

Citrus Fruits and Citric Acid



When mixing henna for use as hair dye, citrus juice is convenient, smells nice, and is very reliable. Dilute orange juice¹ or lemon juice with filtered or distilled water, or use it straight from a bottle; there is no need to squeeze it fresh. If you want to dilute juice, add filtered or distilled water or tea until it tastes like mild lemonade; that's sour enough. You can dilute the acidity to as little as a few spoonfuls per cup of water and still maintain a hydrogen rich paste. Citrus fruit juices mixed with henna create hair stains that are initially a light color, gradually darken, and do not fade over time.

Lemon juice, pH 2.3, mixed with henna leaves a pale orange stain at first, the stain will gradually darken to a deep auburn. Many women with very dark but graying hair simply add lemon juice to henna and leave the paste in their hair overnight for a thorough saturation in a hydrogen-rich medium. With this technique, the gray is virtually invisible and the dark hair shimmers deep red in the sunlight.

The sensation of dryness that follows a lemon juice application is not hair damage, though it may feel 'crunchy' when you handle the hair. This 'crunchy' feeling is caused by the scales of keratin being raised to bind with the lawsone, rather like rubbing a cat's hair backwards to more effectively sprinkle in flea powder. The scales will settle back down in a few washings. Rinsing with hair conditioner will eliminate the 'roughed-up' sensation more quickly.

Lime juice, pH 2, is very acidic. At first, hair dyed with henna/lime juice paste is very light, but it will gradually darken to the darkest of all acidic mixes. Lime juice is the juice most likely to cause skin irritation and can be phototoxic, so use it cautiously.

¹ Orange juice is very convenient because it's in most people's refrigerators, but many brands of orange juice contain pulp. This might not be a problem in your hair dye, if you don't mind washing out a bit of pulp, but don't use orange juice with pulp for your henna body art paste. I made that mistake once. Very embarrassing.

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Ancient Sunrise® Citric Acid

Ancient Sunrise® Citric Acid is convenient for mixing a mildly acidic henna paste. You can add powdered citric acid to your favorite tea, filtered, or distilled water. Add 6g or 1 teaspoon per 100g of henna, or enough citric acid to the tea or water to make it taste as tart as lemonade. Citric acid mixture stains do not darken as much as citrus juice mixtures. Citric acid paste mixtures tend to create bright coppery stains that stay light and bright.

Citric acid and citrus fruits can irritate some people's skin. Other fruit acids with different characteristics can be used to make a hydrogen-rich henna paste. These will give slightly different results.



The above example shows the difference between cassia stains created with a mixture of purified citric acid and water, and a stain created with a mixture of other natural fruit acids.

Citric acid mixed with henna and cassia creates the lightest, brightest henna and cassia stains on pale, gray hair. Fruit acids and juices that are more chemically complex, containing other acids, enzymes, antioxidants, and anthocyanins. By varying the fruit acids and juices, you subtly vary the colors with henna, cassia, and indigo on hair.

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