

Sources of Lye for Curing Olives

The lye used to cure olives **must be 100% pure sodium hydroxide (NaOH)** – also commonly known as caustic soda or lye. **Do not substitute other types of drain cleaners unless the label clearly states that the product is 100% 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.” Although we have provided a list of some suppliers below, please realize that supplier information can become outdated very quickly. If you are having problems, search online or in the yellow pages for the types of local suppliers mentioned above.

NOTE: Many people used to use a product called Red Devil (a 100% lye drain cleaner) as a readily available source of household lye, but this product is no longer being manufactured. Some retail stores stock other brands of 100% lye drain cleaner manufactured by Roto Corporation (LB HSHELD Drain Cleaner) or Roebic Laboratories (Heavy Duty Crystal Drain Opener). In addition, the Roto product was available for purchase at amazon.com at the time this fact sheet was prepared (search for “drain cleaner” under the “health and personal care” section).

Lye suppliers

1. Chemical suppliers:

Sierra Chemical Company — 788 Northport Drive, West Sacramento, CA 95691-2145, 1-916-371-5943) — sells sodium hydroxide — minimum 2 lb.

www.boyercorporation.com — sodium hydroxide beads — sells a minimum size of twelve 2 lb cans/carton. By phone, 1-800-232-3040.

2. Soap making suppliers:

www.soapsalon.com — (based in Sacramento, California) sells sodium hydroxide pellets in 1, 5, 10, and 20 lb quantities. By phone, 1-916-334-4894.

www.saratogascents.com — sells sodium hydroxide in 2 lb plastic bottles, 20 lb maximum per shipment.

www.snowdriftfarm.com — sells sodium hydroxide flakes in 2, 10, and 30 lb.

3. Hardware and home improvement stores: Check in the plumbing section.

Source: Cathi Lamp and Anna Martin, Nutrition, Family, and Consumer Science Advisors, Cooperative Extension, San Joaquin and Tulare Counties, November 2006. Linda J. Harris, Extension Specialist, UC Davis.

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