

Tips and Techniques

Homemade Spray Starch by Amy Aderman

I like to starch all my fabric before cutting because it makes it easier to handle, cut & sew. It is especially helpful when piecing shapes that are bias cut and it reduces the chance of getting pleats when doing free motion quilting.

I've been in-terested in trying homemade starch and when I ran out of my last bottle of starch late one night, it was time to give it a try. I don't think I'll ever buy another can of starch! It's super easy to make, plus I found it's much nicer than commercial starch. It made the fabric perfectly crisp, didn't flake, burn on my iron or leave any weird spots on my fabric. Plus, it's cheaper and doesn't include the nasty chemicals found in spray cans. You can simply make your own from cornstarch found in your pantry – just add water. I found several recipe variations, it doesn't seem like you need to be too precise.

1 tablespoon corn starch + 2 cups water

Or 1 tsp corn starch + 2 cups water

Optional – 1-2 drops of essential oil for scent (such as lemon or lavender oil)

Mix well and put in a pump spray bottle. Shake often. A batch will keep for a couple of days, a little longer if refrigerat-ed.

There are other recipes found online, but I haven't tested myself to know if they work any better than the basic recipe. Some include additional ingredients like borax or alum that are supposed to act as preservatives. Others say that if you mix it on the stove, stirring over heat, then it will stay dissolved and doesn't require shaking. But that sounds too much like cooking for me! There is also a concentrated starch called Sta-Flo available in the laundry section of stores. Another recipe uses cheap Vodka and scented oil and many people suggest this is the secret formula for the popular starch alternative used by many quilters. So you may want to try that one. I'm going to save my Vodka for other recipes!

