



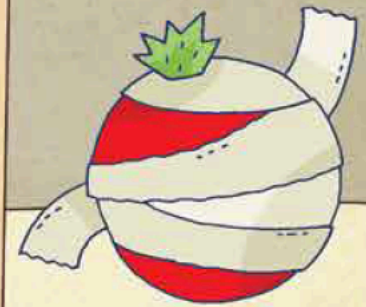
Make a mummy!

Anything that used to be alive can be mummified. Try mummifying a tomato by creating the conditions used in ancient Egypt.



You will need:

- Two tomatoes
- A knife and a teaspoon
- Antiseptic liquid or handwash
- Kitchen roll
- Salt
- Bicarbonate of soda
- Two small jam jars or glasses, slightly bigger than your tomatoes.
- Toilet tissue (optional)



What you do:

Before you start, write down what each tomato looks, feels and smells like. Choose one tomato to mummify.

Appearance, texture and smell...	Mummified tomato	Control tomato
...at the start of the experiment		
...after 1 week		
...after 2 weeks		
...after 3 weeks		
...after 4 weeks		
...after 5 weeks		
...after 6 weeks		
...after 7 weeks		
...after 8 weeks		
...after 9 weeks		
...after 10 weeks		

1. Start by getting rid of the 'guts'! Cut a slit in one tomato. Gently squeeze the tomato and scoop or squeeze out the seeds and pulp. The ancient Egyptians preserved squishy bits in canopic jars, but you can throw them in the compost.
2. Wash the gutted tomato. The ancient Egyptians used a special embalming recipe to stop microbes growing. You can use antibacterial liquid or handwash. Dry the tomato carefully, inside and out and then weigh it.
3. Mix equal amounts of salt and bicarbonate of soda to make a mixture a bit like natron. You will need enough to fill one of your jars.
4. Fill the inside of the hollowed-out tomato with the salt mixture. Then bury the tomato in the salt mixture inside the jar.
5. Put the other tomato in a similar jar – just as it is, with no salt mixture. This is your control, so you can see whether the mummification has worked.
6. Now wait. Place the tomatoes in a warm, dry place, away from food and food preparation areas, where they won't be disturbed by people or pets. Check both tomatoes every week and record what you see. (You'll need to take the mummified one out of the salt mixture.) Can you keep going for 70 days? Replace the salt with fresh mixture if it gets too wet. Weigh the mummified tomato.

You could stuff and wrap your tomato with toilet tissue once the mummification process is complete.

Warning
Avoid touching the tomatoes if they do start to decay, and never eat them!

You should find:

The salt mixture dehydrates (draws water out of) the tomato. The warm, dry air evaporates this water. The microbes that cause decay need water to do their job, so dehydrating the tomato prevents (or at least slows down) the process of decay. The mummified tomato weighs less than its starting weight because it contains much less water.