corn Syrup)
Black-Cherry Kool-Aid (Powder)
Smooth Peanut Butter (check for allergic reaction)

Chinese Red Blood

(Originator unknown)

4 Parts Liquid Glucose

1 Part Water

Chinese Red Food Coloring

Ivory Base

(Originator unknown)

2 Cups Ivory Liquid

1 Tsp. Red Food Coloring

1/2 Tsp Yellow Food Coloring

Creating blood for special effects is not an exact science. Each of the above formulas have their good and bad characteristics. Experiment with each of these recipes and decide for yourself which is best for your application. If you know of any other blood formulas not listed here, please pass them along to me so I can add them to my collection!

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