

Put Your Stamp On It! – Make your own vegetable stamps

Using a stamp with your name, your initials or a special image (maybe a picture of your face) is an easy way to mark your belongings as your own. During excavations, archaeologists have found the stamp of Caius Pal. Gracilis in the area of the Roman market in Leicester.

What do we need:

- Carrots, turnips or any other root vegetable that is easy to cut (you can also use potatoes, but these were not known to the Romans)
- A knife and chopping board
- Cookie cutters
- Paint (you can make your own paint using fresh herbs or fruit from the garden)
- Paper or fabric

How to:

When you work in the kitchen and use sharp tools such as knives, make sure that there is an adult to help you!

Step 1: Think about a design for your stamp. You will probably want to start with something simple and easy.

Step 2: Ask an adult to cut a slice of your carrot; you will need a smooth surface for your stamp.

Step 3: Use a cookie cutter to create your stamp.

Step 4: Carefully cut around your cookie cutter and remove the excess carrot.

What do we know about Caius Gracilis?

Caius Pal. Gracilis may have been a producer of creams and perfumes and would have used this stamp to mark his products. Although we do not know with certainty which name was abbreviated as Pal., we do know that Caius was a Roman citizen. Only Roman citizens were allowed to use three names – the tria nomina of personal name, family name and cognomen (comparable to a nickname in many cases).

Caius may have been aware that many of his customers were not able to read. Therefore, he added a picture of his face to his stamp!



Step 5: You can use a tooth pick or small skewer to carve your initials or a simple motif into your stamp.

Step 6: Carefully dip your stamp into your paint and remove any excess paint.

Step 7: Use your stamp on any kind of paper or fabric. You could decorate pots to grow herbs in your kitchen, or an old towel.



© Character: Giacomo Savani; object: Jewry Wall Museum, Haverfield (1918); photos: Sarah Scoppie