



UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA

Agriculture & Natural Resources



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION • YOLO COUNTY

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Curing Olives—Where can I find lye?

It is the time of year that many people cure their own olives. There are several ways to cure olives—each producing olives with unique flavors. A common way uses a solution of lye to prepare the olives. For many years those preparing home-cured olives have relied on Red Devil™ 100% lye drain cleaner to cure their olives. This product is no longer available. DO NOT use other drain cleaning products to cure olives.

The lye used to cure olives must be 100% pure sodium hydroxide (NaOH) – also commonly known as caustic soda or lye. Pure lye is available in some hardware stores and farm supply stores or can be ordered from some chemical suppliers or soap making suppliers. Because lye is a reactive chemical it is shipped in small quantities and often only by surface transportation. You can search the internet for lye sources in your area under “soap making supplies” or “sodium hydroxide.” Some suppliers are also listed below.

Chemical suppliers:

Sierra Chemical Company (788 Northport Drive, West Sacramento, CA 95691-2145, 1-916-371-5943) – sells sodium hydroxide.

www.boyercorporation.com – sodium hydroxide beads – sells a minimum size of 12 - 2 lb cans/carton.

Soap making suppliers:

www.soapsaloon.com – (based in Sacramento, California) sells sodium hydroxide pellets in 5, 10, and 20 lb quantities.

www.snowdriftfarm.com – sells sodium hydroxide flakes in 2, 10 and 30 lbs.

Hardware stores: Check in the home canning section.

Pacific Hardware, 627 Merchant St., Vacaville, CA 95688 (707) 448-2978

Woodland True Value, 345 W. Main Street, Woodland, CA 95695 (530) 666-5604

University of California ANR catalog offers the following publications on curing olives:

*Home Pickling of Olives <http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/InOrder/Shop/ItemDetails.asp?ItemNo=2758>

*ABC's of Home-Cured Green-Ripe Olives/ El ABC de encurtir aceitunas verde-maduras en casa

<http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/InOrder/Shop/ItemDetails.asp?ItemNo=21131>

Source: Dr. Linda J. Harris, Food Safety/Microbiology Specialist, Cooperative Extension, Dept. of Food Science & Technology, UC Davis, September 2006.

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