

VARNISH RECIPES

Example of how to make some varnishes:

A BASIC ALCOHOL VARNISH

(color coats)

Sticklac	300 g	Mastic	70 g
Sandarac	50 g	Elemi	50 g
Benzoin	100 g	Venetian Turpentine	50 g
Manila copal	200 g	Alcohol	3 liters

The sticklac, copal, sandarac and benzoin are mixed into 3 liters of alcohol. It may take about 2 days to dissolve, and during this time the solution must be frequently stirred.

The mastic is first dissolved in ether; a heated water bath will facilitate the process. A few drops of oil of turpentine will also speed up the dissolving process.

Then the elemi and venetian turpentine are mixed together with a few additional drops of oil of turpentine, and boiled until they are totally dissolved.

The mastic solution is then added and the combined solution brought again to the boil.

When this has cooled, the benzoin, copal, sandarac and sticklac mixture is added. This should be allowed to settle for about 3 weeks. During the final week, the mixture should be stirred 3 times per day. Boiling the mixture will speed up the process.

After 3 weeks the varnish must be filtered.

Alcohol varnish with propolis:

Make a solution of propolis by dissolving 275-400 g propolis in 1 liter alcohol. Add 150-200 cc of this solution to 800 cc of the alcohol varnish described above.

OIL VARNISH

from the Marciana Manuscript (1550/1570):

Varnish that spreads like oil, dries quickly, is very lustrous and beautiful, and put upon things is like a mirror of glass, and is admirable on lutes and similar things.

Take for one measure: One pound of linseed oil, and make it boil in a clean glazed pot. Add half a pound of pulverized clear and beautiful Greek pitch stirring it in, incorporating it well on a gentle fire. Put in a half pound of powdered mastic. Because it swells up, raise the pot from the fire, stirring little by little and incorporate it well. Then return the pot to the fire and stir so that it dissolves and incorporates well.

Put in a nut-sized piece of crushed burnt rock alum, and add it so that it dissolves and incorporates well. Afterwards remove from the fire and strain with an old piece of linen and preserve. For wood, and for iron, and for paper and leather, and for all painting and to make work beautiful, and for resisting water. When it seems necessary, dilute with linseed oil as is done.

Here the use of alum is documented.