How to Mummify a Banana

You will need:
- Banana
- Kitchen roll
- A sharp knife (and an adult to help you!)
- Teaspoon
- Plastic box, big enough for the banana to lie in
- Salt
- Bicarbonate of Soda

This is a wooden carving of an Ancient Egyptian Ba bird (a human-headed bird) from the Oriental Museum.

Why did the Ancient Egyptians Mummify?

It was very important to the Ancient Egyptians to preserve the bodies of people who had died. They believed that your body needed to stay intact (not rot) for your soul, which had 3 parts – the Ba, Ka and Akh - not to be lost.

· The **Ka** was the double of the person and stayed in the tomb.
· The **Ba** (personality) was able to fly out of the tomb and return to it.
· The **Akh** (spirit) had to travel for the final judgement and then hopefully go to the Afterlife.

They realised that if the bodies were completely dried they wouldn't rot. This is because drying something gets rid of bacteria that would otherwise make something rot.

1. Wash your banana carefully and gently to make sure it is very clean. Dry it thoroughly with kitchen roll.

2. **For this next step, please get an adult to help!** Cut the banana skin down one side with the sharp knife.

3. Using a teaspoon, carefully scoop out the banana from inside the skin. The Ancient Egyptians put the organs of the body in **Canopic Jars** that would go in the tomb with the mummified body, but you can eat the banana you have taken out!

4. Dry out the inside of your banana with kitchen roll.

5. The Ancient Egyptians used **NATRON** to dry out the bodies. You can make a mixture similar to this using table salt and Bicarbonate of Soda. Put equal amounts of table salt and Bicarbonate of Soda in a bowl and mix them up. You will need enough to cover the base of your box and then cover the banana in the box.

6. Make sure your box is clean and absolutely dry and then cover the base of it with your **NATRON** mixture.

7. Gently stuff the insides of your banana with kitchen roll to help it keep its shape.
NOTE: you will need to take out the kitchen roll and replace it every so often so you can leave out this step if you would prefer.

8. Place your banana into the box on top of the **NATRON** mixture and then completely cover the banana with more of the **NATRON** mix.

9. Do not cover the top of the box. Keep the box somewhere warm and dry but away from food preparation areas. You should check the box every week. Crush up any clumps of the **NATRON** mix with your hands (don't forget to wash your hands afterwards!) and add more mixture to re-cover the banana if needed. Every time you do this you could take a photograph of the banana so you can keep a record of how it changes. You need to leave the banana covered in the **NATRON** for 40 days if you are doing this like an Ancient Egyptian!

Optional Extra Steps:

1. Take the banana out of the box and brush off all the **NATRON** mixture carefully.
2. Start to sew up the hole with a needle and thread – **ask an adult to help you and be with you for this part.** Leave a 5cm gap.
3. Use sawdust to stuff the banana – you could even mix in some herbs with the sawdust before you put it in if you want to be really Ancient Egyptian! Finish sewing up the skin.
4. Finally, wrap your banana in strips of cloth so it looks like a mummy.

This picture is on top of one of the mummies that we have at the Oriental Museum at Durham University. The picture is one of many on her to help keep her safe on her way to the **Afterlife**. It shows her mummified body lying on a table with the gods **Isis** and **Nephthys** kneeling, one on each side. Underneath are more gods, and in the middle, a **'djed'** pillar. This symbol stood for the backbone of the god **Osiris** - he was **king of the underworld** and the key to making sure you got into the **Afterlife** safely.

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We would love to see the progress of your mummified bananas. If your adults are happy with this, please ask them to email us any photographs to 4Schools@durham.ac.uk or they can post them on Twitter tagging @dulearning.