

Mummified Hot Dog

Have you ever seen or heard of the movies *The Mummy* or *A Night at the Museum*?

Mummies have always played a part in nightmares for Western cultures, but in ancient Egypt, mummification was a serious religious ritual. They believed that preserving human bodies (making them last a long time) after a person died was necessary so that the dead person could enjoy the fruits of the afterlife. In this experiment, we learn about the science of mummification by mummifying a hot dog.

Question:

How are mummified bodies preserved?

Method:

The hot dog is buried in a sealed container of baking soda and left to sit for several days. The sealed container is the “mummy”’s *sarcophagus*.

Results:

The hot dog dries out, darkens in color, and shrinks in size. It is now “mummified,” just like in ancient Egypt!

Discussion:

When a king or powerful person died in ancient Egypt, the body would be washed in the Nile river and the organs removed. Then the body would be covered in *natron salt*, which would suck out all the water from the body and make it really dry. This is what the baking soda did to the hot dog. This extreme dryness is what *preserves* the body, making it last for thousands of years. For human or animal parts other than bone to last a long time, it must be buried in a place that is either very dry, very cold, or very wet. These are things that keep the flesh from *decaying*, so that some day an anthropologist might dig it up and study it!

Mummified Hot Dog Project

http://www.sciencebuddies.org/science-fair-projects/project_ideas/HumBio_p022.shtml

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