

My Adventures in Alcohol Ink

My name is Deb and I am addicted to Pinterest.

As I pinned lots of art to my Art Journaling and Tags boards (as of this writing, I have over 11,000 pins...) I saw that lots of lovely pins, especially of tags, specified 'alcohol' or 'distress' inks as a medium. Quite often, they were used to give a 'vintage' look to works.

I looked at them in the store but holy moly, I'd never pay 5 to 8 bucks for a 2 oz bottle of paint! For a while I just distressed tags by dragging the edges over a stamp pad. But they are not cheap either! So I went to the internet to find out how to make my own alcohol ink.

One site said; basically, combine alcohol and some pigment in a little bottle. Three possible pigments are acrylic paint, food coloring and Rit dye. I had alcohol and all three of the possible pigments, but just one bottle – which to try first? I went for acrylic paint in tan. I really liked the result! As I realized later, the acrylic gave a heft and opacity that resulted in spattering instead of total coverage as the food coloring was to do.

Then I looked for small spray bottles. Finally found them at the Christmas Tree Shop, .99 each in the travel sample section. I made blue and green ink with the acrylics. I found I particularly liked combining the tan and the green as backgrounds for tags, as in my 'little bird series.' The Dollar Store is a great source for cheap Isopropyl alcohol – it's 50 percent but that works fine. If you want to pay more for 70 or 90 percent, it will dry even faster...

So once I had lots of bottles and alcohol I started experimenting with food coloring – and more.

I have the Wilton 8 color gel set, so I started with that in yellow. I thought the gels would give a great depth of color, but that didn't turn out to be the case. I then added some of the old fashioned Durkee yellow coloring, and that was great. The food coloring, though, is totally transparent on the paper. But, the gel comes in colors such as purple that are hard to mix with the old fashioned 4 color set.

I haven't tried the Rit dye yet. Maybe later.

I had experimented with coffee and tea aging before and although I liked the look, I didn't like what the water did to the paper – it changed the texture and buckled it. I decided to make coffee and tea inks with alcohol and see how that worked.

I have a metal filter for my coffee, so I suspended it in a mason jar, put in some coffee, and poured the alcohol over. I found that I had to brew it twice to get the intensity I wanted, and it leaves a bit of residue which does wipe off easily. It is best to flatten the object or spray both sides if it's a tag.

The tea worked best of all! I just put two bags of Red Rose in a jar with two ounces of alcohol and let it sit for an hour. I absolutely love the look because the tea gives a reddish brown tinge to the work that I find more attractive than the coffee brown! I sprayed the tag above outside and laid it on my patio table to dry – and both sides have this wonderful stencil look from the wrought iron table top! That was a total success in my book!



From left to right: plain manila tag, coffee, tea, and food coloring (yellow and purple) alcohol inks.



The textured paper background is white paper salvaged from a fruit box at Costco, sprayed with alcohol inks made with acrylics.