



Centro de Recursos Especializados para Alfareros

How to Cure Pottery Pieces



Introduction

Discover how to safely cure your pottery cookware with the recommendations of Pure Earth México. With more than 25 years of international experience and 15 years of work in Mexico, Pure Earth is dedicated to eliminating lead from artisanal pottery and protecting the health of the families who produce and use it. From our office in Mexico City, we work closely with pottery communities, academic institutions, and partners in the public and private sectors to share accurate and accessible information about the risks of lead and the safe alternatives that are available today.

This manual aims to provide information about traditional methods for curing clay cookware, acknowledging that this process does not remove lead from pieces glazed with lead-based enamels. Instead, curing only helps seal the pores of the surface, making the pieces more resistant and functional.



Curing Pottery Pieces

The curing process for pottery cookware is a traditional practice that helps strengthen and seal the pieces before use. Through curing, the pores in the clay are partially closed, which helps prevent liquid absorption and improves the resistance of the utensil to heat and contact with food.

It is important to remember that curing does not remove lead from pieces glazed with lead-contaminated enamels. For this reason, we always recommend using and purchasing lead-free pottery.



Methods for curing pottery pieces

- Place the pieces in a large container filled with water, ensuring they are completely submerged. Leave them in the water for at least 72 hours. Then remove the pieces and let them air dry naturally.



Methods for curing pottery pieces

- Curing with slaked lime. Prepare a mixture of slaked lime (calcium hydroxide) and water in an appropriate container. The typical ratio is approximately 1 part slaked lime to 3 parts water. Once the mixture is ready, submerge the clay piece in the mixture, ensuring it is completely covered. The slaked lime will penetrate the clay and help strengthen it. Let it rest for 24 hours, and then place the piece directly over heat to use it.



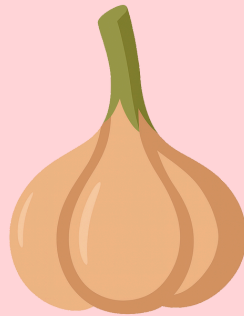
Methods for curing pottery pieces

- Curing with atole (corn masa mixture). Bring water to a boil in the piece you want to cure. Separately, prepare a mixture of masa (corn dough) and water, then pour it into the pot or vessel with the boiling water. Stir until the masa cooks completely and becomes a thick atole-like mixture. Let it sit until it cools, then remove the mixture and wash the piece. After this process, the piece is ready for use.



Methods for curing pottery pieces

- Curing with garlic. Rub a clove of garlic over the entire surface of the piece several times. This helps seal any open pores in the clay, preventing liquids from seeping through the piece.



Methods for curing pottery pieces

- Curing with nopal (cactus). Cut one or more nopal cactus pads into medium-sized pieces and place them in a large container of water. Let the mixture sit for 24 hours, until the water becomes thick and viscous. Once ready, submerge the pottery piece in the nopal water, ensuring it is completely covered. Let it rest for several hours or overnight, then remove and allow it to air dry.

