

Making Fake Toast and Scrambled Eggs As Props

By Jim Scott - November 2014

In CAT Theatre's performance of *Sherlock Holmes: The Final Adventure* (October 24-November 8, 2014), Scene 2 opens with "the remains of breakfast" on a table. The dialogue begins thusly:

HOLMES. The tea, Watson.

WATSON. Yes?

HOLMES. Weak.

WATSON. I'm sorry.

HOLMES. The eggs.

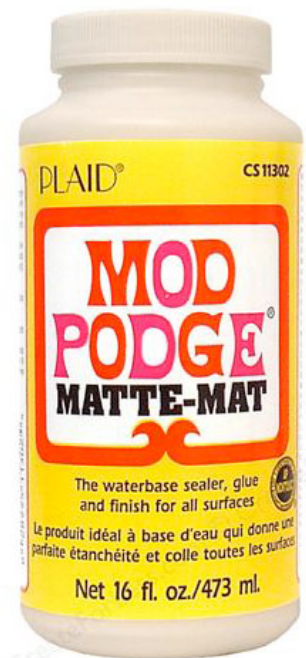
WATSON. Yes?

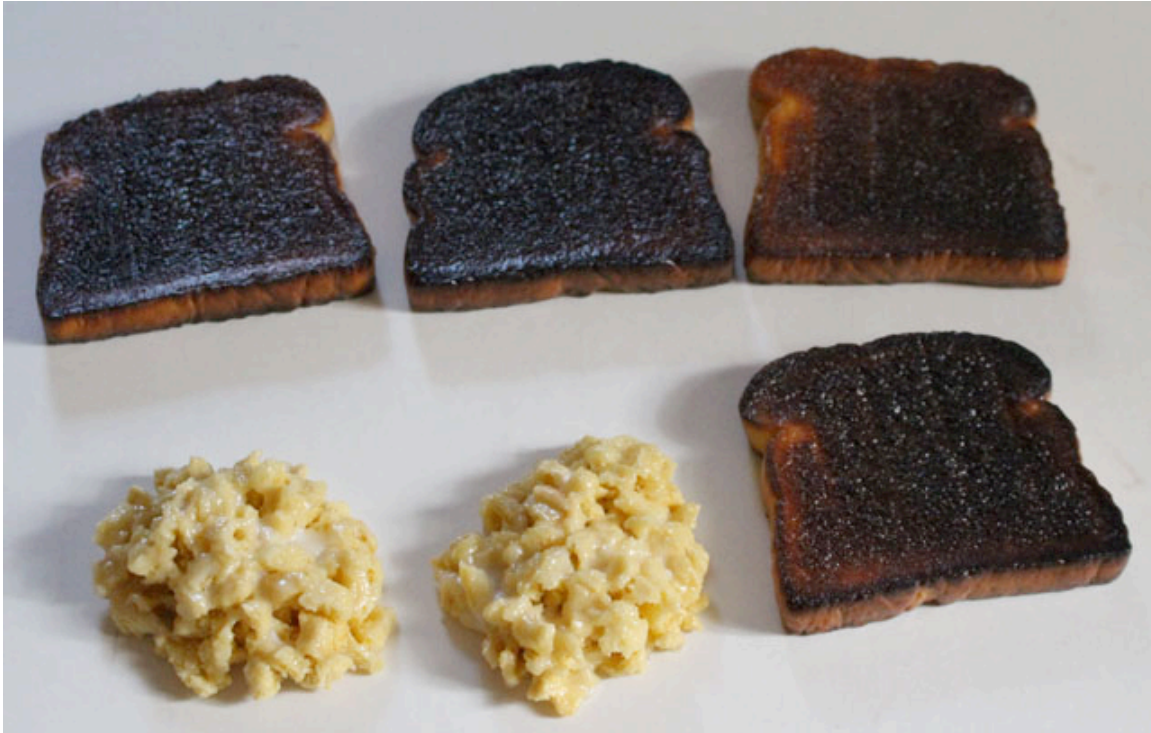
HOLMES. Hard as rocks. The sausages: improperly browned. And the toast, in seeming deference to the meat: burned beyond recognition.

The director used real (vegan) sausage, but the toast and eggs were to be fake so they could be reused. It's usually a good thing to minimize the use of real food props as props. For the eggs, the assistant director specified "scrambled eggs", to be made using potato bread.

Actually, the distinction between "real" and "fake" food props is blurred here, because in this case the toast is real toast, but coated with a clear protective substance for long life. And the "eggs" are not eggs, but the potato bread is real food, which, like the toast, is coated for preservation.

To make the toast, run a few slices of bread through a toaster twice, so it's nice and black, but still intact and with a little brown showing through. With a paint brush, coat all surfaces of each slice with Mod Podge. Use *matte* Mod Podge, not glossy; even then, the resulting surface will still be a bit shiny. When the first coating is dry, put on a second coat, making sure to get into every nook and cranny.





The photo shows uncut slices of toast. Later, it was decided that half-slices would be used. So I cut each piece diagonally, and applied two layers of Mod Podge to the newly-cut edges.

To make two servings of scrambled eggs, start with at least two slices of potato bread. Potato bread is yellow where ordinary bread is white, and it nicely simulates the color of scrambled eggs.

From each slice of potato bread, cut off the crust and discard it. With your fingers, tear the remainder into shreds, each about the size of a pea. Making each serving separately, roll the shreds in matte Mod Podge. Just knead the whole mess until each shred has a thin coat of Mod Podge. Then, on a flat sheet of wax paper (or other non-stick flat surface), bunch the sticky pile together tightly, but not so tightly as to squash the pieces. Leave the pile to dry and harden into a mound with a flat bottom, more or less the shape of a serving of scrambled eggs.

When it's dry, use a putty knife if necessary to separate the mound from the surface it rests on. Then turn it over and brush a coat of Mod Podge on the flat bottom. Once that dries, turn it right-side-up and brush Mod Podge onto the top surface. You might want to add yet another coating.

If at any time it seems to be drying too slowly, you can put it into an oven preheated to 200 F for about ten minutes to hasten drying. (Don't put it into the oven until the preheating is done, because during that time the oven burners will be on high, to shorten the preheating time.)

Now I have to admit that that's not exactly how I made the eggs. In the initial treatment of the torn shreds of bread, I used Elmer's Glue-All instead of Mod Podge. My thinking was that my purpose was to make the shreds adhere to each other, not to coat them at that point. Now that I have some experience with Mod Podge, I think it would be just as good an adhesive as Elmer's Glue-All. (In fact, for all I know, the two products are the same thing! They look alike and they seem to behave the same.)

With the scrambled eggs, even more than for the toast, it can take some doing to get every crevice coated with Mod Podge. If you start with Mod Podge instead of an adhesive, your chances of having any exposed bits of bare food will be greatly reduced.

I don't know yet how long food processed like this will last, but you can be sure it will last through an entire production.