

Fake Blood

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In this industry we often cater to the holiday seasons. Today is a holiday where a good source of stage blood can come in handy.

You have two options: you can buy it or make it. Which you do will depend a lot on your intended purpose as well as your budget.

Bought blood

Ben Nye is the brand I've seen most often in theater. He makes gels, gel capsules, scab blood, regular blood and extra thick. I think there are other brands that TV may prefer, but this stuff is well balanced between price and effectiveness... and at least some of his blood is mint flavored. Other brands out there that I've heard recommended include Kryolan and Reel. I hear Reel brand blood has something about the color that looks better on darker skin tone and Kryolan makes tears of blood for crying effects.

Why Non-Edible Blood

I was first introduced to making fake blood while working on a production of Othello. When edible vs. non-edible blood came up as a discussion in a production meeting, I asked a question that brought quite a glare from the costume designer. If we can make edible blood why on earth would we want to think about making non-edible blood? Edible just seemed more fun. It turns out that most non-edible recipes include some form of laundry detergent or soap. While it doesn't make a costume designers dreams come true, the very presence of soap product makes the blood less likely to stain.

Non-Edible Blood Recipes- A few variations

Bucket-O-Blood- Add red food coloring to the cheapest liquid soap or laundry detergent you can find. Tone down the red to desired color with a little blue food coloring or a touch of coffee. It might foam a little, but if you need a literal blood-bath, this will be your best bet.

Oozy Blood

Mix 2 parts Karo Syrup, 1 part Chocolate syrup, 1 part clear dish soap, a little red and blue food coloring until desired color is achieved. This is a little more likely to stain and is kind of sticky to clean up. You are in complete control of the exact color and consistency through varying your ingredients, so you can achieve exactly the effect you desire.

Textured blood

Take about 2 liters of glycerine (used for making your own soap and can usually be found in the grocery store) and heat either on the stove or in the microwave. Add about ¼ packet of some form of red gelatin and food coloring to adjust the color to perfection. This kind of blood is especially good on pieces of bloody scenery as it seems to have a bit more dimension to it than some other recipes.

Chemical Blood

Secrets of Hollywood Special Effects gives detailed directions for using potassium thiocyanate and ferric chloride for a fun effect. The pro to this is both chemicals are clear when not touching, so you can put one on your actor (with a layer in between to protect your actor), one on the weapon and get a "in front of your eyes" red effect. I shy away from chemicals for theater use though. You definitely don't want this anywhere near eyes, mouths or stupidity.

Why Edible Blood

Sometimes you know you will be using blood that will interact with actor's mouths. Dracula is a classic example of this. Besides... this is much more exciting.

Edible Blood Recipes

There are many variations on these recipes, but most include a karo syrup base, creamy peanut butter, chocolate syrup or cocoa powder for texture and browning and some form of food coloring or product containing color for the red.

Chocolate Raspberry Blood

Mix 1 bottle Karo syrup, a teaspoon or so of black raspberry Kool-Aid and about a half teaspoon of cocoa powder, altering proportions for desired effect. Any blood containing Kool-Aid stains a little more.

Peanuty Blood

I like to start by heating the Karo syrup a little because I think the peanut butter mixes in better that way. So, heat a bottle of Karo syrup, add about a tablespoon of peanut butter and a little food coloring. Make sure your actors don't have a nut allergy before use.

Flour-based Blood

Take about a cup of water for ever 1-3 tablespoons of flour, depending on your desired consistency. Mix completely before heating. Simmer on low for around 20-30 minutes until you reach the right texture. (Yes, it's kind of like making gravy.) Let it cool and then add food coloring to achieve the right color. This doesn't taste as good as some of the other recipes, but has the advantage of not being sticky. You can add a touch of flavor extract if you'd like.

In Conclusion

Most of the different blood recipes are really just variations on the same theme. You need something thick but liquid, something to color it and something to make it not so shiny and syrupy looking if you start with syrup. If you're planning on making fake blood, have fun and experiment with a few different recipes. Take what you like about each, blend them and make your own new and ideal recipe. If you can't have fun with fake blood, what's the point?

